Mizrahi Memoirs:
History, Memory, and Identity in Displacement

Stephanie Rachel Kizimchuk

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Statement of Originality

I declare that this thesis represents an original piece of work, and does not contain, in part or in full, the published work of any other individual, except where acknowledged.

Stephanie Kizimchuk
The Australian National University
February 2017

Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral research project, dissertation, and thesis to

YHWH

who is the Spirit of Truth and Giver of Life unto the ages of ages.

May peace and understanding grow among the children of Abraham and beyond.

Stephanie Kizimchuk

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Stephanie Kizimchuk

My Thesis in Verse

Memory is multidirectional.
It is entangled,
Multilayered,
And complex.
It defies the boundaries people would place in its way.
It appears gone but . . .
Re-emerges, re-grows,
Rebounds, redefines,
The moment, the meaning, the place, and the space.
This is where we are at.
Displacement, Dysfunction,
Exclusion, collusion,
The depths of the pain,
Are hard to explain.
Homelands are lost,
Meanings denied,
Identities broken,
Voices unspoken.
The stories we tell one to another,
The moments of sharing,
Which lead to us caring,
These are the seeds that grow in the dark,
That defying all reason,
Lead to a spark,
Of roots unbound,
Families re-found,
Meaning reformed,
Humanity restored.
Reach out.
Listen.
Journey.
Find.
Discover.
Recover.
History, memory, and identity,
Once Lost. Now found.

Stephanie Kizimchuk
August 2016

Presented as spoken word performance art at the open poetry slam
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Abstract

In this dissertation I analyse the dynamics of history, memory, and identity as represented in the published English-language memoirs of Mizrahim (also known as 'Middle Eastern Jews' or 'Arabic Jews') who were displaced during the mid- to later-twentieth century from Iraq, Iran, and Egypt. I take a thematic approach, analysing the memoirs through a focus on metaphor, sensescapes, dreams, urban landscapes and sacred sites, as well as the different perspectives of key stakeholders. I demonstrate that the culture wars model is inadequate for the study of the experiences of displacement and dispersal. Rather, I argue that the framework of multidirectional memory (Michael Rothberg), in combination with the notion of screen memory, provides a far more accurate reflection of the memory dynamics represented across this body of texts. I also draw on the concepts of postmemory (Marianne Hirsch) and the 'off-modern' (Svetlana Boym) as productive ways of understanding the intergenerational transmission of histories and memories, and the construction of diverse identities in post-displacement life. Furthermore, I show that memory dynamics are multidimensional and are shaped by the senses, emotions, and spirituality. They are multilayered, encompassing diverse experiences of temporality, place, and ontology. They are also highly entangled and interweave different perspectives, power relations, locations, histories, and peoples.

Through examining the dynamics of memories, histories, and identities in published English-language Mizrahi life writing, I seek to contribute to a more accurate understanding of the diversity of Jewish experiences and the complexity of Jewish life and history in a Middle Eastern and North African context. I aim to develop a nuanced understanding of situations of displacement, dispersal, and resettlement. I demonstrate that memoir writing is a crucial genre for recording migratory experiences and transnational histories. This medium provides a vital and powerful tool that can aid in the recovery of psychological wellbeing and emotional resilience among women and men who have been displaced. An improved understanding of memory dynamics as well as the construction of identities and histories is all the more important in this present moment where dangerously simplistic divisions are often made at the expense of equity, diversity, and true human complexity.

Contents

Statement of Originality *2*
Dedication *3*
Acknowledgements *4*
Abstract *9*
Contents *10*
Chapter One: Introductory Overview ***12***
The intention of my research 14
The value of memoirs to cultural history 16
The emergence of Mizrahi memoirs 18
My reflexive position 28
Why this topic and why this approach? 33
Identities: defining Mizrahim 34
The displacement and the current context 40
The 'Archive' 46
Structural overview 52
Conclusion 54
Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements ***56***
Personal and Collective Memory 60
Memory dynamics 71
Multidirectional memory 78
Holocaust remembrance 82
Transnational and multicultural spaces 86
Screen memory 92
Multidirectional and Multidimensional Entanglements 97
Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees ***102***
Intersection and with current debates 103
The importance of tree metaphors 111
The Roots of the tree 113
Being uprooted 123
Flourishing within new lands 128
Conclusion 137
Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food ***140***
Terminology and complex contexts 141
Mizrahi Foodways 145
Kashrut and soul-food 148
Memory transmission and Passover 152

Separate and shared 154
Different rituals - similar foodways 158
The senses and memory 162
Hospitable smellscapes and habitable landscapes 169
Conclusion 172
Chapter Five: Dreaming of Return ***173***
The desire to return 175
Nostalgia and memory 179
Sleep, dream, and memory 182
The inclusion of dreams in Mizrahi memoirs 183
Unwilling return 184
Suspended between worlds 190
Rebellion and liberation 195
Recovery and restoration 198
Rearticulation 203
Conclusion 209
Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters ***211***
Moments in time: context and postmemory 214
Synagogues and sacred sites 217
Change and reuse in Zakho 218
Portable artefacts 225
Jewish community sites and urban renewal in Baghdad 228
Barriers and connections of the Meir Tweg Synagogue in Baghdad 230
Conclusion 232
Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions ***234***
Driven by postmemory 235
Memory, ownership, and the Ben Ezra Synagogue of Cairo 238
Outer structures 242
The entanglements of the Eliahu Hanabi Synagogue of Alexandria 248
Selective Histories and the Rambam Synagogue of Cairo 254
Pilgrims, possession, and the Abu Hasira *moulid* 261
Preserving history and the Torah scrolls of the Char Hashamayin Synagogue in Cairo 273
Portable monuments 276
Conclusion 277
Chapter Eight: Conclusion ***279***
Appendix One: Overview of Memoirs *288*
List of Citations ***298***
Memoirs *298*
Other Sources *299*

– CHAPTER ONE –

Introductory Overview

> No! You should never use the term Arab Jew. *Arab! Jew!* Yuck! It's wrong. I am Jewish and *I* find it highly offensive and derogatory. It is demeaning, insulting, and downright offensive – even to those you are studying . . . When you said 'Arab Jew' something inside me – you know *right* inside, in my very soul – just clinched. It made me cringe. It caused me to react. Use another term. Not this![1]
>
> 'Sarah' to Stephanie Kizimchuk, 'Private Conversation'

This is how a friend of mine, who here will be called 'Sarah', reacted at a public gathering when she heard me discussing my project with another scholar.[2] Sarah and I have been acquainted for many years and have talked about my research numerous times without issue. But on that particular night her reaction was as startling as it was confronting. Sarah is humanitarian and liberal in orientation, easily accepting of other perspectives, and usually very open minded in both her thoughts and politics. Whether because of a sudden rise in tensions and renewed ferocity of rocket attacks on the State of Israel, or because of something else entirely, her genuinely emotional and angry reaction seemed, to me, to be very much out of character. That Sarah reacted with such immediate hostility to the term 'Arab Jew' – both bodily and in the emotional-spiritual core of her being – exposes the raw power and underlying assumes that comes with using certain terms and labels. A raw nerve had been touched. A taboo spoken.[3]

Several years later when discussing that evening, Sarah was keen for me to understand her response. She clarified that:

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[1] 'Sarah' to Stephanie Kizimchuk, 'Private Conversation', Aug 2012. Name changed for confidentiality.

[2] 'Sarah' to Stephanie Kizimchuk, 'Private Conversation'; Ann McGrath, 'Reflexivity and the self-line', in *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narrations*, eds. Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (Melbourne: Monash Publications in History, 2000), 56-58. Ann McGrath calls us to be brave as scholars and be self reflexive in our work. I have therefore chosen to begin this dissertation in such a way because (2000: 58) "experience can be the beginning point of questions".

[3] Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), xix; Ella Shohat, 'Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 336. Here I use the word taboo as Shohat does – in its literal sense as a cultural prohibition but also as an identity, idea, or narrative that challenges or endangers current hegemonic configurations. Shohat widely uses the term 'Arab Jew' to accurately highlight hybrid identities and raise awareness about assumptions and politically unutterable 'taboos'. By using this term in conversation I borrowed from Shohat's approach as it immediately prompts engagement, thought, and reflection from listeners. Sometimes this prompts the person to question their own assumptions or prejudices regarding Jews and instead move towards a greater understanding of Jewish diversity. I see this as a very positive thing.

> I immediately thought about Iranian Jews, and the fact that 'Arab Jew' is used as an insult. Mizrahi friends have told me of being insulted like this (in Melbourne [Australia], and [the State of] Israel . . . Iranians are Indo-Europeans, not Semites (in this context, Arabs). In fact, they are very proud of this.[4]

Sarah's clarification, however, reinforces the fact that culturally constructed hierarchies and stereotypes pervade not only our understanding of others' identities but also the way in which we understand, react to, and talk about them; they are embedded in identity politics.[5] Sarah's reaction is not unusual. Currently within the media, politics, and general discourse, 'Arab' and 'Jew' are configured as polar opposites. These labels are part of a constructed dichotomy of stereotyped assumptions that situates being Arabic as being Middle Eastern and Islamic, and being Jewish as being European and unequivocally Western.[6] As with all stereotypes, this is a simplistic notion, but one that does not fail to shape popular understanding. Even though she was keenly aware of the complexities at play, Sarah's sudden reaction shows that perceptions surrounding the identity designations of 'Arab' and 'Jew' as fundamentally separate, oppositional, and irreconcilable – even if just in the context of Iran – are deeply entrenched emotionally.[7]

The reality is that for generations 'Arabic Jews' – also known as 'Mizrahim' – lived and thrived throughout the Middle East and North Africa.[8] Today, this reality and this history is at times considered surprising, because it is not part of general knowledge in the West.[9] Because they traverse common categories Mizrahim tend to be written "out of the standard narrative" in both "Jewish and Middle Eastern studies".[10] Although they are thoroughly Jewish and equally Middle Eastern and North African in the celebration of their cultural

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[4] 'Sarah' email to Stephanie Kizimchuk, 'Mizrahi', December 2015.
[5] Gassan Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', in *Sociology: Place, Time & Division*, eds. Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 342-346; Cressida Heyes, 'Identity Politics', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2012, accessed 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/identity-politics/>.
[6] Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions – Columbus, Palestine and Arab Jews', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 215. Shohat argues that European Zionism has created this dichotomy within present geopolitics.
[7] 'Sarah' to Stephanie Kizimchuk, 'Private Conversation'; 'Sarah' email to Stephanie Kizimchuk, 'Mizrahi'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 215; Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.
[8] Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Reguer, eds. *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Jews in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); Zion Zohar, ed. *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to the Modern Day* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Rachel Shabi, *Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus*, 2nd ed. (London: Saqi, 2005); Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages,* 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003).
[9] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.*
[10] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* vii.

practice, their richly multifaceted way of life bridged what is now considered a dichotomy.[11] The twentieth century unfortunately saw the upheaval, destruction, expulsion, and displacement of both ancient and contemporary Mizrahi communities in what constituted a tremendous mass movement of Jewish people.[12] Despite the unprecedented scale and nature of this displacement, which will be discussed below, it unfortunately remains very much an unknown and unspoken humanitarian disaster both in the past and today.[13] Along with a way of life that frequently bridged now divided identities, the experiences of Mizrahim could be said to represent a lesser-known history that the rest of the world decided to overlook because it was more convenient to do so in the current configuration of power.[14] The complex relationship between histories, memories, and identities demonstrates, however, that when the combination of people and circumstances is right power structures can and do change.[15]

The intention of my research

My research examines the dynamics of memory, history, and identity as represented in the published English-language life-writing of Mizrahim from Iraq, Iran, and Egypt who were displaced in the mid- to late-twentieth century. In my analysis I also include some works created by their adult children; that is, the first generation to be born and grow up in their new home countries. In doing so, I examine a unique archive – a body of literature previously scattered like the displaced whose stories are shared within the printed pages. In bringing together these texts, I analyse the commonalties and tensions between individual and collective memories and experiences of this displacement, and ask whether a shared history does, or does not, exist. The presumption that there is a shared history is often cited as the foundation for a unifying Mizrahi identity.[16]

My intervention is to identify, amass, and analyse this body of Mizrahi memoirs in English, and to show how they share some common themes regarding the memory of displacement. This is an important but largely 'missing' story compared to that of Holocaust memory that

[11] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.
[12] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*; Sachar, *A History of Jews in the Modern World*; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*; Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross*; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*.
[13] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.
[14] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.
[15] Erna Paris, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001); Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd., 2006); Ewa Domańska, *Encounters*: *Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).
[16] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'.

now dominates understandings of Jewish identity. I argue that the culture wars model is inadequate for the study of experiences of displacement and dispersal that are represented in Mizrahi memoirs. I demonstrate that the framework of multidirectional memory proposed by Michael Rothberg, in combination with the notion of screen memory, is productive for analysing the memory dynamics represented across this body of texts.[17] Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory and Svetlana Boym's understanding of the 'off-modern provide productive ways of understanding the intergenerational transmission of histories and memory, and the construction of diverse identities in post-displacement life.[18] Among scholars there is often considered to be a tension between personal and collective memory. I acknowledge this tension but fundamentally argue that personal and collective memory are inherently connected and intertwined including identities expressed at the national and group level.[19]

My dissertation builds upon and contributes to work in memory studies and cultural history, but also draws upon work from literature, anthropology, sociology, psychology, heritage studies, and politics.[20] Although studies in memory have previously examined the dynamics and relationship between histories, memories, and identities, a focus in those cases has largely been placed on the context of nation-states.[21] More challenging are the experiences and memories of displaced and dispersed peoples and those whose identities – like Mizrahim – are hybrid, and which fall between common categories, or are simply 'taboo'.[22] Through this research I provide additional insight into the memory dynamics represented within Mizrahi life-writing and the complex relationship of these to histories and identities in a post-displacement context. I thereby contribute to an improved awareness and appreciation of human complexity in the writing of histories and the representation of life stories in the context of upheaval, displacement, migration, and resettlement.

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[17] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
[18] Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', in *The Collective Memory Reader,* eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 346-347; Svetlana Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 151-165.
[19] Bernd Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse: Uses and Meanings of the Past*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2012; Jan Assman, 'Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism' in *The Collective Memory Reader,* eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzsky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 207-215.
[20] Please see full list of citations at the end of this dissertation.
[21] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*; Marianne Hirsh and Nancy K. Miller, eds. *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[22] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return*; Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory'.

There is great complexity present in the memory dynamics found in the context of transnational movements and forced displacements.[23] Within standard nation-bound research, numerous studies have chosen to identify a culture wars model to describe the relationship between memories, histories, and identities.[24] Rather than using a culture wars model, I demonstrate that the memory dynamics present in a displacement context within the representations of Mizrahi memoirs instead follow the dynamics of multidirectional memory and are inherently multidimensional, multilayered, and entangled.[25] These make up the central themes and core line of argument which I explore and examine throughout this dissertation.

The value of memoirs to cultural history

Memoirs are valuable sources for cultural history, especially in the context of displacement and dispersal where archival material may be few and far between. When "few traces" are left following upheaval and dispersal, alternative sources of knowledge must be found and analysed instead.[26] This can, however, have its advantages. As Ann Curthoys and John Docker argue, "a different genre will yield a different understanding or explanation of the past".[27] The influence of postmodernism on both "literary and cultural theory" has meant a deeper respect for subjectivity and an opening up of all genres and potential sources as worthy of investigation and analysis.[28] Like any source, memoirs have their own limitations and need to be studied and used with appropriate contextualisation and an awareness of how these accounts are legitimated, or not, in wider circulation.[29] They are commodities and "autobiographical narrative is marketed, consumed, and taken up into debates about the politics of identity in times of crisis".[30]

I analyse and draw upon Mizrahi memoirs in a variety of ways, not only as subjective testimonies witnessing to their author's experiences, but also as narrative representations

[23] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return*; Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory'.
[24] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.
[25] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory'; Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[26] Joan Tumblety, *Memory and History: Understanding memory as source and subject* (London: Routledge, 2013), 14.
[27] Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?,* 192.
[28] Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?,* 180; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 5.
[29] Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?,*; Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Rosanne Kennedy, 'Memory, history and the law: Testimony and collective memory in Holocaust and Stolen Generations trials', in *Memory and History: Understanding memory as source and subject,* ed. Joan Tumblety (London: Routledge, 2013), 63; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 2-3.
[30] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.

steeped in identity politics that can tell us more about the dynamics of memories, histories, and identities. Joan Tumblety succinctly explains this type of stance when analysing memory, writing that:

> We must bear in mind, in fact, that historians do not approach memory just as a source but as subject. That is, they seek evidence not only *of* memory (what is remembered), but evidence *about* memory (how and why the past is remembered in one way and not another). It is the question of how a certain view of the past is incorporated, sustained or alternatively eclipsed in the medium of the present – at individual and social levels – that engages their interest. And it entails the investigation of multiple source bases: texts, objects and actions that serve as conduits for these selective processes of remembrance and memorialisation.[31]

Memoirs are important sources when studying those who have been displaced because "for those who lack social, cultural, and political power, the technologies of the self made available through life narrative allows agency and carefully defined authority".[32] Gillian Whitlock argues that "life narratives have a distinctive role to play in the struggle to shape dialogues across cultures" because they humanise their often unseen subjects.[33] This is certainly the case for Mizrahim. In the context of injustice, Rosanne Kennedy contends that we can view memoirs as a form of testimony "that does not resolve disputed facts but instead reveals the complex legacies of violent events on memory in the present" and how and why it is "simultaneously socially and psychologically framed".[34] Importantly, "testimony has an affective charge, both on the witness and on the audience, and is valuable for revealing the way that past events live on in the memories of individuals in the present".[35]

This affective charge is acknowledged by Whitlock to be a core quality of life writing and I pay attention to this aspect throughout my dissertation.[36] Vitally, given the ongoing tensions, conflict, and war in the Middle East, memoir can help humanise the 'other' and "trigger conversations and interactions across cultures in conflict".[37] Memoir is inherently involved in identity construction and identity politics, not only of its authors but also of its readers.[38] Whitlock explains the sense of intimacy and immediacy that memoir produce as well as the 'work' they do in circulation:

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[31] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 2.
[32] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 18.
[33] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 2, 3.
[34] Kennedy, 'Memory, history and the law', 50; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 5.
[35] Kennedy, 'Memory, history and the law', 63.
[36] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons.*
[37] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3.
[38] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10, 12.

> This contemporaneity establishes beyond doubt that autobiography is fundamental to the struggle for recognition among individuals and groups, to the constant creation of what it means to be human and the rights that fall from that, and to the ongoing negotiation of imaginary boundaries between ourselves and others. Life narrative plays a vital role in the public sphere as it deals in and through private lives. It renegotiates and redefines how we imagine and rehearse cross-cultural encounters and how we know and identify ourselves in relation to others . . . Contemporary life narrative touches the secret life of us; indeed it is part of how we come to imagine 'us'.[39]

Mizrahi memoir, then, are powerful sources to draw upon in the analysis of histories, memories, and identities.

The emergence of Mizrahi memoirs

An entangled conjunction of circumstances and social triggers has contributed to Mizrahi memories gaining greater exposure in the form of published life writing that is easily circulated and consumed by readers. As Whitlock points outs, although:

> minority writing secures its place through struggle, and it is hostage to circumstance and shifts in cultural authority . . . memoir is a genre for those who are authorised and who have acquired cultural legitimacy and influence.[40]

This observation is an important one in terms of identity politics.[41] I, however, consider memoir as a genre to be far broader than Whitlock's usage which is restricted to include only highly self-reflective writing. Whitlock also understands memoir and testimony to be dialectical. The Mizrahi memoirs under study here, however, are diverse and can easily be considered to be minority writing, memoir, and testimony all in one. I do not consider memoir and testimony to be exclusively separate; but rather, I view memoir as one representational medium among many through which testimony can occur.

Mizrahi memoirs do not operate in a vacuum and are connected to both their contemporary context and other non-Jewish literatures.[42] As Whitlock reminds us, "life narrative circulates as an exotic commodity in a world of mobile texts, multinational publishing enterprises, mass media, and migrant audiences".[43] Tessa Morris-Suzuki also

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[39] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.
[40] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 20.
[41] Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.
[42] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 4; Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (London: Verso, 2005), 3.
[43] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 4.

argues that the dynamics of movement, circulation, and entanglement are not unusual but is instead widespread, explaining:

> This crisis [of history] expresses itself in a paradox. One the one hand, our age is one of immediacy and constant change . . . But the past refuses to go away. Indeed, in recent years there have been moments when historical consciousness has seemed to well up like magma from between the shifting tectonic plates of an unstable world order, threatening to overwhelm us. Again and again we have been forced to confront the fact that (as William Faulkner once put it) 'the past is not dead; it isn't even past'.[44]

Her choice to use the metaphor of magma is highly significant given both its destructive and creative potential. Whether you interpret a particular upwelling of memory as destructive or creative, however, would of course depend on your own politics and subjective relationship with that narrative of the past.

The environment in which Mizrahi memoirs have become part of public conversation is one of uncertainty, conflict, and ongoing tension. The present socio-political context is now a distinctly post-September 11 one.[45] Reeva Simon, Michael Laskier, and Sara Reguer explain that there has been a growth of "Middle Eastern and Jewish history" in education system in the United States of America since 1992 along with a corresponding "increasing interest in the role of Middle Eastern and North African Jews in shaping their societies".[46] This Middle Eastern focus in the West has only continued to grow post-September 11. Jaivin has observed, however, that "before 11 September 2011, no one imagined that scholars of Arabic, Islamic religion and Middle Eastern history would suddenly be in such high demand".[47] Given this shift, however, Whitlock argues that "the stage for contemporary life narratives is framed by the war on terror" and that this "dramatically shapes their jurisdiction".[48] It is telling, for example, that Farideh Goldin's memoir ends, following the reunion of her extended family at a wedding, by musing that:

> many were still trapped in Iran, but others, dazed and unsteady on their feet, had finally come to be cradled in the arms of America. Our last refuge. Our only safe place in the world. And two days later came September 11.[49]

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[44] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 3.
[45] Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 252-255; Linda Jaivin, 'Found in Translation: In Praise of a Plural Word', *Quarterly Essay* 52 (2014), 22; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5, 9; Simon, Laskier and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* vii; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 199.
[46] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, vii.
[47] Jaivin, 'Found in Translation', 22.
[48] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 9.
[49] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 199.

The attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 had a fundamental impact on global politics owing to the reactions of the United States of America and its Western allies.[50] Nationalist remembrance of this event fuelled and flamed political rhetoric for the 'War on Terror' and tapped into "long-established and intransigent antagonisms" that bolstered representation of events as being part of "a war between worlds: East and West, Muslim and Christian, traditional and modern".[51] Shohat argues that colonialism and political Zionism perpetuated these "fatal binarisms such as civilisation versus savagery, modernity versus tradition, and West versus East".[52] These divisive binaries, however, emerged strongly in post-September 11 media discourse. Milton-Edwards, for example, writes that:

> [M]any thinkers and commentators, especially on the American right . . . argued in the wake of 9/11that the very fabric of American society – democracy and freedom – was under attack from fanatical Muslim terrorists. In this sense their commentary lent credence to the 'clash of civilisations' thesis.[53]

In short, their discourse added further fuel to the fire and continued to ingrain perceived differences and division. This discourse was used to justify overseas military intervention as well as the vast expansion of Western governmental powers for surveillance, monitoring, and detention – even torture – in the name of hunting down suspected 'terrorists' who were simplistically portrayed thorough 'profiling' as most likely of an Arabic and Islamic background.[54] Because many Mizrahim are of Arabic or Middle Eastern ethnic appearance, within the State of Israel and elsewhere they are often assumed to be Arabic Muslims.[55] This misunderstanding is mentioned often in Mizrahi memoirs.[56] Rachel Shabi observes that in reaction to these assumptions, especially in the State of Israel, many Mizrahim now feel they must prove their Jewish 'loyalty' through supporting strong nationalist and right-wing military oriented policies.[57]

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[50] Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 253-254.
[51] Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 252-255; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5-9; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206.
[52] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206.
[53] Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 255.
[54] Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 254-255; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 9; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 219-221.
[55] Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.
[56] Although it appears at different times in most two particularly good examples are: Joshua Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad: Memoir of an Israeli Intelligence Officer* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1997); Heskel M. Haddad, *Flight from Babylon: Iraq, Iran, Israel, America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1986); and Saul Silas Fathi, *Full Circle: Escape from Baghdad and the Return* (New York: Saul Silas Fathi, 2005).
[57] Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 219-221. For example, Shabi (2009: 220) writes that "in all the political polls, the Mizrahis are shown to be more prone to solutions that use force against the Palestinians; more reluctant to let go of Jewish settlements in the West Bank".

With wars fought in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the sweeping upheavals of the Arab Spring, the present crisis in Syria, not to mention ongoing tensions between the State of Israel and Palestinians, the Middle East has saturated the Western media landscape and been kept at the forefront of public attention. Driven by this substantial media attention, public interest in the Middle East has seen publishing houses thematically match demand. Whitlock observes that:

> since 2002, a proliferation of life narratives from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran is produced for the mass market readership in the West . . . [and] most of its readers occupy a place of relative privilege.[58]

Mizrahi memoirs can be seen as part of this trend, but, centrally, so too are memoirs by Muslim authors.[59] Biography and memoirs in general are popular genres which have experienced a widespread growth in recent years, possibly as part of the broader trend towards remembrance and nostalgia known as the 'memory boom'.[60] Tumblety, however, is cautious about "the so-called 'memory boom'" a term that "applies equally to the apparently renewed enthusiasm for the past in popular culture and to the scholarship that seeks to understand it".[61] Rather than as a flashpoint, she situates the memory boom as part of a longer history prompted by the post-World War II 'witnessing era', that involved the Eichmann trial and South African Truth and Reconciliation hearings, as well as being historiographically situated in the "methodological and epistemological" shift away from positivism towards appreciation of subjectivity.[62] Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy also critique the term 'memory boom', linking it with longer debates about modernity, nationalism, and trauma, but see the interdisciplinary inquiries that have resulted as a consequence of investigating it to be significant and productive.[63] They argue that "our contemporary interest in memory, we believe, is no mere fad though it risks being mistaken for one".[64]

Over the past couple of decades there has also been a rise in interest in 'world literature' with an increase in the variety of English-language memoirs written by authors from

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[58] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 7, 9.
[59] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 12.
[60] Jeffery K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds. *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-5, 14-15; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 1-5.
[61] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 1.
[62] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 3-5.
[63] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 3-5, 14-15.
[64] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 5.

developing nations such as India and various parts of Africa who offer alternative views and voices.[65] Whitlock notes the complex interplay this can have, as:

> ethnic autobiography is highly valued for its exotic appeal and educational value, for the status it confers on the consumer as an enlightened, sympathetic, and politically correct individual, and for that comforting narcissistic recognition that denies difference across cultures.[66]

Contemporary conflicts with, and within, the Middle East, however, have prompted a noticeable rise in the number of Middle Eastern themed biographies and memoirs released onto the market which can be seen as part of this expanding 'world literature' sold to a "'primed' readership".[67] Many of these texts feature Muslim narratives of life in highly traditional Islamic society as opposed to a liberal Western one, including the experiences of women who found greater freedom by leaving and living in the West.[68] These are marketed as part of a contemporary preoccupation about 'the veil' – that is, to wear or not to wear the *burkha* or *chador*. However, these narratives also feed into very successful literary tropes with a long colonial history, such as the exotic 'Arabian', the forbidden princess, and harem fantasies. Whitlock reflects that:

> in the 'veiled best-seller' – popular and romantic biographies of Muslim women like *Mayada* that are syndicated globally and sold in vast quantities – one particular space exerts fascination . . . it is the harem that sells booms . . . they reproduce haunting and exotic oriental fantasies and engage our consent to trespass without shame.[69]

This is a narrative pattern that is echoed by some Mizrahim.[70] Yet also the "cross-cultural exchanges and interdependencies" involved in the global circulation of texts can "become a means for the imposition of Western values and interests".[71] In many ways, however, the narrative of women having greater opportunities in the West is true for the women represented in these Mizrahi memoirs who genuinely struggled with 'traditional'

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[65] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 15.
[66] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 15.
[67] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 13.
[68] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 22, 87-105.
[69] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 88.
[70] See for instance Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught up in Revolutionary Iran* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004); Farideh Goldin, *Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003); David Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press Inc., 1999); Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008).
[71] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 8.

expectations to focus on family rather than pursue an education or independent career.[72] Certainly, these texts, which are framed as exotic and easily compatible with Western discourses of benevolence and liberation, do have a general bias towards the notion that political and military intervention in the region was justified.[73] Importantly, however, despite being objectifying, the process of 'exoticising' can also be seen as an attempt to understand the 'other' by transforming them into something more familiar through aesthetics.[74]

Part of the appeal of these texts is that they offer an opportunity to imagine other sorts of lives. In doing so, they present a pathway to greater empathy and a means of breaking down some boundaries in understanding 'others'.[75] It is for this reason that Shohat advocates crossing perceived identity divides by taking a relational approach to studying Mizrahim which acknowledges a greater awareness of interconnection across peoples, places, and times.[76] Whitlock compliments this perspective, arguing that autobiography "can personalize and humanize categories of people whose experiences are frequently unseen and unheard".[77] She further notes that autobiographies create "a space for dialogue" yet are simultaneously "potent yet flawed weapons for cross-cultural engagement and the pursuit of human rights" because while creating an opportunity for empathy their affective equalities can be very "easily co-opted into propaganda".[78] This is a concern shared by Mizrahi memoirist Roya Hakakian in relation to her own work, explaining that:

> when you belong to a breed on the verge of extinction, a Jewish woman from the Islamic Republic of Iran living in the United States [of America], one small slip can turn you into a poster child for someone else's crusade. And you know of nothing more suspect than a crusade.[79]

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[72] See for instance Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*.
[73] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 1-4, 8, 13, 18, 88; Christine Prentice, Vijay Devadas, and Henry Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations: Perspectives on Translocation in a Global Age', in *Cultural Transformations: perspectives on translocation in a global age*, eds. Christine Prentice, Vijay Devadas, and Henry Johnson (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2010), xv.
[74] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 7.
[75] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 2-3, 7, 11, 13; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 14; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 344, 352-354.
[76] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'.
[77] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3.
[78] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3.
[79] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 14.

Nevertheless, despite the danger of texts being coopted as propaganda, Whitlock makes the valuable point that memoir "can produce an openness to narrative that decentres us and allows us to think beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own".[80]

Just as the personal is political, Mizrahi life stories, and the personal motivations of their authors in creating them, situate their memories as acts of present day intervention and identity creation.[81] Ewa Domańska argues that every activity is actually a way of searching for, and creating, self and meaning.[82] She also observes that "we are turning to the past because the present is not sufficient for us".[83] In other words, we are now in a situation where in order for the present to feel meaning, change or be renewed, different pasts and perspectives must be drawn upon. This constructive fluidity is important because narratives create and shape identities. What memories are drawn upon to form identities will in turn shape what is constructed and our relationship to such representations.

Displaced Mizrahim have now reached an age where they are genuinely concerned that memories of their life experiences and knowledge about their history, culture, and customs will be lost.[84] Those who were displaced as children or young adults are now middle-aged, while those who were adults at the time are now elderly or have already passed away.[85] The fact that the next generation has grown up in very different circumstances and contexts to their parents has made the issue of loss and the risk of continued disjuncture a real and pertinent one.[86] Mizrahi memoirs record life stories filled with personal challenges, achievements, and nostalgic reminiscences in the context of the upheaval of displacement, dispersal, and resettlement. Their authors' motivations for writing include the hope that their writing might directly intervene against forgetting. They are often framed as an

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[80] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 13.
[81] Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-Interview)', 257, 265; Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450; Prentice, Devadas, Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xii.
[82] Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-Interview)', 257, 265.
[83] Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-Interview)', 265.
[84] For example, Sabiha Abi David Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember* (Caulfield South: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001)*;* Violette Shamash, *Memories of Eden: A Journey through Jewish Baghdad* (Virginia Water: Forum Books Ltd., 2008)*;* Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue: Shoreline, 2007)*,* Fathi, *Full Circle*.
[85] Shamash, *Memories of Eden*, 228-229*;* Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember;* Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008). For example, Shamash (who was born in 1912) wrote her memoirs at an elderly age and passed away in 2006. Jawary also wrote her memoirs in her elderly years. Zonana is middle-aged, and Sabar is keen to preserve the memories of his father who is starting to advance in years.
[86] Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Andre Aciman, *False Papers: essays on Exile and Memory* (New York: Picador, 2000); Andre Aciman, ed. *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: The New Press, 1999). While this is a theme that emerges within many of the memoirs, Zonana, Schinasi-Silver, and Sabar all make this central within their life narratives, and Aciman too becomes especially preoccupied by the disjuncture of displacement and exile.

attempt to record, preserve, or correct, history and culture, a personal account witnessing against injustice, and an attempt to bridge and heal the disjuncture between generations.[87] Interestingly, these motivations are generally consistent with Whitlock's perspective of autobiography as a:

> force to be reckoned with in the politics of consent and critique . . .[that is] deeply engaged in the social and discursive production of identities . . . [and] instrumental in debates about social justice.[88]

Horesh, for example, overtly declares in his memoir that he intends for his writing to act as an educational intervention, noting:

> I wrote this book to tell the secrets of the past, in the fervent hope that it will help mould a better future. I hope that my autobiography will shed some light on the problems that still dominate our lives in this world, and allow us to put some of our misery behind us. Otherwise, may God help us to avoid the consequences of mad acts in a mad world.[89]

Several memoirists explicitly state their hope that their memoirs might act as prompts for peace. They offer their personal stories as a reminder of better times in the past within communities which are said to have once adhered to a highly respectful multicultural cosmopolitanism.[90] It should be noted that even if these memoirs tend towards a nostalgic tone, injustices and atrocities are nevertheless mentioned. The memoirists write with a conscious awareness of present conflicts, and use more peaceful pasts as a rhetorical prompt in the hope of greater mutual understanding.[91] While some writers dispute the historical existence this peaceful cosmopolitan coexistence, it is still a valid remembrance of a subjective experience.[92] It is worth noting that authors who emphasise a continual separation between Jews and Muslims are generally influenced by Arab nationalist or political Zionist perspectives. Shohat observes that:

> Zionist . . . historiography concerning Jews within Islam consists of a morbidly selective 'tracing the dots' from pogrom to pogrom . . . I do not mean to idealise the position of Jews within Islam. Rather, I argue that Zionist discourse in a sense has hijacked Jews from their Judeo-Islamic political geography and subordinated them into the European Jewish chronicle of *shtetl* and pogrom.[93]

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[87] For example, Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Aciman, *False Papers*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*, 13.
[88] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 13.
[89] Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*, 4.
[90] For example Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*
[91] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*
[92] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 341-342.
[93] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 341-342.

While Mizrahi memoirists mention the tensions, injustices and atrocities that their communities suffered, many also include fond memories of the more peaceful times they enjoyed and so see displacement from their prior homes as a loss, although there are some who nonetheless view it as a painful but necessary liberation.[94] The remembrance of more peaceful times of unity between neighbours at a personal level, even in the midst of inter-group conflict, speaks to a human truth for the need of justice and peace amidst ongoing regional tensions, conflict, and war.[95] Such a stance echoes Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche's understanding of memory as "a symbolic representation of the past embedded in social action" that consists of "a set of practices and interventions".[96] Joan Tumblety also argues that even if emotionally charged, such writing has historical legitimacy because:

> historians [have] increasingly accepted that the authors and subjects of their primary source material interpreted the world through a grid of thoughts and feelings – expressed in ideologically charged language – whose workings have to be grasped in order for the 'truth' of the past to be understood.[97]

In her memoir, Shamash remembers the good times shared with Muslim neighbours as well as the atrocity of the Farhud, and the injustice of displacement.[98] Nevertheless she writes:

> I was sad to leave the city. My generation witnessed Baghdad's blossoming . . . It was where the Muslims and we lived side by side until relationships began to sour and we were attacked without provocation . . . We were treated as equals and accepted on our own merit until the poison of Nazism and Arab nationalism entered the bloodstream . . . But although the country rejected us, we know our neighbours were not devils at heart. Many were good to us. They themselves felt embarrassed to see us pack up and go because, only a day earlier, we had been good

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[94] Lucette Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007); Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Collette Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile: A Memoir with Recipes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001); Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Naim Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009); Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2007); Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 2004); Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.*

[95] G. J. Ashworth, Brian Graham, and J. E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 3; Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 3; Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 224-225.

[96] Alon Confino and Peter Fritszche quoted in Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4.

[97] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 3.

[98] Shamash, *Memories of Eden.*

> friends. Too late. Once uprooted from Baghdad, we scattered all over the world like feathers from a pillow, never to be reunited.[99]

Focused on displacement and resettlement, Mizrahi memoirs offer a different type of narrative to those generally seen within the life writing of Middle Eastern Muslims or Ashkenazic Jewish authors, yet they retain strong interconnections in conversation with each. In this way, Mizrahi memoirs are themselves very much entangled with the memories, stories, histories, and textual circulation of others.[100] It is worth noting that these 'others' are those who would be seen as distinct and separate if only viewed through a competitive memory lens.[101] The life stories and remembrances in Mizrahi memoirs easily act as an intervention against stereotyped assumptions and exclusive identities that are readily reinforced within popular media.[102] They bridge those easy divides, blurring and mixing up categories reminding us of the far greater complexities of connection between histories, memories, lives, and identities within reality. Beverley Milton-Edwards has observed of the media of the United States of America, which continues to influence Western media more broadly, that:

> in some respects, particularly after the events of 9/11, it is difficult to see how the American media can represent the Middle East objectively. The media – reflecting popular trends and government sentiment – thus reinforce prevailing opinion rather than try to turn the tide to it.[103]

Mizrahi memoirs reveal to a far greater extent the complexity of the identities involved and have the potential to create the "productive pause" needed in order to question media assumptions and build empathy across divides.[104] Ironically, reflecting the dynamics of screen memory, the very circumstances that have given rise to the perceived conceptual division of East from West have also inadvertently brought forth a possible counterbalance in the form of these Mizrahi narratives.[105] They challenge the simplistic notion of this division, as well as reminding us of the circumstances and historical legacy of pain that brought this about. Even here, however, the dynamics of these memories and their exact intervention is not always straight forward or clear cut, as a diversity of perspectives and voices are present within this collection of texts. Yet these entanglements and

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[99] Shamash, *Memories of Eden.*
[100] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 7.
[101] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5-7.
[102] Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 252.
[103] Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 252.
[104] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 201.
[105] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-22.

multidirectional dynamics amongst Mizrahi memoirs as a group enhance rather than detract from their potential to prompt a shift in understanding among readers. Rothberg observes that:

> Memory's anachronistic quality – its bringing together of now and then, here and there – is actually the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of older ones.[106]

My analysis of Mizrahi memoirs throughout this dissertation reveals the creative potential of memory to be remapped and form new identities. The potential to create anew a different way of seeing or being is one that is open to both authors and readers, although this option is one not always recognised. Memoirists, through the practice of research, reflection, and writing, must, in framing their experience as narrative, engage in a process of sense- and meaning-making that can have therapeutic benefits.[107] For readers of these memoirs, the possibility of learning about and imagining different lives and experiences can open up new ways of seeing and understanding their own self, others, and history.[108] These new understandings and configurations may offer an antidote to the competitive escalation and rhetoric of division that is rife in contemporary discourse. Just as Whitlock observed in relation to the life writing of Middle Eastern Muslims, here, regarding Mizrahi memoirs, I am concerned with the capacity of this life writing to "perform small acts of cultural translation in a time of precarious life".[109]

My reflexive position

In this dissertation we discuss sensitive topics and loaded identities that are deeply embedded in identity politics, so it is important that I am transparent about my own subjective position as a woman and a scholar.[110] Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath, both inspired by Greg Dening's perspective on historical writing as performance, argue that: "We have lost history when . . . authors cannot recognise or refuse to display their own presence".[111] Self reflexivity is vital because:

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[106] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.
[107] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9-10; Rosanne Kennedy, 'Indigenous Australian Arts of Return: Mediating Perverse Archives', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 89; Kent D. Harber and James W. Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory*, ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 359-387.
[108] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 13.
[109] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 23.
[110] McGrath, 'Reflexivity and the self-line', 55-58; Ann Curthoys, 'The personal is historical: writing about the Freedom Ride of 1965', in *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration,* eds. Ann Curthoys and Anne McGrath (Melbourne: Monash Publications in History, 2000), 80; Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.
[111] Greg Dening quoted by McGrath, 'Reflexivity and the self-line', 55.

> Potentially understanding her or his lived experience better, the writer understands the emotions of history better. While the inclusion of personal experience is no egalitarian solution, in losing full disguise, authors share their common humanity with their historical subjects and their readers.[112]

Consequently, I will first position myself in terms of my gender and heritage, and outline how my background has inevitably shaped my perspective as a researcher. I do so in full awareness that this too constitutes a performative act of narrative self-construction – but one which, I hope, will aid transparency, dialogue, and understanding.[113] As Whitlock says of the study of contemporary topics, "this is the world we inhabit, and where we engage in our most intimate works of self-invention".[114] I shall inevitably use labels to express elements of what I am and what I am not, but I want to emphasise that I believe that "the 'other' can only be relational, always also within us and one of us".[115]

I am not Jewish. I am not Arabic, nor am I Middle Eastern, or North African. Whenever I speak about my research, however, I am usually bombarded with questions like: 'Are you Jewish? Is anyone in your family Jewish? Are you *sure* you aren't Jewish? You know, you look kind of Jewish, don't you think?'. Often, when I reply that I am not Jewish, nor is my ancestry, I am met with surprise and disbelief. People then tend to follow up with 'Well, *why* are you doing this topic then? Surely, you *are* Jewish – right?' and 'Well if you're not Jewish, then why are you bothering?' These questions have been asked of me by many women and men of a wide variety of ages in both academic contexts and in everyday conversations. I have been asked by self-identifying Jews as well as non-Jewish people. I admit that I found this confronting because, as a cultural historian, I have never encountered this experience in previous projects.[116] Yet these reactions and questionings make sense if we look at them in terms of identity politics. They demonstrate that identity politics is still a potent force both within, and outside, the university.[117]

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[112] McGrath, 'Reflexivity and the self-line', 58.
[113] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 1, 3, 7
[114] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.
[115] Seyla Benhabib quoted in Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 7.
[116] When I was working on early modern English ballads, for example, no-one asked if I were actually English. When I investigated classical literature, again, there was no mention of if I might be an Italian descended from the Romans. Likewise, when researching Greek cafes in Australia, I was never questioned about if were of Greek heritage or not in order to be interested in pursuing the topic or to consider it worth pursuit.
[117] Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.

To clarify: the comments, suggestions, and 'advice' that "assumes the person doing the study, shouldn't do it because of their background" are racist.[118] To insinuate that the topic under study here is not worth pursuing because it is Jewish is overtly anti-Semitic. Such questioning, however, flags, from the outset of the conversation, that the topic is overtly political and contentious.[119] It also signals that people feel the need to immediately assess subject positions before engaging in further discussion.[120] A concerning element in these interactions is the repeated attempt to discover and project onto me any form of stereotyped 'Jewishness' that the speaker can imagine, however minute, including physical appearance, as a way pathway to understanding why the topic might be of interest to me. People often try hard to make what they see fit into their own predetermined frameworks and prejudices. For many, it is far harder to try – with open eyes – to reassess, question, learn, and thereby change their existing assumptions altogether. Despite this, however, the first place to start is always through dialogue.

Although I hold equity, balance, and the search for 'truth' as core principles, my subjectivity will inevitably affect how I approach and conduct research.[121] I am a cisgender woman and an intersectional feminist.[122] This position affects how I perceive myself and the world in general – a world where the core power structures remain white-dominated, heteronormative, and patriarchal.[123] I have had a privileged upbringing because I was raised in a middle-class household that valued education. I went to a private Roman Catholic girls' high-school before going on to study at the Australian National University – a member of the research intensive Australian Group of Eight (Go8) coalition.[124] As a cultural historian

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118 Inger Mewburn, 'Unhelpful PhD advice', *The Thesis Whisperer*, 24 February 2016, accessed 2016, <https://thesiswhisperer.com/2016/02/24/unhelpful-phd-advice/>. Inger Mewburn includes mention of my situation along with other similar experiences of PhD candidates through consultations prior to her post.

119 Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.

120 Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders'; Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.

121 Curthoys, 'The personal is historical', 80; Donna Merwick, 'Postmodernity and the release of the creative imagination', in *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration,* eds. Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (Melbourne: Monash Publications in History, 2000), 22; Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources,* 2; Curthoys and Docker, *Is history fiction?*, 5-6. Here I agree with Walter Benjamin's questioning of history as purely "objective and truth-telling" and "essentially neutral in relation to power," as articulated by Merwick (2000: 22). History, rather is deeply entangled with the structures of power, shaped at the very least, by the innate bias of its authors. Greater self awareness and transparency can help reduce this, but not mitigate it entirely. As Howell and Prevenier suggest, to choose sources, read, and write in an open and "reliable" fashion is fundamentally key (2001: 2).

122 Anna Carastathis, 'The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory', *Philosophy Compass* 9 (2014): 304-314; Jarune Uwujaren and Jamie Utt, 'Why Our Feminism Must Be Intersectional (And 3 Ways to Practice It)', *Everyday Feminism*, 11 January 2015, accessed 2015, <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/why-our-feminism-must-be-intersectional/>.

123 Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.

124 Curthoys, 'The personal is historical', 75; Curthoys and Docker, *Is history fiction?*, 5-6, 181. By being purposely self reflexive, I am following a postmodern call advocated by Curthoys to engage with historical writing with greater awareness of cultural specificity, the limits of our practice, and being self-consciously open about our own role as scholars in creating a representation. Curthoys states that (2006: 75): "By saying

specialising in memory studies, I strive towards a more equitable writing of history and an awareness of the present that is inclusive and supportive of human complexity and diversity. I am also passionate about interdisciplinary work that crosses and breaks down boundaries. Furthermore, as a scholar I feel an ethical duty to help bring to light histories and stories that are less well known, left unheard, or are accidentally or intentionally silenced.[125]

I am a researcher and an educator. I feel a keen sense of social justice to assist, empower, and build capacity in individuals and communities for the growth of equity and joint improvement of the world around us. I believe that it is essential that the knowledge we create should feed back into society and that we should listen to and acknowledge diverse knowledge systems. Through improved knowledge and education we can enhance agency and the capacity to choose and act through greater awareness rather than blindly accepting the inevitability of inequity within the status quo.

I am an Australian citizen of Anglo-Celtic heritage; this geographic and cultural position has implications on my perspective as a scholar. I was born 'white' into a 'safe' and 'Western' nation that is firmly situated in the geographic south but that enjoys the post-Cold War geopolitical and economic benefits of being part of the 'global North'. Australia is a multicultural country of many peoples; it is marked by the crossing of many paths and many histories.[126] This is so even in the nation's capital, Canberra, where I grew up and am currently based. Canberra is a growing city with a fluid population that often shifts and moves in constant interchange with other cities interstate and overseas as academics, federal public servants, and those working in defence circulate on regular exchanges and postings. As a 'native' Canberran I am used to transition and impermanence. My own surroundings and friendships, apart from a close and stable core, are characterised and informed by movement, flow, and interconnection with people and places elsewhere.

'I,' many argue, we are not aggrandizing but rather relativising ourselves, drawing attention to the possibility of other views, interpretations, and ways of representing the past, to the limited and contingent nature of historical knowledge. By saying 'I,' we leave the reader freer to judge and weigh up the historical narrative we have offered, and ourselves the space to admit to what we don't know, or cannot figure out".

[125] McGrath, 'Reflexivity and the self-life', 61-63; Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources,* 14-16, 90, 107, 112-114; Curthoys and Docker, *Is history fiction?,* 155, 180-181. As McGrath has keenly observed (2000: 63), "Historians' journeys into the past both bring them away from and towards their self. Each project presents opportunities to struggle not only with distant others, but with old and new selves in the process of recreation". I would like readers to be aware of where I am coming from as we embark together through this dissertation.

[126] John Goldlust, 'Movement, Margins, and Identities', in *Sociology: Place, Time & Division,* eds. Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 349-356); Gillian Polack, ed. *Baggage: Tales of Speculative Fiction* (Rockville: Borgo Press, 2014).

My family, very recent arrivals to multicultural Australia, originally came from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. From a family of migrants, therefore, I am familiar with the possibility that different generations may have multiple nostalgic connections to varying overseas homelands.[127] Through a strong familial story-telling tradition I have witnessed and experienced the interlacing and intrusion of different times, meanings, and landscapes into the narratives and perception of sites, people, and cityscapes in the here-and-now.[128]

An interweaving and intermixing of faiths and philosophies is common in Australia owing to the diversity of cultural and religious communities now dwelling here.[129] I am consequently no stranger to the influence that migration and multiculturalism can have on families and their beliefs. My family now includes Roman Catholics and Protestants of a variety of different persuasions including 'traditional', evangelical, and Baptist. I married into a family whose members respectively span Russian Orthodox, neo-pagan, and atheist perspectives. In a prime example of entangled complexity, a Greek Orthodox priest presided over my wedding in a previously Anglican traditional sandstone church built in memory of English religious architecture, the interior of which has now been transformed into an Eastern Orthodox space. Thus the church references both the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. I have lived experience and an appreciation for the flows of multidirectional memory and how quickly impassioned and intense differences can become a focus for people with a volatile mix of different personal, religious, and political perspectives and philosophies. I have also seen how very different belief-sets can peacefully coexist in the same space through open dialogue and mutual respect.

Although living in a multicultural society arguably brings with it a greater appreciation of other cultures, I am keenly aware that other people have had very different experiences from mine.[130] My religious heritage and family upbringing as a Christian means that although I am able to recognise the personal and cultural importance of religious belief, there will also be specific nuances within Judaism and Jewish history that Jews themselves will recognise with greater immediacy and be able to articulate far more clearly than I. I do, however, bring to this project the vital perspective of being an 'outsider' – someone who

127 Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory'.
128 Aciman, *Letters of Transit*. Aciman also experiences and describes this in his concept of 'exile'.
129 Goldlust, 'Movement, Margins, and Identities'; Polack, *Baggage*.
130 Goldlust, 'Movement, Margins, and Identities'; Polack, *Baggage*; Carastathis, 'The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory'; Uwujaren and Utt, 'Why Our Feminism Must Be Intersectional'.

may be able to see certain patterns and interactions far more clearly than those who are steeped in their 'norm'.[131]

Why this topic and why this approach?

In this dissertation I closely examine Mizrahi memoirs, offering an investigation of the myriad of experiences, understandings of identity, and relationships with the past and memory that flow from transnational displacement and subjective life-writing in a post-displacement context. I came to this topic in a roundabout way while looking through an archival finding aid on sources for Jewish history in Australia.[132] When I discovered that there were only a few lines devoted in reference to Middle Eastern Jewish refugees while there were pages and pages devoted to European and British Jewish experiences in Australia, this sparked my concern as well as interest.[133] What I saw as an inequitable 'gap' in the literature prompted further investigation and has led to the development of this topic and a focus on memoir because of the limited collection of records in official archives. Because of my own cultural heritage, I am indeed an 'outsider'; but one, I hope, who can thereby offer alternative perspectives and different insights.

As a cultural historian I have specifically chosen to take an interdisciplinary approach. Mizrahim have traversed the globe as a result of their displacement and dispersal. In reflection of this diversity it is also necessary to travel through different scholarly fields where new resonances and intersections can be found and brought together to better understand and reflect their experiences. Discipline boundaries can be helpful, but a far more enriched and holistic way of understanding the true complexity of humanity (especially in a displacement context) can be found by crossing them, using multiple 'lenses', and the inherent strengths of a relational approach.[134] Consequently, although this dissertation is firmly grounded in approaches from memory studies, cultural history, and literature, I also draw upon trauma studies, politics, psychology, and sensory anthropology.[135] Because this current chapter is intended to provide an overview and orientation, the core theories and frameworks used throughout this dissertation are instead discussed more in depth in *Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements*. We turn now to look

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131 Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders'.
132 Malcom J. Turnbull, *Safe Haven: Records of the Jewish Experience in Australia,* Research Guide No. 12 (Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 1999).
133 Turnbull, *Safe Haven.*
134 Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources,* 88-89; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'.
135 Please see the full citation list at the end of this dissertation.

at what is understood in this dissertation by the term 'Mizrahi' as well as the displacement itself that they experienced.

Identities: defining Mizrahim

The general term 'Mizrahi' (and its plurals as 'Mizrahi Jews' or 'Mizrahim') emerged relatively recently and remains a contentious, debated, and highly political label meant to denote a particular collective Jewish identity. 'Mizrahi' is associated with the Hebrew word '*Mizrah'* meaning 'East', thereby very generally defining Mizrahim as being 'Eastern Jews'.[136] In practice the term is used as a very loose enthocultural category describing Jews who have heritage, or originate from, the now predominantly Muslim Arabic regions of the Middle East and North Africa, but also parts of Asia, specifically India and Pakistan. Previously, many Jews now known or described as Mizrahim were simply labelled 'Sephardi' or 'Sephardim', 'Eastern' or 'Oriental', as opposed to being of a European cultural or religious Ashkenazic Jewish tradition.[137] The designation of 'Mizrahi', however, refers more to geographic origin rather than exclusively to religious practice. For example, some Mizrahim are Sephardic in their religious practice of Judaism, but not all are. Localised traditions, religious persuasion, philosophies, and languages varied greatly across the region.[138] The use of these variable and sometimes interchangeable terms makes writing about origins and histories particularly challenging, but also very fascinating.

Identities are multifaceted, constructed, and performed through interaction and dialogue with others.[139] This is so for 'Mizrahi' identities, just as it is for other Jewish and non-Jewish identities alike. In most general knowledge, however, the perception of what constitutes Jewish identity and culture is strongly influenced by Ashkenazi (European Jewish) history and practices.[140] However, as Rachel Solomin explains:

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136 'Mizrah', in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions,* ed. John Bowker, Oxford Reference Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), accessed 2016, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview/Main&entry=t101.e4841>.

137 Peter Y. Medding, ed. *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), vii-viii, xi; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 10; Zion Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel: Rethinking the Sociopolitical Paradigm', in *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*, ed. Zion Zohar (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 300-327. Please note that these terms are still being used interchangeably in academic literature which can create a lot of definitional confusion.

138 Rachel M. Solomin, 'Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews: The Jewish world is more ethnically and racially diverse than many people realise', *My Jewish Learning,* 24 February 2009, accessed 2017, <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sephardic-ashkenazic-mizrahi-jews-jewish-ethnic-diversity/>; Norman A. Stillman, 'The Judeo-Arabic Heritage', in *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times,* ed. Zion Zohar (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 40-54; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry.*

139 Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders'; Carastathis, 'The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory'.

140 Solomin, 'Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews'; Stillman, 'The Judeo-Arabic Heritage', 40.

> Shared Jewish history, rituals, laws, and values unify an international Jewish community. However, the divergent histories of Jewish communities and their contacts with other cultural influences distinguish Jewish ethnic groups from one another, giving each a unique way of being Jewish.[141]

Jewish heritage and culture is generally split into three main categories: Ashkenazi, originating from Europe; Sephardic, originating from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal); and Mizrahi – Jews originating from the Middle East, North Africa, and sometimes Asia.[142] A very ancient community, Mizrahim from Iraq can trace their history back to the sixth century BC, namely the famous Babylonian Exile of 586 BC.[143] Over the centuries Jewish communities spread throughout the Mediterranean and Europe. In classical times, the majority in the West – Ashkenazim – were shaped under the Roman Empire and influenced by living within societies dominated by both Hellenistic-Roman culture and later European Christianity.[144] Conversely, the Eastern Jews – Mizrahim – flourished in Babylon, producing a celebrated renaissance of Judaic culture including such important theological writing as the Babylonian Talmud.[145] Later, the Muslim conquest of the Middle East resulted in Islam and Arabic Middle Eastern culture profoundly influencing the Mizrahi way of life.[146] Bernard Lewis and Mark Cohen, for instance, both argue that this historical divergence between the dominant cultures within the West and the East divided Judaism into these two major groups, that is, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, with Iberian Sephardim forming a common link of exchange between them.[147] Emily Benichou Gottreich, however, argues that communities were more connected, observing that "it is estimated that between 85 and 90 percent of the world's Jews lived in the Muslim world during the medieval period" and there is "copious evidence of cross-cutting, transregional ties between Jews throughout the Mediterranean region in all periods".[148]

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141 Solomin, 'Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews'.
142 Zohar, 'A Global Perspective on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: An Introductory Essay', in *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times,* ed. Zion Zohar (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 4-9; Solomin, 'Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews'.
143 Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 4; *The Holy Bible containing the Gold and New Testaments: King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). See also Jeremiah 40-44 (KJV).
144 Zohar, 'A Global Perspective on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry', 4-9; Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross.*
145 Zohar, 'A Global Perspective on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry', 4-9; Stillman, 'The Judeo-Arabic Heritage'.
146 Zohar, 'A Global Perspective on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry', 5-6; Stillman, 'The Judeo-Arabic Heritage'; Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* viii-xi.
147 Bernard Lewis and Mark Cohen quoted in Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 6; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 5-9. The height of Jewish Babylonian cultural achievement was between the fourth and tenth centuries.
148 Emily Benichou Gottreich, 'Historicising the Concept of Arab Jews in the Maghrib', *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* 98 (2008): 435, 443.

For Mizrahim, when conceptualising and expressing their own identity, there has always been a lively tension as well as interconnection between the transnational, national, and local levels. More recently, discourse surrounding the construction of Mizrahi identity for both Mizrahim and sholars has tended to centre around the question of if they are actually 'Arab Jews' or not. The often contentious term 'Arab Jew' is often used interchangeably by intellectuals in relation to Mizrahim as this identity designation brings with it political implications. Lital Levy argues that it was only in the modern era that a more distinctive and "self-ascriptive" Arab Jewish identity emerged through:

> Jewish involvement in modern Arab thought, culture, and politics . . . [which occurred] in two distinct phases. The first, from the final decades of the nineteenth century through the end of the Ottoman Empire, was based in Beirut and Cairo, while the second, from 1920 to the early 1950s, took place mainly in Baghdad and Cairo.[149]

These were periods of "intense and explicit negotiation with modernity for both Hebrew and Arabic cultures as they underwent concurrent processes of revival" which enabled "Arab Jewish intellectuals to reimagine their identities and redefine themselves" and to "inscribe themselves and their communities into the emerging Arab collective".[150] In the latter interwar period, the "formation of Arab Jewish identity" was very much influenced by "the rise of Arab nationalism" and local expressions of "patriotism" to their home nations as well as "communist, and anticolonial causes".[151] A third phase and shift in identity emerged yet again with the displacement, dispersal, and departure of Mizrahim from their home nations in the mid- to later-twentieth century, leading to a further concentration and politicisation of this identity.[152] To provide some context, the memoirs examined in this thesis project fall predominantly within this third phase, although at times I contextually refer to events from the second.

While Ashkenazim and Mizrahim are united religiously by both being Jewish, there are thousands of years of historical, cultural, and political differences between them, making each group undeniably Jewish but also quite culturally distinct.[153] These cultural differences, however, should not be seen as dilution or dangerously divisive but rather as an example of

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[149] Lital Levy, 'Historicising the Concept of Arab Jews in the "Mashriq"', *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* 98 (2008): 465.
[150] Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 465.
[151] Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 466-467.
[152] Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 452-469.
[153] Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross*; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry*; Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times.*

the long endurance and dynamic diversity present in Judaism as a whole.[154] Unfortunately, however, contemporary conflicts, geopolitics, and inequality at times shatter this ideal, creating tensions and perceived 'racial' hierarchies.[155]

The construction of categories does become overt in the context of prejudicial 'ethnic' divisions and structural power and economic inequalities.[156] For example, in the State of Israel, Ashkenazim are disproportionately represented in leadership and higher education compared to Mizrahim who, despite being the majority in population, have faced "decades of entrenched discrimination".[157] This is because of the "painful legacy of the 1950s and 1960s" in the State of Israel that saw ethnic and national origin of newly arrived Jews be used as the basis for which citizens had easier or more limited access to housing, education, employment, and leadership opportunities and ethic segregation in Israeli towns.[158] In the State of Israel today there continues to be a struggle over identity politics and for equity and Mizrahi recognition.[159] With an emphasis often placed on Israeli 'melting pot' assimilation, it is a struggle frequently overlooked as "there are no official statistics on the gaps between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews" despite on-going differences in opportunities.[160] In practice, generalised distinctions also often become blurred and many Jews both in the State of Israel and throughout the world live a "multi-layered Jewish existence" that draws upon multiple Jewish cultural backgrounds and traditions.[161]

As a construct and collective identity, Middle Eastern Mizrahim are often defined exclusively in difference, or opposition to, Western Ashkenazim.[162] Ella Shohat argues that

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154 Solomin, 'Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews'.
155 Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Heyes, 'Identity Politics'.
156 Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel'; Stillman, 'The Judeo-Arabic Heritage', 41; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.*
157 Michal Zak, 'Mizrahi Jews remind Israel of its hidden Other', *Middle East Eye,* 16 March 2015, accessed 2017, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/mizrahi-jews-remind-israel-hidden-other-513815657>; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel'; Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* x.
158 Jerusalem Post, 'Mizrahi culture', *The Jerusalem Post,* 7 November 2016, accessed 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=460110>; Solomin, 'Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews'; Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel'; Stillman, 'The Judeo-Arabic Heritage', 41.
159 Zak, 'Mizrahi Jews remind Israel of its hidden Other'; Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel'; Heyes, 'Identity Politics'. Rueven Gal, an artist, graphically showed in a photograph how only 9 out of the 400 pages of his high-school history text book included Mizrahi histories and experiences compared to Ashkenazim. Mizrahi are often described as "backward" and "primitive" in such texts.
160 Zak, 'Mizrahi Jews remind Israel of its hidden Other'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel', 305-307.
161 Solomin, 'Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Stillman, 'The Judeo-Arabic Heritage'; Gillian Polack, 'Food and family fictions – exploring the origins of an Australian Jewish cuisine', Unpublished and used with author permission, 1-8.
162 Zak, 'Mizrahi Jews remind Israel of its hidden Other'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel'; Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* vii-viii.

being Mizrahi – or, to be contentious, an 'Arab-Jew' – has been a taboo identity following the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel and the occurrence of subsequent Middle Eastern conflicts.[163] In conventional discourse 'Jews' and 'Arabs' are now generally perceived as polar opposites, a false perception that has been exacerbated by politicised media since September 11.[164] Shohat argues that:

> Since the beginnings of European Zionism, the Jews of Islam [Mizrahim] have faced, for the first time in their history, the imposed dilemma of choosing between Jewishness and Arabness in a geopolitical context that has perpetuated the equation between Arabness and Middle Easterness and Islam, on the one hand, and between Jewishness and Europeanness and Westernness, on the other.[165]

Currently, there is also much debate over whether the term Mizrahi is merely descriptive, or distinguishing, if it denotes a particular identity or self image, and if it is self-adopted or actually applied by 'outsiders'.[166] As previously mentioned, often it is used alongside or in combination with the term 'Arab Jew', a "concept gaining increasing acceptance and purchase in academic discourse" because of its significant "symbolic importance".[167] As Lital Levy explains:

> Whichever way you look at it, the not-so-simple fact of Jews who are Arab or Arabs who are Jewish raises all sorts of problems and possibilities ripe for exploration, interpretation, and manipulation – and people are beginning to notice.[168]

Emily Benichou Gottreich and Lital Levy, in the pursuit of an improved understanding of historical specificity, have sought to historicise the concept of 'Arab Jews'.[169] Levy asks specifically "what kind of political and cultural work has the concept of the 'Arab Jew' performed at different times?"[170] She argues that this identity has always been intensely political and was strongly influenced by reactions against colonialism.[171] Levy observes that during the "modern Arabic renaissance" and rise of pan-Arabism, many Middle Eastern Jewish intellectuals embraced the "language-based regional Arab identity" which "facilitated alliances of like-minded, progressive (self-perceived 'enlightened') individuals

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163 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 218.
164 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 204-206, 208, 212-225; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 214, 221-222; Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel', 304.
165 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 215.
166 Medding, *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews,* xi; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 211, 221-222; Zohar, 'Sephardim and Oriental Jews in Israel'.
167 Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 453.
168 Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 453.
169 Gottreich, 'Arab Jews in the Maghrib', 433-451; Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 452-469.
170 Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriqu', 459.
171 Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 460, 463.

across communal lines".[172] The idea of Arab Jewish identity also "permeated the public sphere" during the 1920s–1950s through the Arabic press as "Jewish writers and intellectuals in Egypt and Iraq mobilised the term [Arab Jew] to express either a cultural or political affinity with the Arab collective" with the aim to "convince others that Jews could belong organically to an Arab nation".[173] Conversely, the "evocation of Arab Jewish identity by [select] contemporary Israeli intellectuals" today tends to be done explicitly for its political utility as a statement of "*dis*association or *un*affiliation with a national project – a rejection of the Eurocentric terms of Israeli national identity".[174] It provides, as Gottreich argues, a political capital drawn upon by activists from both the left and right orientation in politics, and, as Levy observes, can become especially powerful when evoked as a commodified symbol.[175] Gottreich argues that currently the identity construct of being an 'Arab Jew':

> (1) . . . is largely an identity of exile; (2) . . . implies a particular politics of knowledge vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and larger Zionist narratives(s); (3) . . . was originally theorised from within the frameworks of, and remains especially prominent in, specific academic fields, namely, literary and cultural studies.[176]

She also emphasises that:

> conceptualisations of the Arab Jew reveal a strong link not only between exile and personal identity but also between exile and *national* identity, a sentiment, not coincidentally, often felt most keenly at a distance.[177]

This is an observation that is corroborated by my study of Mizrahi memoirs, where the original home nation of the memoirists predominantly takes precedence in terms of self-identification, for example, as an Egyptian Jew or an Iraqi Jew. It is important to note, however, that the motivations of memoirists are not always as explicitly political as those of intellectuals mentioned above, even if the articulation of their identities has political implications. Writing for the preservation of history and their personal and familial memories takes precedence. Interestingly, Gottreich has called for a more interdisciplinary approach when studying Mizrahim and has criticised scholars for not paying much attention to the notion of memory and time in relation to Arab Jewish (Mizrahi) identity

[172] Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 460, 463.
[173] Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 461-462.
[174] Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 464-465.
[175] Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 454.
[176] Gottreich, 'Arab Jews in the Maghrib', 433.
[177] Gottreich, 'Arab Jews in the Maghrib', 436.

nor its relationship with Arab nationalism and modernity.[178] My project goes some way towards filling this gap by drawing upon multiple disciplines and making memory, identity, and history the core focus of my exploration of Mizrahi identity as represented in the memoirs under study.

In my own research, I have found that while the term 'Mizrahi' is often used in academic circles, the authors of the memoirs I study do not see themselves as such.[179] Instead, they have a strong tendency to self-identity in national or localised terms. For example, 'I am an Egyptian Jew' or 'I am a Baghdadi Jew'. This finding was corroborated by speaking in-person with Egyptian Australian Jews at the Limmud-Oz conference I attended in 2011.[180] I do, however, use the terms 'Mizrahi' and 'Mizrahim' throughout this dissertation, because they provide a useful analytical category as I consider complex identities and life-stories that span different nations, especially in the context of displacement where there is often hybridity, ambiguities, 'grey zones', and overlaps.[181]

The displacement and the current context

The historical event, or more precisely series of events, that changed forever the lives of Mizrahim and which pervades their memoirs, is their mass displacement and 'exodus' from the Middle East and North Africa in the mid- to later-twentieth century. As I mentioned above, in terms of general knowledge, this constitutes a lesser known narrative within Middle Eastern history and twentieth century Jewish history.[182] Even in the State of Israel, Mizrahim "were long silenced and kept at the margins of the national historiographical, as well as literary, canon".[183]

Mizrahim in different locations across the Middle East and North Africa experienced both internal and external displacement – although ultimately the majority became dispersed

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[178] Gottreich, 'Arab Jews in the Maghrib', 436-437, 455, 459.
[179] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 218; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Bagdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Saul Silas Fathi, *Full Circle: Escape from Baghdad and the Return* (New York: Saul Silas Fathi, 2005); Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.* Shabi also tends to articulate her identity as of identity of Iraqi Jewish heritage even though she does mention Mizrahim.
[180] *Limmud-Oz 2011: A Festival of the Jewish Mind and Spirit,* University of New South Wales, 11-13 June 2011.
[181] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 214-215.
[182] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* vii.
[183] Dario Miccoli, 'Another History: Family, Nation and the Remembrance of the Egyptian Past in Contemporary Israeli Literature', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies,* 13 (2014): 32.

internationally. The terms displacement and dispersal, as UNESCO define them, refer to the "forced movement of people from their locality or environment and occupational activities".[184] Comparatively, however:

> [T]he internally displaced are people who are forced to flee their homes, often for the very same reasons as refugees – war, civil conflict, political strife, and gross human rights abuses – but who remain within their own country and so not cross an international border.[185]

On personal and familial levels, women, men, and children faced a great diversity of circumstances and experiences even though Mizrahim were collectively displaced. Across the memoirs there are examples of Mizrahim who pre-emptively went through lengthy formal immigration processes before the main displacement of their community, others who were suddenly stripped of citizenship and expelled *en masse* through government decree, and some who had to secretly flee via both legal and 'illegal' means owing to an immediate physical threat to their lives.[186] Their memoirs are vital accounts that not only speak to a great diversity of situations across different localities and countries, but also witness the shared transnational experience of targeted vilification, upheaval, displacement, dispersal, and resettlement. As texts they provide a crucial voice that can enhance our present understanding of this shared history of the region and the deep complexity of its past – something that has unfortunately been lost through the siloing of research and the absence of Mizrahi perspectives in many standard histories.[187] They also aid a more nuanced understanding of Jewish identity as one which is through these accounts "refashioned as a multifaceted feeling of belonging that enables . . . connect[ion] to different spaces and epochs".[188]

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184 UNESCO, 'Displaced Person / Displacement', *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation,* 2016, accessed 2017, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/displaced-person-displacement/>.

185 UNESCO, 'Displaced Person / Displacement'.

186 Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*

187 Orit Bashkin, 'Jewish Identities in the Middle East, 1876-1956: The Middle Eastern Shift and Provincializing Zionism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 577-580; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry;* Medding, *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews.*

188 Dario Miccoli, 'A Fragile Cradle: Writing Jewishness, Nationhood, and Modernity in Cairo, 1920-1940', *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 21(2016): 20.

Prior to 1948, Mizrahim dwelt in predominantly Muslim Arabic countries – the majority concentrated in major urban centres.[189] From around the 1950s, and continuing into the latter half of the twentieth century, however, around one million Mizrahim became an 'uprooted' people in what Peter Medding describes as a "total geographic displacement" and Zion Zohar, a "mass exodus".[190] Entire local and country-wide communities were forcibly 'transplanted' elsewhere.[191] While the exact numbers involved can vary according to the study, there is widespread agreement in the literature that the vast majority of the region's Mizrahi population were permanently displaced, leaving a far smaller remnant compared to the sizable and very long established communities that had existed there beforehand.[192] DellaPergola, analysing modern global Jewish population movements, demonstrates, for instance, that the total Mizrahi population in their original homelands as a regional collective declined by 97 percent between 1948 and 2005.[193]

Although there were also specific local triggers, shared reasons for this upheaval include the rise, and confrontation between, Arab nationalism and political Zionism. Furthermore, the fall-out resulting from the establishment of the State of Israel and the ensuing war with Muslim nations, led to draconian anti-Semitic laws being passed internally. This, in combination with a huge increase in hostility and violence directed towards Mizrahim by their Arabic compatriots, forced them, as Jews, to leave – either 'voluntarily' though migration or involuntarily through official expulsion and deportation programs.[194] Fearing for their lives, Mizrahim hoped to find greater freedom, safety, stability and opportunity elsewhere. As a result of their displacement, however, the original Mizrahi communities were effectively destroyed; they no longer exist on the same scale in their original

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[189] Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry*, vii, ix. Other Mizrahi communities also lived in Ethiopia, Indian, parts of the USSR, and some in the region that became the State of Israel.
[190] Medding, *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews,* ix; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 4.
[191] Medding, *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews,* ix.
[192] JIMENA, 'JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa', *JIMENA,* 2012, accessed 2013, <www.jimena.org>; Sergio DellaPergola, '"Sephardic and Oriental": Jews in Israel and Western Countries: Migration, Social Change and Identification', in *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews,* ed. Peter Y. Medding, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 3, 11; JIMENA numbers those displaced at "nearly one million" while DellaPergola argues for "more than" one million. DellaPergola does, however, include statistics from 'Asian' communities from regions of the former USSR not normally included with the Middle Eastern and North African region in other studies. His population estimate prior to displacement is also therefore a bit higher than most others.
[193] DellaPergola, 'Sephardic & Oriental', 11.
[194] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry*; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists*; Simon, Laskier and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*; Sachar, *A History of the Jews in the Modern World;* Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*, Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*; Medding, *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews*; Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). It is outside the scope of this project to provide a very detailed investigation of the history of the displacement, especially as detailed texts already exist such as the ones noted above. Please refer to these for in-depth details if desired. Some major national flashpoints that acted as warning precipitators include the Farhood in Iraq, the 1970 Revolution in Iran, and the Suez Crisis and Black Saturday riots in Egypt.

homelands, with the exception of a greatly reduced community in Iran, a very small community in Egypt, and a few remaining individuals in Iraq.[195]

Mizrahi displacement occurred in the broad context of the political upheavals and social transformations of the twentieth-century and the mass movements of people across the globe through the chaos of two World Wars. It is important to emphasise that Mizrahim were not passive 'victims', but rather were active participants who debated and engaged in the philosophies and politics of the time along with their contemporaries.[196] They placed crucial roles in many movements that arose including nationalism, patriotism, universal humanitarianism, Communism, Marxism, pro- and anti-colonialism, Zionism (of a wide variety of forms), anti-Zionism, and positions that were pro- and anti- independence and revolutionary thought of the time.[197] As Sternfeld as observed, often this involved holding "hybrid identities" which, for example, combined together "sentiments of nationalism, [and] radical socialism, all mixed with Muslim and Jewish religiosity".[198] Mizrahi memoirs lend insight and further weight to this perspective of "multiplicity" in the historical reality of this period and the lived identities of the time.[199]

What distinguishes Mizrahi displacement from the twentieth-century's mass population movements is the specificity of each situation locally as well as the targeted anti-Semitic measures implemented by their homelands specifically designed to repress, vilify, uproot, and expel Jews.[200] Although Mizrahi displacement constitutes a collective transnational displacement, there were unique localised flash-points that triggered off movement according to distinct regional patterns. The first, occurring within ten years of the end of World War II, saw at least half of Mizrahi populations depart Muslim Arabic countries of the Middle East. By 1953, for example, Iraq had already lost of 90 percent of its Mizrahi

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[195] Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 4; Michel Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands in the Modern Period: History and Historiography', in *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews,* ed. Peter Y. Medding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44; Parvaneh Vahidmanesh, 'Sad Fate of Iran's Jews: Remnants of once flourishing community wonder how much long they can hold out', *Institute for War & Peace Reporting,* 11 May 2010, accessed 2015, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/sad-fate-irans-jews>, 1, 6-8; Sachar, *A History of the Jews in the Modern World,* 22, 615-618; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*, 7; JIMENA, 'JIMENA'; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, 282-283. Abitol provides a detailed overview of the population statistics involved including national breakdowns.

[196] Lior Sternfeld, 'Jewish-Iranian Identities in the Pahlavi Era', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 602-604; Orit Bashkin, 'The Barbarism from Within – Discourses about Fascism amongst Iraqi and Iraqi-Jewish Communists, 1942-1955', *Die Welt des Islams* 52 (2012): 400-429; Lior Sternfeld, 'The Revolution's Forgotten Sons and Daughters: The Jewish Community in Tehran during the 1979 Revolution', *Iranian Studies* 47 (2014): 857-869; Bashkin, 'Jewish Identities in the Middle East'.

[197] Sternfeld, 'Jewish-Iranian Identities', 603-604; Sternfeld, 'The Revolution's Forgotten Sons and Daughters', 859-860, 869; Bashkin, 'Jewish Identities in the Middle East'.

[198] Sternfeld, "The Revolution's Forgotten Sons and Daughters', 863.

[199] Bashkin, 'Jewish Identities in the Middle East'.

[200] Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*; Sachar, *History of the Jews.*

population.[201] Comparatively, the dispersal from North Africa occurred later, at roughly 20 years after the end of World War II.[202]

As this project focuses on memoirs by Mizrahim from Iraq, Iran, and Egypt, I will restrict my discussion here to these nations as they are most pertinent. In Iraq, it was rising fascism and the targeted *Farhud* massacre in Bagdad (1-2 June 1941) saw the most cautious start to leave, but it was the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and a brief lift in martial law and 'amnesty' on emigration in early 1950 that saw the majority leave in floods via Israeli airlift.[203] In Egypt, the first dispersals were triggered by the "the outbreak of the 1948 [Arab-Israeli] War and then the Free Officer's Revolution (1952) led by Gamal 'Abd-al-Nasser", yet "most of the Jews migrated, or were expelled, in the aftermath of the so-called Lavon affair (1954) and the 1956 Suez War" before a continuous but less urgent stream thereafter.[204] Finally, in Iran, movement was prompted by the 'Black Friday' massacre (8 September 1978), the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the mock trial and execution of Jewish businessman Habib Elquanin (9 May 1979), and the Iran-Iraq War (1980).[205] Common across all was the passing of anti-Semitic legislation and violent repression which was exacerbated by the formation of the State of Israel as well as the reaction of Middle Eastern states against it.[206]

Throughout this dissertation I consider the experiences of dispersal and displacement to be highly complex and entangled. Displacement is a traumatic experience that has deep psychological and emotional consequences.[207] Thus the legacy of this painful past has an ongoing salience in the present day lives of Mizrahim and their descendants, despite their new locations. The outcome of resettling has, however, also been liberating for some – especially women – because of the forced break with highly restrictive patriarchal traditions

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201 Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* 141, 168, 170.
202 Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* 171, 170.
203 Bashkin, 'The Barbarism from Within', 413-414; Sachar, *History of the Jews,* 620; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* 159, 163-164.
204 Miccoli, 'Another History', 322; Miccoli, 'A Fragile Cradle', 1; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* 169; Sachar, *History of the Jews,* 622.
205 Sternfeld, 'The Revolution's Forgotten Sons and Daughters', 857, 864, 867-869. It should be noted that local Iranian Jews were targeted even though on an official front, Khomeini publically made a distinction between Iranian Jews as 'loyal' and Zionists as 'traitors'. Some Iranian Jews also voluntarily fought in the Iraq-Iran war to defend Iran against invasion.
206 Sternfeld, 'The Revolution's Forgotten Sons and Daughters', 867-869.
207 United Nations Development Program, 'Migration, refugees and displacement', *United Nations Development Program,* 2017, accessed 2017, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/development-planning-and-inclusive-sustainable-growth/migration-refugees-and-displacement.html>; UNESCO, 'Displaced Person / Displacement; JJAC, 'Justice for Jews from Arab Countries: As a Matter of Law and Equity', JJAC, 1 January 2013, accessed 2017, <http://www.justiceforjews.com>; JIMENA, 'JIMENA'; Cathryn J. Prince, 'Jewish refugees from Arab lands seek justice a United Nations', *The Times of Israel,* 2 December 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-refugees-from-arab-lands-seek-justice-at-united-nations/>.

and the increase in educational and employment opportunities that life in the West has brought.[208] This does not, however, discount the disruption and indelible losses that occurred in terms of family, property, and, for some, lives.[209]

Following displacement and dispersal, Mizrahim found themselves in a wide variety of contexts. Most took refuge, and re-established themselves, within the newly founded State of Israel; many others went to France, Britain, the Americas, and Australia.[210] It should be noted, however, that, although Australia was a destination for several thousand Mizrahim, it is rarely mentioned in the literature; this information is absent from most histories that stress the role of the State of Israel and of the United States of America.[211] Although the new locations of Mizrahim were for the most part 'Western', Mizrahi Jewish experiences varied significantly owing to the different cultural attitudes and social milieux in each place. For instance, in the State of Israel especially, Mizrahim found themselves subject to discrimination by an already established European Ashkenazi elite.[212] Mizrahim became a new minority in societies which had already established European Jewish communities of largely Ashkenazic religious and cultural tradition, from which Mizrahim differed.[213] Peter Medding argues that, because of this new context, self definition took the form of an oppositional identity against the '"Ashkenazic other"'.[214] Currently, in North America and in the State of Israel in particular, Mizrahi identity and culture is undergoing a revival.[215] Lobby groups have been established; and, very recently, Mizrahim have voiced a statement about their experiences to the international community at the United Nations.[216] As Mizrahim are becoming more vocal, this has resulted in a wave of newly published academic literature and also, importantly, memoirs.

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208 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*.
209 JJAC, 'Justice for Jews from Arab Countries'; Prince, 'Jewish refugees from Arab lands seek justice a United Nations' (2 December 2015); JIMENA, 'JIMENA'.
210 Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*; Medding, *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews*; Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*; JJAC, 'Justice for Jews from Arab Countries'; Prince, 'Jewish refugees from Arab lands seek justice a United Nations'; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*
211 Turnbull, *Safe Haven*.
212 Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* x; Turnbull, *Safe Haven,* 34; Heyes, 'Identity Politics'. Even this research guide only dedicates a one line mention to the Mizrahi/Sephardi emigrants.
213 Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* ix-x.
214 Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* x.
215 Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 15.
216 JJAC, 'Justice for Jews from Arab Countries'; JIMENA, 'JIMENA'; Prince, 'Jewish refugees from Arab lands seek justice at United Nations'.

The 'Archive'

Recording and writing the history, or histories, of displaced people can be challenging since, as a consequence of upheaval and dispersal, they settle eventually in a myriad of diverse locations. In addition, because of the problems of disintegration or destruction of collective archives, and the loss of individuals' personal documents in hurried transit, those vital sources are in many cases missing. Consequently, written are extremely valuable artefacts that record personal memories and histories otherwise lost, and enable the trajectories of individuals to be traced across vast distances. Accounts of family members, close friends, and the wider community are often included in these testimonies, linking individuals with collective communities.[217]

The published English-language memoirs by Mizrahi authors who originated (or whose family originated) from Iraq, Iran, and Egypt constitute the primary sources and core 'archive' under study in this dissertation. In total I examine nineteen core memoirs arising from publishing houses in Britain, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and the State of Israel. To break this total down by nation of origin; eleven are written by Iraqi Jews, six by Egyptian Jews, and two by Iranian Jews.[218] I draw upon two further memoirs which provide supporting contextual material: one Ashkenazi memoir that encompasses work in the Middle East and another relating the displacement experiences of a Sephardic family.[219] In this sense, I view memoirs both as representations and as historical sources in their own right with strengths and weaknesses like any other.[220] I use scholarly books, journal articles, and relevant internet sites and personal correspondence to enhance my investigation of the primary texts.

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[217] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*

[218] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.* Please note that Aciman's *Letters of Transit* consists of autobiographical and philosophical reflections, and Shabi's *Not the Enemy*, although containing sections of memoir incorporates social and cultural history to a large degree to might be considered between genres.

[219] Stanley Abramovitch, *Survival to Revival: A Memoir of Six Decades in a Changing Jewish World* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2008); Victor Perera, *The Cross and the Pear Tree*: *A Sephardic Journey* (London: Flamingo, 1995).

[220] Helen Buss, 'Memoirs', in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms, Vol. 2* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001, 595-597; Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources.*

For the purposes of this project I gathered together and constructed the 'archive' under study. These are not all the memoirs that were published in English, but rather a selection that was made based on those that were most easily accessible and acquirable by readers. A brief overview of each is provided in Appendix One. As noted above, I stumbled across the existence of these memoirs following the lack of sources in formal archives.[221] Memoirs are not only easily available for research purposes but are also readily accessible to the private readerships that drive the publication and circulation of these texts.[222] The memoirs I investigate can easily be found through main internet search engines such as Google. They are easily purchased and shipped to Australia through global book dealerships like the Book Depository and Amazon.com. The decision to establish a personal collection was forced by necessity, because both the university and community library systems in Canberra, as well as the National Library of Australia, hold very few of these memoirs in their collection, although these texts are readily available through online book dealers.[223]

It is important to note that all of these memoirs are part of an emergent literary wave that has appeared only in the last twenty years or so. It is telling that the majority of memoirs were published from the mid-1990s onwards.[224] I discuss this emergence in further detail in *Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements.* However, events such as the September 11 Twin Towers attacks, the Second Iraq War, and ongoing upheavals in the Middle East have ensured a more receptive audience for these types of life narratives.[225]

English-language memoirs are the focus of this project, for several reasons. Firstly, English is now the global *lingua franca* although "only one out of every four users of English . . . [are] a native speaker of the language".[226] While this focus may be interpreted as a form of linguistic imperialism it is also malleable because "English is being shaped at least as much by its non-native speakers as by its native speakers".[227] An interesting development is that:

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221 Turnbull, *Safe Haven*.
222 Buss, 'Memoirs'; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*.
223 Lucette Lagnado's memoir *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit* is an exception to this and is one of the more widely available texts.
224 Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.
225 Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*.
226 Barbara Siedlhofer, 'English as lingua franca', *ELT Journal* 59 (2005): 339; Vladimir M. Smokotin, Anna S. Alekseyenko, and Galina I. Petrova, 'The Phenomenon of Linguistic Globalisation: English as the Global Lingua Franca (EGLF), *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences* 154 (2014): 509-513; Muttahir Khan, 'English as lingua franca: A linguistic imperialism?', *Dawn,* <http://www.dawn.com/news/print/1028971>.
227 Khan, 'English as lingua franca'; Smokotin, Alekseyenko, and Petrova, 'The Phenomenon of Linguistic Globalisation'; Siedlhofer, 'English as lingua franca', 339.

> [In] most cases, it is a 'contact language' between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication.[228]

English may be considered, that is, as a language that can build bridges, a language through which knowledge can be shared and cross-cultural empathy developed.[229] This is significant in the case of Mizrahi memoirs, because the potential readership for these texts is consequently the largest possible global readership, even though their primary distribution is through Western channels. Secondly, because of the legacy of European colonial powers in the Middle East and North Africa, there is a historical divergence between those areas formally under British as opposed to French control.[230] For the sake of containing the scope of this project, focus has been placed upon the former rather than the latter.

Lastly, and certainly not least, the choice to publish in English language is exactly that – an authorial and purposeful choice made by Mizrahi memoirists themselves despite the structural power relationships involved. Mizrahim and the majority of these memoirists were, and continue to be, multilingual thanks to thousands of years of trade through cosmopolitan urban hubs as well as the legacy of more modern European empires. Many could speak Persian and Arabic as well as English, French, Italian, Spanish, and *ladino*.[231] Some memoirists, however, find that their primary mother tongue has been compromised because of the trauma of anti-Semitic attacks and displacement.[232] Roya Hakakian is a prime example, explaining:

> to write about Iran in Persian would be daunting. Instead of re-examining the memories, I feared that in Persian, I might begin to relive them. Persian could summon the teenager at sea. English sheltered the adult survivor, safely inside the lighthouse . . . what I had painstakingly arrived at, greater than even the new land, was a new language, the vessel of my flight to vast possibilities.[233]

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[228] Siedlhofer, 'English as a lingua franca'.
[229] Smokotin, Alekseyenko, and Petrova, 'The Phenomenon of Linguistic Globalisation'; Seidlhofer, 'English as lingua franca'; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*.
[230] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*.
[231] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.
[232] George Mandler, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma: A Theoretical Integration', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory*, ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 93-110; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 359-387.
[233] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*, 15.

Writing in English instead provided enough psychological space to reflect on and process events sufficiently in order to be able to liberate and communicate them.[234] It is important, also, to consider the context in which the memoirists are now writing and the audience their texts are intended for. Through their accounts some memoirists, consciously or otherwise, 'write themselves' into the grand 'migration and success' narratives of the countries they resettled in. Strong examples of memoirists who use this framework, or elements of it, come from Mizrahim who settled both in Canada and the United States of America.[235] These memoirists often thank their new communities and compatriots for their acceptance and inclusion in their society – a contrast that does not go unnoticed by contrast with the confronting experience of exclusion from their original homelands.[236] It is significant that the memoirists' descendants now for the most part live in the West and the State of Israel. It is a logical choice to write in the primary language of your children and grandchildren, if one of your primary aims is to pass on your history and memories in an accessible way.[237]

So what *are* these accounts – what do they say? To summarise common patterns across the body of texts, these memoirs tell the stories of their author's lives, and the lives of those to whom the authors feel especially close, such as family and friends. Memoirists usually aim to record their memories of their lost homeland and their way of life, some concentrating on the story of their family, others being much more individually focused on themselves. Usually, these narratives include memories of growing up in the Middle East – some memories being joyous, others recording personal challenges. For this reason, many memoirs follow the trajectory of a 'coming of age' story, such as how and when the memoirist reached adulthood, and how she or he took on greater responsibility towards others, or became especially aware of her or his own 'Jewishness'.

There are some patterns evident within the memoirs that are shaped by the gender of the authors. It is notable that, because of the time period they grew up in and cultural expectations of that time, most of the memoirs written by men tend to be focused on education, the pursuit of particular careers, and efforts to rebuild after displacement.

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234 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*, 15; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'.
235 Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Fathi, *Full Circle.*
236 Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Fathi, *Full Circle.*
237 Jawary, *Baghdad, I* Remember; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Goldin, *Wedding Song.*

However, those of women (although not all) tend to include concerns about being a burden, marriage at a young age and the birth of children. For some women this includes their struggle against those traditional expectations of marriage and their search for a sense of equilibrium which allows them to respect their cultural heritage while also embracing Western feminism.

Amongst all the individual variations you might expect amongst different life stories, however, there is a certain core theme that unites all these Mizrahi memoirs – the powerful and moving narrative of loss through displacement. It is a collective story of a rupture in time, space, belonging, and place: a story of the destruction of home and meaning that brought with it intense grief and dislocation. For some, the experience threw them into deep depression and an existential crisis from which they never fully recovered. Others, continued to bear their loss while trying to make a new life. For a certain few, the experience, although initially one of loss, was ultimately one of liberation and empowerment, which offered opportunities for education and employment that they had never considered possible in their former homelands.[238] In many ways, these memoirs seek to raise awareness and encourage a broader acknowledgement of the trauma Mizrahim suffered by being uprooted.

There is, however, a counterpoint to all this. Intertwined amidst this tale of loss and suffering is a second core narrative, one that tell of the potential for human return, reconnection, and healing. It is the story of Mizrahim who display ingenuity in the face of the unknown, and the strength, courage, and adaptability to create a new life elsewhere for themselves and their children. Some, according to their story, never reach a point of healing, and forever carry their burden of loss. The very writing of these texts, and the bringing together of these events into a broader dialogue, creates a pathway to acceptance. Indeed, some authors find great solace in having written their accounts, and in knowing that their histories are not lost and that future generations might learn from them. The very transmission of these stories after such a rupture represents the forming of a new intergenerational continuum of recognition and learning – a re-knitting of being, place, and personhood through the valuing and celebration of their cultural origins. So although memoirs may be highly subjective, they are nonetheless legitimate and extremely valuable

[238] The liberation narrative is mostly a female one, unless framed in terms of aliyah to the State of Israel.

sources which stand at several interesting intersections, between personal and public, fiction and fact, individual and collective, and memory and history.[239]

Another important intersection that is often discussed by the memoirists is the concept of heritage. In this dissertation, heritage is not seen as something singular or fixed. Rather, like memory and identity, it is fluid, multifaceted, constructed through discourse, and conveyed and performed through representations and the interplay of the variable interpretations and meanings attributed to it.[240] As Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge argue:

> [W]e define the concept [of heritage] as the use of the past as a cultural, political and economic resource for the present, our concern being with the very selective ways in which material artefacts, mythologies, memories, and traditions become resources for the present . . . heritage is less about tangible artefacts or other intangible forms of the past than about the meanings placed upon them and the representations which are created from them.[241]

While memories and their relationship with histories and identities are the focus here, it is worth noting that, in the context of displacement and dispersal, material artefacts and concepts of place may take on a heightened importance because they are so closely related to what was lost.[242] These memories are what imbue sites and artefacts with value; and that value may easily be commodified as part of the heritage and tourism industry.[243] Similarly, the narratives of identity are represented, transmitted, and easily absorbed by readers through memoir. And these in turn, collectively, have constructed the concept of a regional Mizrahi identity, although individual texts tend to have a nation-based focus. Just as Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge explain:

> [C]ontemporary societies use heritage in the creation and management of collective identity, most especially as expressed through the shaping of senses of belonging defined and transmitted through representations of place. These processes occur within a range of overlapping scales extending from the global through the national and regional to the local and individual.[244]

The "process and practice" of heritage is "a force for fragmentation as much as cohesion, a cause of alienation and exclusion as much as unity and inclusion".[245] It therefore forms an

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[239] Buss, 'Memoirs'; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*; Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources*.
[240] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* xi-4; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.
[241] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 3.
[242] Zonana, *Dream Homes*.
[243] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 2.
[244] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 1.
[245] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* xi-xii, 2.

important strand in the investigation of the dynamics between history, memory, and identity within Mizrahi memoirs.

Structural overview

This dissertation constitutes a total of eight chapters including this current one (*Chapter One: Introductory Overview*) and *Chapter Eight: Conclusion*. The first two chapters are contextual while the following five demonstrate the application of theory and analysis of the dynamics of history, memory, and identity as represented in the memoirs before the core themes are brought together in the concluding chapter. What follows is a brief synopsis of each core chapter.

Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements

In this second chapter I introduce the core theories from memory studies that are essential for understanding the analysis in subsequent chapters where these theories are demonstrated via a close reading of the memoirs. First, the concepts of personal and collective memory are established as inherently interrelated and memory is shown to be fluid rather than static. Next, the current framework that dominates memory studies – the 'culture wars' model – is outlined and its limitations identified. The culture wars model is shown to be obsolete as an analytical category in the context of displacement and contemporary post-World War II complexities. Through explicit reference to the displacement of Mizrahim, I argue that Rothberg's alternative framework of 'multidirectional memory' strongly addresses the limitations of the cultural wars model in this context.[246] The combined framework of multidirectional memory and Rothberg's reinterpretation of Sigmund Freud's 'screen memory' instead enable us to see the inherent links between personal and collective memory, present politics and power relations, and the complex conjunction of circumstances that enable an upwelling of selective narratives driven by present needs.[247] Drawing upon these insights and through discussion of their relationship to Holocaust memory, I demonstrate the existence of just such an upwelling in the form of the recent emergence and growth of Mizrahi memoirs as a body of texts. The case of Mizrahim is shown to require an expansion of the concept of multidirectional memory that incorporates the multilayered and multidimensional nature of human existence and complexity in the context of displacement. I term this expanded framework 'multidirectional entanglements'; a stance that informs the dissertation as a whole.

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[246] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.
[247] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.

Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees

In this third chapter I examine the transnational experience of displacement and dispersal and its effects of the dynamics of history, memory, and identity as expressed through the use of tree metaphors within the memoirs. The concepts of 'routes', as understood by cross-border travel and displacement, and 'roots', as related to concepts of cultural heritage, familial descent, place, home, and use in metaphor, are both explored. Reference to roots and 'uprooting' is shown to form an essential language of symbol and expression for communicating Mizrahi experiences of displacement in terms of trauma and, for some, recovery. I demonstrate that this conceptual language and the complexity of Mizrahi identities directly challenges the dominant understanding, theory, and construction of 'diaspora' in a Jewish context. Through this analysis, identities, memories, and histories are shown to be highly multidirectional, multidimensional, multilayered, and entangled.

Chapter Four: Sensescapes and Soul-Food

In this forth chapter I demonstrate the multidirectional entanglements of memory, history, and identity through an investigation of the importance of sensescapes and soul-food to the histories and identities of displaced Mizrahim, as represented in their memoirs. Sensescapes are established as essential to personal ontology and fundamental to the vital process of emplacement, especially in the context of displacement. Soul-food is understood both in terms of the religious foodways of Jewish *kashrut* but also the emotional and psychological dimensions of familiar dishes and personal comfort food. Mizrahi foodways are shown to be fundamentally Jewish but also firmly embedded in the cultural and social context of the Middle East and North Africa. Mizrahi dishes are very different from Ashkenazic (European Jewish) cuisine, which is often understood to be 'quintessentially' Jewish. The senses are shown to be important to the formation and recollection of personal memories and both religious feasts and recipes are shown to be a valuable means of memory transmission. Examples from the memoirs are used to demonstrate that personally significant times and places may be temporarily relived, or at the very least, accessed through aromas and the cooking and consumption of familiar and favourite dishes. Finally, smellscapes, aromas, and the consumption of cuisine are proven to be vital in the post-displacement context of reconstructing place and home within new homelands.

Chapter Five: Dreaming of Return

In this fifth chapter I show that memory is multidimensional through a study of the relationship between memory, dream, nostalgia, and the desire for return – all of which are

interwoven throughout the memoirs under study. The two core themes of return and dream are shown to affect the dynamics between memory, history, and identity as represented in these texts. Reflecting the diverse ways that memory, dream, nostalgia, and return manifest themselves in individual life-writing, four examples of dream narrative are explored in-depth. Memoir writing is then considered as a form of return in its own right, an important factor to consider in relation to the readership of these texts and our understanding of the therapeutic benefits of writing for memoirists in post-displacement settings.

Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters

In this sixth chapter I show that memory is multilayered and multidimensional through an examination of the dynamics of history and identity in the context of displacement and urban change, reuse, and renewal. This is done with a focus on synagogue sites and the portability of artefacts as represented in the memoirs. The concepts of heritage and postmemory are drawn upon to shown the relationship between the generation who was displaced and those of the next, whose parents were displaced but who still feel torn between different locations and identities. The legacy of displacement and the dynamics of memory are demonstrated as I observe how states of flux and divergent histories can affect sites, meanings, and identities for Mizrahim who live elsewhere as well as for those Jews who continue to live locally.

Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions

In this seventh chapter I continue to use the theme of heritage and the concepts of multidirectional memory and postmemory to demonstrate how the dynamics of memory can be highly entangled and are driven and affected by the politics of the present. Synagogue sites and a sacred festival are used as the focus to demonstrate how the performance of identities and histories becomes especially complex in situations where multiple stakeholders, such as national government, the judiciary, political groups, the heritage and tourism industry, remaining Jewish communities, and Mizrahim themselves all have different perspectives and priorities in the performance and consumption of memories.

Conclusion

In this first chapter I have provided an introductory overview of the topic and the research project that is the subject of this dissertation; an initial orientation to the key texts that are

discussed; and an account of the structure that the following investigation and analysis will encompass. We move now to the second chapter wherein the core theoretical frameworks for this dissertation are introduced and discussed in relation to the dynamics of memory, identity, and history, as represented in Mizrahi memoirs.

– CHAPTER TWO –

Multidirectional Entanglements

> What happens when different histories confront each other in the public sphere? Does remembrance of one history erase others from view?[1]
>
> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*

> The emergence of new political maps therefore also brought about the emergence of different geographies of identity and a new rewriting of the boundaries of belonging.[2]
>
> Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*

> History is like life, life is history.[3]
>
> Ewa Domańska, *Encounters*

Mizrahi memoirs are infused with the human need for remembrance and recognition, bringing into light the tension and tangle between the universal, the specific, and the borders between identities and belonging that all collective groups wrestle with.[4] Looking a life under totalitarian regimes, Erna Paris has observed the fierceness with which "people will fight to chronicle their personal and collective experience in the face of an official history that has been falsified".[5] She consequently concluded that "although twentieth century totalitarian cultures perfected the art of the controlled historical lie, in varying degrees, the *desire* to shape the way history is remembered is universal".[6] This desire to be remembered and shape remembrance is one that emerges throughout Mizrahi memoirs and feeds into how identities are represented and understood. Differences are often emphasised

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[1] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2.
[2] Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions: Columbus, Palestine, and Arab-Jews' in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham, Duke University Press: 2006), 206.
[3] Ewa Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', in *Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism,* ed. Ewa Domańska (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 263. Here Domańska is paraphrasing Roland Barthes.
[4] Rubie S. Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism: An Introduction', in *Memory, History and Opposition Under State Socialism,* ed. Rubie S. Watson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), 18; Erna Paris, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (New York, Bloomsbury: 2002), 449-450, 454; Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 10.
[5] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450. Paris specific observed this across Japan, France, Germany, the United States of America, South Africa, and former Yugoslavia.
[6] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450.

and justified according to the narration of a particular version of the past in order to define oneself or one's group in relation to another.[7] As Watson explains:

> the creation of 'our past' often involves the [attempted] negation of another group's history. Remembering and forgetting are thus locked together in a complicated web as one group's enfranchisement requires another's disenfranchisement.[8]

Rothberg's model of multidirectional memory shows a way out of this deadlock, and, as will be examined within this chapter, although this process frequently operates, other outcomes can result and it is as absolute as is often stated. Watson herself acknowledges that "new concepts are needed to capture the subtleties of opposition and compliance" in the collective process of remembering and forgetting.[9] I propose that multidirectional memory advances our thinking markedly in this space and that these dynamics can be clearly observed within Mizrahi life writing.

Entanglements between people, places, and pasts are made especially complex within the shared, diverse, and overlapping spaces of present-day multicultural societies whose transnational ties challenge previous conventions of inclusion and exclusion.[10] These 'traditional' conventions of inclusion and exclusion were based on the idea that nations were singular societies of uniform culture. As Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson note, however, findings from "postcolonial and diaspora theory" indicate "the impossibility of maintaining a pure and pristine notion of culture . . . [rather] it is transitional and translational; culture is always in invention".[11] They also observe that "diasporic population flows and the additional culture flows brought about by technology and globalisation of the media are transforming our world, globally and locally".[12] Here, within my dissertation, transnational links are understood in this manner as the ties and flows of discourse, capital, culture, and people. Tessa Morris-Suzuki further explains that:

> many writers have reminded us that globalisation does not mean the demise of the nation state; but it does mean that people around the world find their everyday lives influenced by forces and institutions whose origins lie outside their national borders

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[7] Gassan Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', in *Sociology: Place, Time & Division*, eds. Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 342-346.
[8] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 18.
[9] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 19.
[10] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media Memory, History,* (London: Verso, 2005), 30-31; G. J. Ashworth, Brian Graham, and J. E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity, and Place in Multicultural Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 2007) xi, 1-4; Christine Prentice, Vijay Devadas, and Henry Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations: Perspectives on Translocation in a Global Age', in *Cultural Transformations: Perspectives on Translocation in a Global Age,* eds. Christine Prentice, Vijay Devadas, and Henry Johnson (New York: Rodopi, 2010) xi-xiii, xiv; Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5, 8.
[11] Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xiii.
[12] Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xi.

> . . . The study of national history alone is obviously inadequate to provide the understanding needed to make sense of this world.[13]

Consequently, coming from a heritage management perspective, Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge indicate that "the creation of plural heritages and place identities" is now essential if a sense of belonging to any collective identity is to be achieved.[14] This shift is because of the "increasing diversity and fragmentation of [contemporary] societies", the "ever more complex forms of cultural diversity", and the increasing presence of "plural representations of the past".[15] In this increasingly complex context, Whitlock also argues that "the transnational circuitries of images and narratives . . . are a feature of contemporary culture".[16] This is the highly entangled reality in which we now live. I argue that our research needs to become more inclusive and openly acknowledge this complexity. Mizrahi life writing reflects these complex entanglements not only as narratives but also as circulated commodities in the form of published memoir.[17]

Ella Shohat and Michael Rothberg have also grappled with the issue of dynamics and representation – of multiple memories amidst present politics – that occur within such an entangled context.[18] I propose that a combination of Shohat's relational approach to studying Mizrahim combined with Rothberg's model of multidirectional memory opens up a more accurate and ethical way to examine and understand the experiences of Mizrahim.[19] Whitlock also understands identities as relational, that is, formed through interaction and in relationship to constructed 'others'.[20] By a more ethical approach I mean, and agree with, Morris-Suzuki's call for a greater appreciation of emotion and the affective quality of history within the creation of identities, but also the need for diversity of perspectives in the pursuit of historical truthfulness.[21] Such a stance emphasises exchanges, interconnection and multiplicity, and challenges dominant thinking on memory and identity dynamics which favour frameworks of conflict, competition, and exclusivity.[22] Instead, like

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[13] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 30.
[14] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* xi, 1-4.
[15] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* xi, 1-4.
[16] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 8.
[17] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons.*
[18] Ella Shohat, ed. *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 7.
[19] Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 201-232; Ella Shohat, 'Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab-Jews', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 330-358; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.
[20] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 7.
[21] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 24-28.
[22] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 201-232; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 330-358; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.

life – as reflective of their source – memories are messy, entangled, imbued with emotions, traversing diverse times and spaces, enmeshing people in places and identities (be they assumed or chosen) in tangled webs of potential affiliation and affect.[23]

This is particularly so in the situation of Mizrahim who experienced displacement and dispersal across the globe. Mizrahi memoirs reflect and demonstrate the concepts of multifaceted identities and multidirectional memory at both the collective and personal levels.[24] To clarify, I use the term multidirectional memory as Rothberg does, where memory moves in multiple directions and makes connections with other experiences.[25] The memory that moves here is that of Mizrahi displacement, although it is understood that this occurs in the context of the simultaneous movement of other memories. In the memoirs, as narrative, Mizrahi memory connects at different times and in different ways with a wide range of other memories and narratives including those of the Holocaust but also Judaism, Islam, colonialism, anti-colonialism, Zionism, anti-Zionism, revolution, racism, refugees, migration, immigration, nationalism of a variety of forms, and more. As a physical object in the form of a memoir, Mizrahi memory can also be said to move and shift through the global circuits of commerce and consumption. Although interconnection is important here and forms a focus, it is the multidirectional *movement* or *dynamics* to which I pay particular attention. That is, the mechanics and form of memory itself; memory as a object, sensation, text, but also as a narrative that can be used to dynamically construct and reconstruct a variety of identities, meanings, and ontologies in response to the ebbs and flows of historical events.

The memory that I primarily discuss is that of Mizrahi displacement itself. This is a collective memory held among Mizrahim who constitute a transnational group. Because displacement can be seen as both an event and a process, this Mizrahi memory also includes some aspects of life before and after leaving original homelands. This means that the way this collective memory is expressed is sometimes transnational and at other times articulated in strongly nation-based terms. Here, it should also be noted that I view homelands from the perspective of what can be interpreted as a 'revisionist' reading, where, for example, the State of "Israel was a diaspora, and Egypt, a homeland" – a tension I discuss in more depth in *Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees.*[26] When I discuss 'memory', I

[23] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 24-28.
[24] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.
[25] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.
[26] Orit Bashkin, 'Jewish Identities in the Middle East, 1876-1956: The Middle Eastern Shift and Provincializing Zionism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 579.

understand it as appearing to have singularity only at the largest possible collective level when it is at its most general and abstract. For example, there is group commonality in the fact of dispersal and displacement and yet local and national differences in the ways this was executed and the results that flowed from this. Mizrahi memoirs witness both this commonality and difference. I emphasise throughout that the memory of Mizrahi displacement is shared and yet also plural and that it encompasses a multiplicity of experiences, circumstances, and outcomes. It reveals the vital importance of being more inclusive of diversity and complexity in our understanding of Middle Eastern and Jewish histories – histories which are not separate but rather inextricably bound.

These are concepts that are interwoven throughout this dissertation, each chapter of which thematically explores the ways multiple entangled identities and multidirectional memories manifest within Mizrahi life writing. Consequently, this second chapter presents a conceptual constellation, a map through which subsequent thematic chapters and the links between them can be understood. I firstly outline the concepts of personal and collective memory and the connections between them. Secondly, I examine the dynamics of memory and how the framework of multidirectional memory best reflects Mizrahi experiences and life writing. Next, I investigate the issue of multicultural and transnational spaces in relation to the entangled nature of pasts and presents. Following this, I shall introduce the concept of screen memory to help understand the appearance of these Mizrahi texts at this present time. Finally, I highlight the multidirectional and multidimensional qualities of remembrance and recognition within these memoirs as the threads which appear throughout this dissertation as a whole.

Personal and Collective Memory

Memory is a major theoretical focus of this project because it is inseparable from human comprehension and expression of past experiences.[27] In this case, memories of past experiences are further transformed through representation as narrative within memoir.[28] As Domańska argues, the "category of *experience"* is vital to the renewal of the philosophy

[27] Joan Tumblety, *Memory and History: Understanding memory as source and subject* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1-2, 7; Bernd Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse: Uses and Meanings of the Past*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2012, 8-13, 292-293.
[28] Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 149; Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 262-263.

of history and includes the theoretical categories of "the *sublime, memory, consciousness"*.[29] She explains that:

> life is made up by experiences. Can there be anything more encompassing than our being-in-the-world? History is, after all, also an experience. Perhaps, to paraphrase Roland Barthes, it is worth saying: History is like life, life is history.[30]

I argue that the genres of life writing and memoir, as narrative representations of memory, enable the experiential and reflective mode of writing the past to come forth, which more formal categories of 'history writing' tend to eschew.[31] Mizrahi memoirs include narratives of events encountered personally and collectively by Mizrahim and others. A conceptual division has often been made by scholars between personal memory (that of an individual) and collective memory (for example, that of a group, culture, or society).[32] This division has its roots in Enlightenment philosophies of progress and 'civilisation' that framed 'primitive' societies as constituting the locus of collective memory, while modernity had comparatively 'freed' the more 'advanced' to become "societies of individual memory".[33]

Here, although contextual distinctions are made, memory is considered holistically.[34] Drawing on Geoffrey Cubit, Tumblety explains that "memory is a concept rather than an object, and as such its boundaries are malleable" – its meaning and the nature of the concept itself is not fixed but shifts according to historical period and culture.[35] There is also the danger of reifying "meta-entities such as 'collective memory' . . . [such that memory is treated] as a thing, an essence, cut adrift from the worldly networks in which its operations and their social purchase are enmeshed".[36] Given this risk, I suggest that to concretely and holistically link collective memory to personal memory helps to ground concepts in lived reality and observable practice. As Tumblety argues, "to avoid these conceptual pitfalls it is important for historians always to grasp *whose* memory is in question".[37]

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[29] Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 263. Emphasis in original. In contemplating a return to the category 'historical experience' rather than language and discourse, Ewa Domańska was influenced by Franklin Ankersmit.
[30] Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 263.
[31] Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006).
[32] Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11, 16.
[33] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader,* 11, 16.
[34] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 6-8.
[35] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 6.
[36] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 7.
[37] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 8.

Although they have subtle differences, I consider personal memory and collective memory to be inseparably interlinked and intertwined in practice. Both consist of multiple levels (of awareness, attention, and scale), with each influencing the other in a constant fluidity of back and forth exchange.[38] My position is one that is also reflected by Rothberg and that has been influenced by the intellectual legacy of Halbwachs.[39] The entangled and enmeshed nature of memories feed into and shape narratives and identities that are meaningfully drawn from these – an interlayered relationship that is brought forth particularly within life writing, as Whitlock has also observed:

> We are born into webs of narrative: micronarratives of familial life and macronarratives of collective identity, codes of established narratives that define our capacities to weave individual life stories.[40]

These narratives are woven from remembrances and meanings, personal *and* collective. Such a holistic epistemological approach matches the observable evidence within Mizrahi memoirs themselves. What follows is an explanation of how this operates and how it is understood within this project. I shall draw upon the work of Maurice Halbwachs but my discussion throughout this dissertation will represent a case study based on Michael Rothberg's model of multidirectional memory in combination with additional frameworks as explained in *Chapter One: Introductory Overview*.[41]

Personal memories directly inform the life stories that Mizrahi memoirists share through their work. At its most basic, a personal memory can be understood to be an individual's memory of a past event that she or he experienced personally.[42] Personal memory, however, is also highly subjective, performative, constructed and mediated through filters of perception, culture, interpretation, re-interpretation, and, when shared, the nuances of representation and narrative.[43] Across both the arts and sciences findings consistently demonstrate that remembrance is a performative process because "individual memory does not function like an archive of lived experiences deposited somewhere in the brain, but is rather constructed anew at each moment of recall".[44] It is also situated in a particular temporality. Neural plasticity has recently enabled an appreciation of how the mind can be

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[38] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 16-22.
[39] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 16-22.
[40] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 11.
[41] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992 [1941/1952]); Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.
[42] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 8; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 19.
[43] Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 28; Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 265; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 3, 4, 6-7; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 1; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 6.
[44] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 3, 4, 6-7.

historically shaped through exposure to different technologies at different times. These affect the brain and how it retains information.[45] Domańska explains that "reality and truth are relative" in the sense that "our statements about the world are a sort of construct: they are the *interpretations* of the world" rather than something fixed.[46]

Consequently, although a valuable source of knowledge, memories themselves are not static and it is possible that variations, additions, and omissions occur over time.[47] Drawing on the findings of modern psychology, Elizabeth Minchin's nuanced analysis of autobiographical memory within Homeric narrative notes this changeability and fluidity of memory. Minchin observes that:

> every one of us holds in memory a sequence of stories about himself or herself and the things he or she has done. These stories, taken together, amount to an informal life-history . . . It is clear that there may be inconsistencies amongst the perceptions which we entertain about ourselves; it is also clear that when we revise our self-concept we may be obliged to revise, reconfigure, or reconstruct substantial holdings in our memory store.[48]

This is not to say that such memories are any less 'real' or meaningful. Memories inevitably shape (but do not determine) the ways an individual understands the world and relates to their past, reacts in the present, and affects how she or he imagine the future will unfold.[49] For "personal memory, shared memory, and narrative (written) history interact in highly complicated ways, shaping each other as versions of the past are constructed and reconstructed".[50] Morris-Suzuki establishes the clear link between our present-day lives and identities and this mutable sense of the past, explaining that:

> our visions of history are drawn from diverse sources . . . Out of this kaleidoscopic mass of fragments we make and remake patterns of understanding which explain the origins and nature of the world in which we live. And doing this, we define and redefine the place that we occupy in that world.[51]

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[45] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 6.
[46] Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 265. My emphasis added.
[47] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 4, 7; Elizabeth Minchin, 'Homer on Autobiographical Memory: The Case of Nestor', in *Approaches to Homer: Ancient and Modern,* ed. Robert J. Rabel (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2005), 61.
[48] Minchin, 'Homer on Autobiographical Memory', 61.
[49] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 9; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 2, 24.
[50] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 9.
[51] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 2,

This representational process can be seen in Mizrahi memoirs in different ways, as will be explored in subsequent chapters, but is noticeable even within the motivations authors give for wanting to preserve their own life accounts.[52] For example, in the foreword to her memoir, Schinasi-Silver writes that:

> this is the story of my personal reconciliation with the past and with the people who have nurtured the person I am today. It is the story about bearing witness to the last generation of Egyptian Jews who lived during Egypt's Gold Age . . . Because the first fifteen years of my life began in Egypt, I needed to tell my story.[53]

Here, Schinasi-Silver directly articulates the links between past and present within her life-story, which for her is also an essential part of the process of catharsis she feels she must undergo in order to move forward in her life.

Although subjective, through being drawn from first-hand experience, personal memories are imbued with the experiential 'truth' power of witnessing.[54] Following the Eichmann trial and the South African 'truth and reconciliation' hearing, '"bearing witness' in the quest not only for justice but for historical truth" has taken on an "elevated status".[55] Rosanne Kennedy agrees with this view and has discussed the legal and historical evidence-based issues of traumatic memory and survivor testimony.[56] Although Kennedy notes the issues that testimony raises given its reliance on fallible memory, she nevertheless contends that:

> literary and cultural critics, as well as some historians, value survivor testimony for its affective power, its subjective insight into events, and its ability to transmit memory to the public and to later generations.[57]

This affective charge can also provide "insight into the psychological or emotional state of the witness, and may bring out aspects of events that escape the medium of the written document" which is also "valuable for revealing the way that past events live on in the memories of individuals in the present".[58] Indeed, Whitlock explains that life narrative, which is drawn from personal memories, is distinctive because it "refers to lived

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[52] Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue: Shoreline, 2007), 8.
[53] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 8.
[54] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 5; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 12; Rosanne Kennedy, 'Memory, history and the law: Testimony and collective memory in Holocaust and Stolen Generations trials', in *Memory and History: Understanding memory as source and subject,* ed. Joan Tumblety (London: Routledge, 2013), 51.
[55] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 5.
[56] Kennedy, 'Memory, history and the law'.
[57] Kennedy, 'Memory, history and the law', 51.
[58] Kennedy, 'Memory, history and the law', 63.

experience; it professes subjective truths; and above all it signals to the reader an intended fidelity to history and memory".[59]

The importance, meaning, and, indeed, salient power, of personal memories are heightened and concentrated by the potential to be shaped according to present situations.[60] For, as Paris observes, ultimately "what matters is the way that the past – however it is conceived – can be bent to serve the present".[61] These qualities make Mizrahi memoirs simultaneously problematic and insightfully enriching in terms of knowledge about the past. Yet they also represent a deeply personal and human form of history situated in present needs and action.[62] I turn now from personal memory to look more closely at the related concept of collective memory.

Collective memory can be understood, like a shared language, as the generally agreed understanding about the past that a group holds in common within the present.[63] In this sense, collective memory has a strong relationship to group identity and belonging.[64] Identities are constructed dialogically through narrative, so "the identity of a person, or a group of people, take the form of stories told . . . [thus] relying upon models and styles of emplotment already existing in a culture".[65] This would include collective memories and narratives about the past, which in turn can form the basis of identity creation in the present.

Group remembrance of a collective memory often takes an abstract form such as discourse, narrative, tradition, commemoration, performance, and symbol.[66] Watson describes this collective nature of memory in helpful terms as follows:

> There are also collective or shared memories that are not dependent on a single individual's direct experience of the past. That is, we may 'remember' an event – have a shared understanding that is represented as a 'memory' – that we ourselves did not experience . . . [because we] share with others sets of images that have been passed down . . . through the media of memory – through paintings, architecture, monuments, ritual, storytelling, poetry, music, photos, and film.[67]

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[59] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 12.
[60] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 4.
[61] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450.
[62] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 8. Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450. Within her life writing Schinasi-Silver displays an overt awareness of this quality that memoirs can possess.
[63] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 15. This understanding is drawn from Halbwachs.
[64] Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xii.
[65] Couze Venn as quoted by Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson in 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xii.
[66] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 15, 20. Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 8.
[67] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 8.

Although this idea of collective memory has received considerable scholarly and public attention since the late nineteenth century, there is yet to be a firmly agreed definition.[68] Consequently, different disciplines have and continue to use a wide variety of terminologies, such as 'racial memory', 'cultural memory', 'public memory', and 'collective memory', among others.[69] Each combination of terms brings with it different loaded meanings and implications, even with some overlap. This is important to keep in mind given the highly politicised region that Mizrahim originate from, the complexity of their identities, and the discrimination and misrepresentation they have often suffered as a result of Eurocentric and disciplinary bias. Shohat has shown how skewed perspectives have previously contributed to an objectifying, exploitative, and inaccurate representation of Mizrahi experiences.[70]

Consequently, to ensure a more balanced and inclusive approach, I have specifically chosen to use terminology previously developed by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.[71] I use Halbwachs' descriptor of 'collective memory' and not 'public memory' nor the now very loaded term 'racial memory'.[72] Halbwachs situated memory as variable and changing according to the present. Crucially, he also recognised individuals as social beings, the group context of remembering, and how individual memories are mediated socially but also contribute towards the creation of collective remembrances and traditions.[73] Halbwachs' formulation presents an appropriate and inclusive terminology that easily incorporates the

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[68] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 16, 29; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 9. Indeed, as Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy have rightly observed (2011: 29), "'memory studies' may be a 'new formation,' [however] 'collective memory' and interest in it is not".

[69] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 12, 22, 27, 48; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 1, 6. Tumblety also notes the emergence of the concept of 'species memory' – the concept of genetically encoded remembrances. Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy have conducted a considerable study of the concept of memory in its collective sense across a wide variety of disciplines and terminologies, and have concluded that (2013: 48): "Too many studies in different fields announce the same conclusions as if they were new, remain within a small section of the literature without looking over the disciplinary hedges, or fail to speak in a language that is general enough to advance truly interdisciplinary dialogue, a value announced much more often than it is redeemed". Consequently, I have endeavoured as far as possible to genuinely take into account the insights of multiple fields in relation to those relevant for analysing Mizrahi memoirs.

[70] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 330-358; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 201-232; Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Sergio DellaPergola, ""Sephardic and Oriental" Jews in Israel and Western Countries: Migration, Social Change, and Identification', in *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews,* ed. Peter Y. Medding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 38. Shabi and DellaPergola also note the systemic inequality that Mizrahim faced in an ongoing capacity after their arrival within the State of Israel.

[71] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 5. Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy (2011: 5) critique and contextualise the consideration of Halbwachs as being "the founding father of contemporary memory studies" and that "his ideas did not emerge from a vacuum". While I acknowledge the importance of understanding Halbwachs' work as part of a longer intellectual history, this does not diminish his highly significant findings.

[72] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 16, 18-19.

[73] Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 16, 18-19.

multiple ways in which, and levels on which, memory exists and operates beyond the immediately personal. He "established memory as a social category", recognised the interconnections between society and the individual and emphasised the plurality of memory and the multiple social frameworks that can influence and shape it.[74]

The term 'collective memory' describes group remembrance without imposing outside restrictions or assumptions about what is considered to constitute a 'group' or indeed their method of remembrance.[75] This is important because the official criteria for being formally recognised as a Jew are still very much shaped by the concept of genetic descent and definitions of legal citizenship established by the State of Israel.[76] This can be problematic and exclusionary for individuals and groups (such as the Lemba of southern Africa) who consider themselves to be Jewish (and may follow cultural and religious adherence to Judaism) and yet fall outside these imposed definitions.[77] Consequently, in this project I have purposely chosen to consider self-identification as the basis of being considered Jewish or not. Mizrahi memoirs reveal a diversity of understandings of 'Jewishness', including religious and secular perspectives.[78] As a concept, collective memory easily encompasses this diversity.

I consider collective memory to be a more inclusive concept than 'public memory'. For example, although public memory can sometimes be a useful term, slippage can easily occur where 'public' is considered synonymous with 'state citizens' and 'remembrance' is

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[74] Bernd Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse*, 8; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 15; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 20.
[75] Nadia Abu El-Haj, 'Jews – Lost and Found: Genetic History and the Evidentiary Terrain of Recognition', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 40-58.
[76] El-Haj, 'Jews – Lost and Found'.
[77] El-Haj, 'Jews – Lost and Found'.
[78] Lucette Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007); Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008); Collette Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile: A Memoir with Recipes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001); Farideh Goldin, *Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003); Joshua Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad: Memoir of an Israeli Intelligence Officer* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1997); Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008); Violette Shamash, *Memories of Eden: A Journey through Jewish Baghdad* (Virginia Water: Forum Books Ltd., 2008); Naim Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009); Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem, Ibis Editions, 2007); Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); Heskel M. Haddad, *Flight from Babylon: Iraq, Iran, Israel, America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1986); David Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press Inc., 1999); Sabiha Abi David Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember* (Caulfield South: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001); Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 2004); Saul Silas Fathi, *Full Circle: Escape from Baghdad and the Return* (New York: Saul Silas Fathi, 2005); Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004); Andre Aciman, ed. *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Rachel Shabi, *Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

understood in terms of national commemoration at formal memorials.[79] Firstly, this risks excluding or obscuring other social statuses such as 'outsider', stateless, refugee, and immigrant – differing social categories of turbulence and transition, 'legal' and 'illegal', that were encountered in variant combinations by Mizrahim within their transnational movements.[80] These cross-border experiences, the shifting categories, and transnational dispersal that Mizrahim endured do not easily lend themselves to a single formalised monument in a particular place nor a restrictive nation-state centric understanding of history.[81] It is for this reason that Shohat advocates a relational approach, rather than state-centric approach to Mizrahi history and identity.[82] Consequently, other cultural ways of commemoration and subtler forms of group remembrance – 'private' and portable – such as cuisine (which I examine in more depth in *Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food* and indeed the memoirs themselves, need to be taken into account.[83] The concept of collective memory easily encompasses a variety of different understandings of status, group, and forms of remembrance, making it highly appropriate to use in relation to the experiences described by Mizrahim within their memoirs.

In Mizrahi memoirs personal memory and collective memory are clearly interlinked – a relationship that Halbwachs also initially observed and established within his model of memory transmission.[84] Unlike most of his contemporaries, Halbwachs took his investigation into memory and remembrance beyond a purely nation-state or class based focus.[85] At the time, many were exclusively focussed on the category of class as well as society level analyses that were offered by Marxist and more purely Durkheimian

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[79] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 334-337; Elazar Barkan, 'The Politics of Return: When Rights Become Rites', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 227-228, 234; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-3. Barkan discusses the problem of categories and rights in relation to displacement, Shohat also does so in terms specific to the situation and 'labelling' of Mizrahim. Rothberg notes the common conflation of remembrance as limited to physical national memorials, which also stands as one of the main problems with the competitive memory model discussed within this chapter.

[80] Fathi, *Full Circle.* While these are issues that emerge within most Mizrahi memoirs (and will be returned to at different points within this thesis) Fathi's memoir is an excellent example of blurred categories of 'legal' and 'illegal' and classifications of 'refugee' or 'immigrant' during displacement, resettlement, and immigration across multiple countries.

[81] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 330-333. Nevertheless, I would like to add that this does not mean that a memorial should not be built nor greater inclusion sought within nation based historical narratives.

[82] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 330-333.

[83] Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources,* 18, 27, 69; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 223-224; Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 86-89; Ann Rigney, 'Portable Monuments: Literature, Cultural Memory, and the Case of Jeanie Deans', *Poetics Today* 25 (2004): 361-396. Shohat notes that Arabic oriented cuisine and music (points of commonality between Arabic Muslims and Mizrahim) is an important dimension in their identity and history that is often ignored to instead emphasise difference and division. The sensory aspects of memory, including cuisine, are examined in *Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food.*

[84] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 14-15.

[85] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 18-21; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 9.

approaches. And yet, Halbwachs through his research identified the 'family' as the most concrete demonstration of the links in memory transmission between an individual and a collective group.[86] This is because the 'family' is usually the first group (or collective) that someone is born into, included, and involved within. It is formative in socialising and instilling particular ideas and beliefs within a person. Depending on their personality, these beliefs are sometimes adopted or reacted against and are further shaped by inclusion or exclusion from the 'family' group.[87] Personal memories of shared experiences can also be influenced by 'agreed versions' that inevitably emerge during discussion. In this way, even personal memories are socially created and shaped. In turn, a similar dynamic of shared experience, discussion, transmission, and influence over remembrances (including ideas and practices surrounding belonging or exclusion) can occur within larger collectives such as a religion, culture, locality, or nation.[88] Exposure and access to these larger social groupings usually happens, at least initially, through the 'family.' Being Jewish, for many Mizrahim a particularly strong emphasis is also placed culturally, socially, and religiously, upon the centrality of the 'family.'[89] That Halbwachs identifies and understands the importance of this within memory creation and transmission establishes a further resonance between aspects of his model and what is shown within Mizrahi memoirs themselves.

In sum, personal and collective memory are inherently interlinked. While personal memories are formed through the senses and at level of individual psychology, these are comprehended and understood through learnt frameworks of meaning acquired in collective contexts via socialisation and acculturation.[90] Collective memory is formed and expressed socially and therefore:

> [C]omes into existence when people *talk* about the memories that they consider important enough to share with others. Consequently, both *social relevance* and *communication* are indispensible elements . . . For a memory to be shared it first has to be articulated and thus depends on the shared cultural forms and conventions of

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[86] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 18-21; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 9.
[87] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 18-21; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 9.
[88] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 18-21; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 9.
[89] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.*
[90] Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse,* 9-13; Jan Assman, 'Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism' in *The Collective Memory Reader,* eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzsky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 212-213.

> language . . . Both language and collective memory are idealised systems that can not exist without individual speech acts and memories, respectively.[91]

Depending on their unique personal situation, an individual can participate in many different "memory communities" across their lifetime, including their family and relatives but also friendship groups, colleagues, local, regional, and national communities, classes, cultures, ethnicities, philosophies, religions, and more.[92] Each group identity in the present is based on a generally agreed and shared consensus of the past, but one which is fluid as well as informed and negotiated in the present through discourse.[93] As Steinbock observes, "[s]ocial groups change over time, and their memories change along with them".[94] What is considered to be 'important' has a longer duration and as Jan Assman argues, "[m]etaphorically speaking, a discourse has a life of its own which reproduces itself in those who are joining in it".[95] Crucial to this process, factors such as trauma and intense emotion cause a far longer salience of specific memories at the personal level, and when shared, these fuel the long term persistence of a specific discourse amongst a group creating a collective memory.[96]

We can understand Mizrahi memoirs then, as publically shared narratives of personal memories of a collective displacement and dispersal – an intensely emotional experience which has cemented itself as one of the collectively understood foundations of Mizrahi identity and heritage, even though the ways this dispersal manifested was not always uniform. As each memoir is published and is added to the body of works on this subject they contribute to identity-work in the negotiation, formation, preservation, and transmission both individual and collective memories of this past historical experience.

What has ultimately resulted from Halbwach's insights and approaches influenced by him is an understanding of collective memory that is less monolithic, more inclusive of diversity and multiplicity, and that importantly also recognises and incorporates the individual within its schema.[97] As Rothberg explains:

> For Halbwachs and the tradition that has emerged from him, all memories are simultaneously individual and collective: while individual subjects are the necessary

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[91] Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse,* 12.
[92] Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse,* 13; Assman, 'Moses the Egyptian', 213.
[93] Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse,* 13; Assman, 'Moses the Egyptian', 210, 213.
[94] Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse,* 13.
[95] Assman, 'Moses the Egyptian', 210, 212.
[96] Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse,* 292-293
[97] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 14-15.

> locus of the act of remembrance, those individuals are imbued with frameworks common to the collectives in which they live.[98]

Mizrahi memoirs reflect this understanding. As life stories, they derive from personal experiences and memories of the past.[99] This is history in a representational and experiential mode: history as life, life as history, and reflection based upon personal memories and lived experience. But through their very telling, these narratives also situate and connect the memoirist to the histories and remembrances of a wide variety of other collectives with which they were, and continue to be, involved, or from which they were excluded. Rather than a singular, monolithic, universal narrative, a plethora of collective experiences, remembrances, and traditions are included within and between these different Mizrahi texts, written by Mizrahim who continue to identity with Jewish heritage. These collectives are not just those of nations, although they are present too, but also importantly include 'family' and friendship networks. Local, national, and transnational levels, as well as religious, secular, or political identification (of different types) are all present in a wide variety of ways within these memoirs.[100] Personal memories and collective memories are indeed shown in these life stories to be inherently interlinked, manifold, and multilayered. What does this mean then, for their dynamics?

Memory dynamics

Mizrahi memoirs offer insight into the dynamics of memory because they are situated at the nexus of entangled histories, but also cut across many of the assumptions generally made about Jewish identity, history, and the Middle East.[101] Mizrahi memories – and memoirs – can aid in re-balancing and creating more inclusive histories because "the construction of memory and the construction of history do not take place in isolation from each other".[102] As Watson has observed, "in asking how people remember what is meant to be forgotten, matters of transmission – the mechanics of shared memory and hidden

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[98] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 14-15.
[99] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 12; Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview), 263.
[100] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.*
[101] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209, 213-216, 227-229; Rachel Shabi, *Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 2009); Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 8.
[102] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 8.

histories – take centre stage".[103] How the dynamics of memory are understood to operate is important because the issue of which understandings of the past are drawn upon, why, and in what way, directly impacts upon present identities, powerful politics, and anticipated futures.[104] These are themes that come up throughout Mizrahi memoirs as a whole; however, the memoirs by Jawary and Shamash, for example, are quite overt in contemplating this dilemma.[105]

For Mizrahim, the workings of memory directly involve questions about recognition or otherwise of their history and existence within their previous homelands, the injustice of displacement, dispersal, and resettlement, and the ongoing issue of whether their traditions, culture, and stories will be retained by their descendants.[106] Mizrahi remembrances are of different experiences from those of Ashkenazim, which generally dominate understandings of Jewish history and identity.[107] It is for this very reason that Simon, Laskier, and Reguer created their edited volume on Mizrahi history with the specific hope to:

> counteract the stereotype that has evolved of Middle Eastern Jews as primitive premodern people and recast them as possessors of densely textured and creative public and private intellectual lives. This volume is an attempt to reclaim modern Middle Eastern Jewish material, cultural, and spiritual existence, not just to prove that such a history existed.[108]

Stillman has also contributed to writing formal histories of Mizrahim and affirms that their experiences are distinct:

> the near extinction of Arabic-speaking Jewry was not due to the annihilation as with Europe's Jews in the Holocaust – although the Jews of a number of Arabic countries . . . [experienced] Nazi and Fascist anti-Semitism during World War II – but rather, it was due to mass migration.[109]

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[103] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 7.
[104] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 3; Paris, *Long Shadows,* 405; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5.
[105] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*, Shamash, *Memories of Eden*.
[106] Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden.*
[107] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 214-220; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Reeva Spector Simon, Menachem Michael Laskier, and Sara Reguer, eds. *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), viii; Zion Zohar, ed. *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 3-9; Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), xi, 10; Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), xxi.
[108] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, '*The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* viii.
[109] Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times,* xxi.

As Rubie Watson has observed, however, "official histories, while plentiful, never preclude the active construction and transmission of unofficial pasts".[110] These scholarly texts referenced here, among others, as well as the memoirs that form the focus of this project represent a growing literature specifically on Mizrahim as well as repeated attempts to write and consolidate a more inclusive history. The rise in scholarly attention to Mizrahim and the increase in published memoirs may signal a shift: these once totally unofficial experiences are becoming more 'mainstream'.[111] The dynamics between these different, yet both still Jewish, collective memories have implications for how Jewish identities and differences of experience are, and will be, understood and recognised. The discourse of a stark division between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East also draws significantly from framings of Jewish history and culture as 'foreign' and European. Mizrahi history and remembrances challenge the rhetoric of foreignness and irreconcilable separateness between Jews and Muslims.[112] Ironically, both the State of Israel and the surrounding Middle Eastern nations currently assert this discourse of separation based off a perceived need to embed distinction as the basis of bolstering national sovereignty.[113] As Shabi explains, "when Zionism and Iraqi nationalism developed, in opposing directions, that forced Jewish citizens to choose: what are you, and to whom are you most loyal?".[114] This is an example of completing nationalisms in nationalistic discourse and the political entanglements of the region. Mizrahi memoirs witness the long duration of their presence in the region and a way of life steeped in Middle Eastern culture with points of shared commonality with the other groups they lived with. The dynamics between this collective memory and the discourse of difference will have implications for how both history and futures in the region might be understood and imagined.[115] For example, Shohat points outs that clearly:

> this conceptualisation of East and West has important implications in this age of the 'peace process', since it avoids the inherent question of the majority of the population within Israel being from the Middle East – Palestinian citizens of Israel as well as Mizrahi-Sephardi Jews.[116]

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110 Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 2.
111 Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry;* Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times;* Medding, *Sephardic Jewry & Mizrahi Jews;* Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands.*
112 Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy.*
113 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 216, 219, 222-226; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 223.
114 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 223.
115 Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 11; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 18-239; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 211-214, 225.
116 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.

Until relatively recently, scholarly discourse on memory dynamics has been dominated by the competitive memory model.[117] In this perspective, different collective memories are seen to be locked within an intense struggle where eventually one remembrance will dominate while competing versions of different experiences will be eclipsed, silenced, and ultimately forgotten.[118] This model was primarily developed with a focus on the public visibility of national commemoration practices. The presence or absence of official remembrance memorials were seen to indicate the dominance or absence of select collective memories with the presumption of "the public sphere as a pre-given, limited space".[119] Earlier scholars working on models of totalitarianism initially had held a similar perspective where it was argued that "the public destroys the private under state regimes. Control, they contend, is effectively exerted as the state engulfs its citizens".[120] In the competitive memory model interactions between groups are said to be locked within "memory wars" ever repeating an all or nothing intense "zero-sum game" with domination or subordination, complete inclusion or exclusion, occurring.[121] Consequently, the dynamics between diverse collective memories and different perspectives on the past are viewed as being saturated with the potential of violence over limited resources, either as implied undercurrents or in an overt and active form culminating in atrocity.

If this model were applied to an 'all-Jewish' context, Holocaust remembrance and European-focused Jewish history would be seen as acting to exclude and silence Mizrahi accounts.[122] Shohat is one such scholar that has identified the silencing that has concretely occurred due to Eurocentric bias in the study of Jewish history.[123] Shohat, however, manages to avoid a singular overemphasis on exclusion (a pitfall of the competitive memory model) by suggesting ways this bias can be corrected and stressing the relational nature of identities between groups.[124] This is something that Rothberg also does.[125]

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[117] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 2-3; Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, eds. *Transnational memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson, eds. *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen, eds. *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies* (Oxford: Berghan Books, 2016). Authors such as those noted above have been expanding beyond the restrictions of the competitive model.
[118] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5; Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 14-15. Consequently, (1994: 15) "if one accepts the model, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to understand how alternative versions of the past, the second economy, and nepotism could emerge".
[119] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.
[120] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 14.
[121] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1, 3-5.
[122] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3.
[123] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'.
[124] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'.
[125] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3.

In turn, in a competitive memory model, the emergence and growth of Mizrahi memoirs which offer alternative Jewish narratives to Ashkenazic experiences might be perceived as a potential threat to dominant narratives. The reality is, however, far more complex than the competitive memory model suggests. Yet it was developed out of genuine concern about the dominance and possible erasure of lesser known histories by more 'official ones'.[126] Close examination by Rubie Watson of case studies where the risk of this erasure appears highest, such as under totalitarian regimes, has repeatedly shown that "even as the creators of 'correct' history jealously guarded their right to produce historical texts, alternative remembrances and alternative histories survived and on occasion even prospered".[127]

One of the major downfalls of the competitive memory model is that the dynamics it describes perpetuates pain without leaving open the real possibility for change. One set of collective memories of atrocity or injustice is pitted against the other in comparative terms – the result often being to establish if one seems more 'worthy' of attention or recognition over the other.[128] For example, Mendelsohn directly encountered the discourse of a European biased hierarchy of suffering when discussing atrocities against indigenous North Americans. Recognition of whether or not these atrocities constituted genocide repeatedly brought up competitive comparisons with the Holocaust.[129] I agree with Mendelsohn's response to this situation, where he argued that:

> this whole my-genocide-was-worse-than-your-genocide thing seems to me to betray a fundamental lack of moral and historical imagination – an essential failure to understand just why genocide in general is an abomination. The very *idea* that one genocide could be 'worse' than another is abominable, as far as I'm concerned.[130]

As Curthoys and Docker point out, Raphael Lemkin himself – whose work led to the very definition of genocide:

> believed that the loss of the culture of *any* disintegrated or crippled group is a loss to the world culture, to the human cosmos, for humanity's whole cultural heritage is a product of the contributions of all peoples.[131]

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[126] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 2, 4, 7.
[127] Watson, 'Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism', 2-3. The focus of these case studies was on the dynamics of history and memory within societies that had experienced, or were under, state socialism within Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and in China.
[128] Saidiya Hartman, Eva Hoffman, Daniel Mendelsohn, and Nancy K. Miller, 'Memoirs of Return', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Nancy K. Miller and Marianne Hirsch (New York: Columbia, University Press, 2011), 118-119; Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, 111-112.
[129] Mendelsohn discussed by Hartman, Hoffman, Mendelsohn, and Miller, 'Memoirs of Return', 118-119.
[130] Mendelsohn discussed by Hartman, Hoffman, Mendelsohn, and Miller, 'Memoirs of Return', 119.
[131] Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, 119. My emphasis added.

In the configuration that the competitive memory model suggests, each past (locked in a vicious cycle) feeds into and creates further pain in the present, building and extending additional silences and injustices by suppressing or denying the suffering of others. This approach comes perilously close to advocating competitive attitudes towards trauma through creating a 'hierarchy of suffering' by categorising what constitutes the 'worthiest wounds' to bear.[132] This approach ignores the diversity of subjective experience, cultural differences, and the interconnectedness of histories.[133] It is for this precise reason that Shohat advocates a relational approach to identities that values commonalities as well as differences.[134] To say, however, that the competitive memory model does not fit the Mizrahi case is not to say that aspects of it do not appear. Certainly, Mizrahim have been subjected to discrimination, inequality, and exclusion – both within their original homelands and the places they came to resettle, including the State of Israel and the West. Mizrahi history, as taught within the State of Israel, has also in many ways been manipulated, ignored, or subordinated to Ashkenazi experiences within national narratives.[135] Yet the relationship between groups and collective memories both within Mizrahi memoirs and outside them is distinctly different from the singular picture described by the competitive memory model.

There are additional issues in applying a competitive memory model to the situation of Mizrahim. Firstly, within this model the pasts or histories of different groups are considered to be separate. Consequently, identities based on such pasts are configured in absolute terms as singular, exclusive, and 'pure'.[136] This in itself is problematic given that "even within a single society, pasts, heritages, and identities should be considered as plurals" given our contemporary context of the "increasing hybridisation of cultures, peoples, and languages".[137] In the case of Mizrahi memoirs, trying to impose arbitrary divisions between the histories of the groups involved is impossible – there are too many shared experiences, overlaps, and entanglements. In short, pasts are shared and, where they appear different, they are still strongly implicated in each other.[138] Morris-Suzuki, for

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132 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 8-9, 29; Hartman, Hoffman, Mendelsohn, and Miller, 'Memoirs of Return', 118-119.
133 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-207.
134 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-207.
135 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 226-229; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 182-184. Both Shohat and Shabi mention the 2002 photograph of artist Meir Gal entitled 'Nine out of four hundred'. As Shabi explains (2009: 182-184), nine out of four hundred "was the number of pages dealing with Mizrahi history. The book he held up wasn't exceptional. A survey of history books on the Israeli school curriculum in the 1990s found that none contained more than 4 per cent content on Middle Eastern Jews".
136 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3, 5; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 11; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 353-355.
137 Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 2; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 11; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 313.
138 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 28-29; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27.

example, further discusses interconnection and 'implication' around the issue of historical responsibility because later generations and immigrants often feel a sense of disconnection from the atrocities of the past carried out in the place they now dwell within.[139] She argues nonetheless that "though we may not be responsible for such acts of aggression in the sense of having caused them, we are 'implicated' in them, in the sense that *they* cause *us*" through being "beneficiaries of the results of those actions" and our enmeshment "in structures, institutions and webs of ideas which are the product of history, formed by acts of imagination, courage, generosity, greed and brutality performed by previous generations".[140]

Mizrahi narratives instead present and demonstrate pluralistic understandings of both personal and collective identity, revealing a picture of diversity, hybridity, fluidity, and adaptation of a myriad of *identities* within pre- and post- displacement life.[141] The situation of Mizrahim is consistent with Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson's observation that "many of the world's peoples are living 'in translation': inhabiting transitional and transl(oc)ational realities as migrants, diasporas, the colonised".[142] Shohat, illustrating the complexities of these entangled histories, makes the additional point, however, that Mizrahim (as citizens of the State of Israel) can also be viewed as 'colonisers' in relation to the situation of Palestinians.[143]

The competitive memory model is inappropriate in the case of Mizrahim because it also assumes a deterministic understanding of the past.[144] By deterministic I mean that if pasts are considered to be pure and separate, as the competitive memory model claims, then this greatly restricts the nature of identities that can be constituted in the present-day based on this understanding of history. This stance is restrictive in that it also does not account for the choice to articulate an injustice, but then to forgive and set it aside.[145] Jawary's memoir is a good example of this. She still mourns the pain of forced separation from her home-city of Baghdad, yet nevertheless retains her love for this city and its present people.[146] A rigid and deterministic view of the past is challenged by the choices and narrative creativity shown within the writing of Mizrahi life stories. A multiplicity of pasts and histories,

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139 Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27.
140 Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27.
141 Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xi-xii; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 352-354.
142 Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xi-xii.
143 Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 352-354.
144 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4-5.
145 Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember.*
146 Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember.*

varying in emphasis and selection, is drawn upon by Mizrahim within their life-writing. Diverse affiliative connections are made with numerous collective memories, shaped and selected according to personal experiences and circumstances.[147] While all Mizrahi memoirs display this to varying degrees according to the individual, Fathi's memoir provides a good example of diverse affiliations because of the young age at which he was displaced, the breadth of his life experience, and his constant self-reflection (according to his memoir's narrative) about himself in relation to the numerous countries he visits.[148]

Lastly, the competitive memory model also sets up a relationship between groups that is set in deceptively absolute terms.[149] As Rothberg states "those who understand memory as a form of competition see only winner and losers in the struggle for collective articulation and recognition".[150] This stance shuts down the possibility of grey zones, dialogue, mutual exchange, compromise, change, growth, or shared spaces – all of which are evident when examining Mizrahi memoirs. A different dynamic is discernibly present rather than an exclusively competitive relationship between groups, variant perspectives, and differing collective memories. In the telling of their personal and collective histories, Mizrahi memoirists frequently show a considered and nuanced awareness of other experiences and remembrances within different places and spaces – some of which Mizrahim come to adopt or see themselves as part of too. These include, for instance, Holocaust remembrance but also Palestinian experiences of displacement, the atomic bombing of Japan, indigenous North American histories and historicities, the attacks of 9/11, the wars within Afghanistan and Iraq, and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.[151] In the sharing of Mizrahi displacement and dispersal narratives, remembrance of these other events is engaged with in terms of connection, if similar, and considered conversation, if different, rather than the subtext of violence or mutual exclusion that a competitive framework presumes.

Multidirectional memory

147 Fathi, *Full Circle.*
148 Fathi, *Full Circle.*
149 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.
150 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.
151 Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*. While this occurs across the body of texts, those referenced above provide a cross-section of those whose authors demonstrate a high awareness of different interlocking pasts and presents within their narrative focus.

In the face of the complexities presented by Mizrahi experiences and life writing, Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory offers a vital intervention.[152] Rather than viewing the interactions between different collective memoires as simply efforts to eclipse each other, multidirectional memory reflects and acknowledges the interconnected and entangled nature of experience, recollection, and representation.[153] In appreciating the entangled relationship between pasts and peoples, the commonalities as well as the differences, Rothberg's model is highly complementary with Shohat's relational approach to identities.[154] Rothberg developed this new framework by combining insights from Holocaust studies and postcolonial studies. This involved investigating Holocaust remembrance in relation to the strong entanglements between "black Atlantic and French-Algerian contact zones", reading this "across and through Jewish history".[155] Despite the presence of apparently differing historical experiences and collective memories, Rothberg found that these were actually involved in complex dialogues, mutual exchanges, and interconnections.[156] Importantly, Holocaust remembrance was shown to *enable* other collective memories rather than only *exclude* them, as is often claimed.[157] These insights – of entangled connections – make the multidirectional memory model complementary with Shohat's recommendations for Mizrahi studies.[158] Shohat specifically identified the acceptance of historical entanglements and relational parallels as crucial for the understanding and accurate representation of Mizrahi experiences.[159] To equitably encapsulate Mizrahi experiences, past and present, she strongly advised using cross-disciplinary approaches which recognise the interconnections between different places, peoples, and temporalities – multidirectional memory does this.[160] Rothberg's model is squarely situated within a Jewish context but also, as Shohat advocates, importantly recognises and values relatedness and interconnection with other histories, memories, places, and spaces – making it ideal for studying Mizrahi narratives and life writing.

Compared to the competitive model, multidirectional memory presents a different understanding of the relationship between collective memories and present identities which

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[152] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory.* Rothberg demonstrates this new epistemological stance to collective memory within this book.
[153] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5, 11-12, 18, 27-29; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209.
[154] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5, 11-12, 18, 27-29; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209.
[155] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* xiii.
[156] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.
[157] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-3, 6-7, 11.
[158] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'.
[159] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209, 213-229; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 332-333, 352-354.
[160] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 353-354; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209.

are viewed as relational rather than absolute.[161] This is consistent with the perspective within postcolonial theory (a background that Shohat and Rothberg share) that identities are unstable and are negotiated and created through interaction within narrative, discourse, and representation.[162] Nevertheless, power inequalities between differing "articulations of memory" continue to be acknowledged, as does the "urgency of memory, with its life-and-death stakes".[163] Rothberg recognises that "powerful social, political, and psychic forces articulate themselves in every act of remembrance" and the "differentials of access and power that marks the public sphere".[164]

Instead of one collective memory acting simply to eclipse another or be eclipsed, this relationship is made more complex – indeed multidirectional. Rather than assuming a fixed result of silencing, loss, exclusion, and destruction will inevitably result, possible outcomes are recognised as unpredictable.[165] This includes recognition of the ability to create and construct new understandings of the past and different configurations of identity in light of interaction.[166] Rothberg argues that "the content of a memory has intrinsic meaning but takes on meaning precisely in relationship to other memories in a network of associations".[167] Interestingly, Domańska suggests that "every kind of human activity is essentially a way of searching for oneself and for self-realisation" – writing about one's past or reading about those of others shape knowledge of human experience but also the self.[168]

In the framework of multidirectional memory, the public sphere remains the theatre where interaction is played out. Rather than being seen as a limited and static resource, it is instead viewed as an "open ended field of articulation and struggle" with greater flexibility and fluidity than is often anticipated".[169] Rothberg explains further:

> In contrast [to the competitive model], pursuing memory's multidirectionality encourages us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction.[170]

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[161] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4-7, 11; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209; Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xii.
[162] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4-7, 11; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209; Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xii.
[163] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 16-17, 21.
[164] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 16, 21.
[165] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 11-12, 16.
[166] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5-6, 16; Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 22-23; Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 257; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.
[167] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 16.
[168] Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 257.
[169] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5, 21.
[170] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.

This echoes Shohat's insight that identities are not static but often shift along with new political circumstances that can redefine categories of inclusion and exclusion.[171] Different narratives of the past and collective memories are selectively used to justify and negotiate these categorisations of belonging.[172] Within this discursive dynamic, "transfers . . . take place between diverse places and times during acts of remembrance" as identities are reconfigured to fit new situations.[173] Pasts, and remembrances of them, are not exclusive or separate, but instead overlap, although at first they may appear oppositional.[174] As Rothberg explains:

> [W]e cannot stem the structural multidirectionality of memory. Even if it were desirable – as it sometimes seems to be – to maintain a wall, or *cordon sanitaire,* between different histories, it is not possible to do so. Memories are mobile; histories are implicated in each other.[175]

These interconnections between histories and memories directly shape how identities are perceived to operate because they are constructed in present time using inevitably selective understandings of the past.[176] As a consequence of multidirectional memory, identities can no longer be understood as absolute, exclusive, or deterministic, but rather are fully recognised as malleable and shared, often in surprising ways.[177] It is important here to note that while the focus here are memories, remembrances, and narratives of events – the specificity of each and every event continues to be maintained "since no two events are ever alike".[178] Conceptualising Mizrahi history, memory, and identity within a multidirectional framework liberates analysis from a static, artificial, and restrictive mode, shifting instead towards an intellectual stance that sees all three as "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative".[179]

Multidirectional memory, as a framework, is more reflective of Mizrahi experiences and their life writing than a competitive memory approach. The presence and dynamics of multidirectional memory can be clearly seen throughout Mizrahi memoirs. As "narrative acts" they bear witness to injustice, record memories of past experiences and present circumstances, along with the shifts that occur throughout the renegotiation of space,

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171 Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* 206.
172 Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 4.
173 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 11.
174 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 7, 11.
175 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 313.
176 Domańska, 'Ewa Domańska (Self-interview)', 265; Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 7; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5, 18-19.
177 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5, 18-19.
178 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 18.
179 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3.

place, and identities.[180] As representations in the form of literary commodities these published texts circulate throughout a global context with the potential to "shape understanding" during this socially and politically charged time where identities tend to be considered in more absolute terms.[181] Yet they are also very personal stories, sharing subjective experiences of self, family, and others across different times and places. They are transnational narratives of disruption and displacement. This quality situates them in a relationship with other groups' collective experiences of exile or dispersal, be it as refugee or immigrant. Importantly, these are also Jewish stories with a relationship to other Jewish histories and remembrances.

Holocaust remembrance

Collectively, as previously mentioned, memoirs of Mizrahi displacement constitute a very different type of remembrance in contrast to Ashkenazi Holocaust survivor testimonies.[182] Yet both are important and both are 'authentically' Jewish. Of the two, Mizrahi displacement remains generally a lesser known historical experience.[183] This is not the case regarding the Holocaust. Over the last fifty years, Holocaust remembrance has "move[d] towards the centre of consciousness in many Western European, North American, and Middle Eastern societies" as well as significant, if more general, influence noticeable throughout the rest of the world.[184] Rothberg, for example, observes of Holocaust memory that "there is probably no other single event that encapsulates the struggles for recognition that accompany collective memory in such a condensed and global form".[185] Paris also notes more generally that memory of World War II "which sits implacably at the heart of the twentieth century, refus[es] to be displaced".[186]

Significantly, there is direct geographical overlap between areas of greatest Holocaust memory saturation and the regions that Mizrahim were initially displaced from and subsequently resettled within.[187] Rothberg mentions that Western Europe, North America and the Middle East are the greatest regions of saturation.[188] Comparatively, as mentioned

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[180] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 10-11.
[181] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 2-7; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 7, 10-11; Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xiv-xv. Whitlock (2007: 5) notes that there has been a "resurgence of fundamentalist forms of cultural identification based on religion and nationalism . . . [due to] the armed conflicts of the war on terror".
[182] Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* xxi.
[183] Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* xxi; Simon, Laskier, & Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* vii-xi.
[184] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 6; Paris, *Long Shadows,* 451.
[185] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 6.
[186] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 451.
[187] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 6; DellaPergola, 'Sephardic and Oriental'.
[188] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 6; DellaPergola, 'Sephardic and Oriental'.

in *Chapter One: Introductory Overview,* Mizrahim predominantly resettled within the State of Israel, Europe, Britain, and North America – although communities also became established within South America and Australia. Where people go, their pasts and memories travel with them.[189] The places that Mizrahim resettled were spaces where Ashkenazim had already been living or had themselves resettled. They had already established themselves and set a generalised precedent on what they and others considered as 'being Jewish'. This precedent spoke of a Europeanised Jewish cultural identity and appearance, one that differed from the Middle Eastern cultural background of most Mizrahim and did not necessarily match Mizrahi historical experiences or collective memories.[190] Zohar explains, regarding the situation within the State of Israel, that:

> under Ashkenazi leadership to be a 'good Israeli' meant subscribing to socialist ideals, living out Western values, and rejecting all but the most modern adaptations of religious identity. Naturally, this paradigm presented a serious problem for Sephardi [and Mizrahi] immigrants and their children. To accept it, meant to reject their past, their traditions, and their very sense of self.[191]

While Zohar's observation is for the most part true, and reflected within Mizrahi memoirs, experiences were diverse.[192] Some Mizrahim, especially businessmen within Egypt and Iraq, had very much embraced a secular Westernised lifestyle before leaving their homeland as this way of life was seen as a mark of prestige and European 'civilisation'.[193] While they experienced identity conflicts following displacement, this was more oriented towards encountering discrimination at the hands of fellow Jews regarding their origins or ethnicity, rather than religious issues.[194] Haddad, for example, is religious, but repeatedly mentions the racial discrimination and cultural hierarchies that were pervasive within the State of Israel at the time.[195] Among many other examples of racial discrimination, he writes that:

> in Iraq . . . Jews were Jews, diversified as individuals but not divided . . . Now at home at last in [the State of] Israel, gathered in from all the scattered places,

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189 Gillian Polack, ed. *Baggage: Tales of Speculative Fiction* (Rockville: Borgo Press, 2014).
190 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3-6; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 213-229; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Medding, *Sephardic Jewry,* vii-xii; Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 18-19; DellaPergola, 'Sephardic and Oriental', 38-40; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
191 Zohar, *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 18-19.
192 Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No.*
193 Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*
194 Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
195 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*

> together we were worlds apart. Separate and unequal. At the top were those who'd lived in Palestine pre-Statehood; next, the *sabras,* born and bred in Israel; and in descending rank, the *Ashkenazim,* the *Sephardim,* and last and last, the Easterners. The Orientals. 'Arab' Jews. *Mizrachim.* And all of these, in turn, were subdivided into smaller units. Though disavowed by everyone in public office, the pecking order, based on origin alone, was all-pervasive. Where Arabs spat '*Yehudi!*' in Islamic states, Israelis of an upper class would utter '*Marocani!*' or '*Tunisai!*' with the same contempt.[196]

Indeed, as DellaPergola argues "in the process of immigrant absorption, [the State of] Israel did not act in the manner of a utopian society, as some would have liked to believe".[197] Nevertheless, the bringing together of these different experiences and remembrances makes this situation highly multicultural. The tensions between and among diverse Jewish identities, especially the recognition or otherwise of specifically Mizrahi experiences past and present, make understanding the interactions between collective memories especially pertinent.

As part of present conflicts within the Middle East, there is an unfortunate tendency – among all parties – to use Holocaust reference as part of aggressive rhetorical grandstanding.[198] Zertal notes how Israeli Prime Ministers have repeatedly used rhetorical discourse to equate Arabs with Nazis.[199] Holocaust denial, however, is also a strong feature of Iranian political rhetoric in heated exchanges with the State of Israel and mutual reference to the Holocaust also surfaces in exchanges within the ongoing Israeli and Palestinian conflict.[200] This demonstrates the complex entanglements of histories and present politics, but Rothberg points out that:

> in this context, the Holocaust's invocation tends to take the form of a ritual tradition of threats and insults. A typical – and relatively minor – exchange took place in February 2008 between Israeli and Palestinian spokespeople. After an Israeli defense official warned Palestinians that they would be subject to a 'shoah' (disaster or Holocaust) if they continued firing rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel, a Hamas official answered that Palestinians were faced with 'new Nazis'. Here we see in a condensed form the typical spiraling logic of memory production and the tendency of 'enemies' to share a language of suffering and retribution.[201]

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196 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 317.
197 DellaPergola, 'Sephardic and Oriental', 38.
198 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 6, 29, 311; Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
199 Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 98-99.
200 Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 98-99.
201 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 311.

Within both the State of Israel and the West, the centrality of Holocaust memory has impacted to such an extent that the level of respect or fervour someone personally displays for remembrance of this unprecedented atrocity has become associated with how 'legitimate' or 'loyal' they are to their Jewish identity.[202] Shohat also notes the 'salvational' and 'messianic' discourse present within political Zionism. This discourse creates a value judgment and identity hierarchy that equates being Israeli and living within the State of Israel as the culmination of being Jewish.[203] Dwelling elsewhere is viewed in lesser terms and, as Shohat argues:

> the metanarrative of the nation constructed one official past while simultaneously destroying other perspectives on the narrative. Non-canonical memories have been suppressed while previous affiliations have been severed.[204]

In short, Jewish identity has very much been conflated with Zionist and Israeli nationalist perspectives, with Holocaust remembrance intoned as the singular universal history and definitional paradigm that Jews should understand themselves within.[205] Ophir argues that political Zionism will ultimately diminish, yet nevertheless he observes that:

> the Holocaust is conceived of, thought, learned, and taught through the prism of the question of Jewish identity. The Holocaust is used and abused as a means in the construction of Jewish identity, and identity questions frame and shape the domain of Holocaust discourse.[206]

The saturation of Holocaust memory has deeply affected understandings and assumptions about being Jewish, for Jews and non-Jews alike. Sometimes this is part of a misunderstanding that comes from presuming that Jewish origins are Western ones along with a greater familiarity in the West with Ashkenazic culture compared to that of Mizrahim. Yet across both the Middle East and the West, being Jewish has generally become conflated with having ties to a Holocaust past.[207] What then of Mizrahim, whose experiences differ?

The collective memory of the Holocaust has also been further transformed into a symbol – a universally dominant cipher of ultimate atrocity. The weight of such a symbol shapes how

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[202] Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood;* Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 330-358; Adi Ophir, 'The Identity of the Victims and the Victims of Identity: A Critique of Zionist Ideology for a Post-Zionist Age', in *Mapping Jewish Identities*, ed. Laurence J. Silberstein (New York: New York University Press, 2000).
[203] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 330-358.
[204] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 341.
[205] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 342.
[206] Ophir, 'The Identity of the Victims and the Victims of Identity', 178-179.
[207] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 332; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3-4.

other groups relate to and remember their own suffering and that of others.[208] For this reason, both competitive and multidirectional models of memory focus attention on Holocaust remembrance. Its currently unshakable place as referent makes it an inescapable part of global memory discourse. The Holocaust is also prominent within historiography and is central to the debate over the role of moral judgement in historical writing.[209] Both frameworks recognise that other collective memories, including those of Mizrahim, frequently seek to compete, compare, or contrast with the dominant cipher of the Holocaust.[210] Viewing memory as multidirectional enables interactions between collective memories to be viewed as a conversation. As part of a conversation, even if an unequal one, voices come into being and remembrances effectively enabled through the exchange even when driven by the act of reacting against.[211] The relationship is allowed to be entangled, enmeshed, and unpredictable.[212] This complements Morris-Suzuki's view of an "enmeshment" of past, present, and person within the recording, representation, and reception of different accounts of events.[213] This perspective is reflective of the memory dynamics apparent within Mizrahi memoirs, where a transnational and multicultural context dominates and their relationship with Holocaust remembrance serves as a reminder of the diversity present within Jewish experience.

Transnational and multicultural spaces

Mizrahi memoirs are textual accounts of personal journeys, a collective memory of experiences transcending national borders, and a pertinent reminder of the diversity present within Judaism. Mizrahi displacement is entangled within multiple movements and events of the time that interlinked both East and West.[214] Rothberg's multidirectional memory model is appropriate here because it was developed directly with an aim of rethinking "public memory and group identity" through the "conceptualisation of collective memory in multicultural and transnational contexts".[215] Prior to displacement Mizrahim were firmly enmeshed with other religious, ethnic, and cultural groups within the

[208] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3, 6-8, 11; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader,* 30, 33; Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction,* 7.
[209] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 6-7, 12; Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction,* 217.
[210] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 18-19.
[211] Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', xii; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 20, 23, 29.
[212] Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 26, 28; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 16-17, 23.
[213] Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 26, 28.
[214] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 8; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 21, 307.
[215] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 21, 307.

Middle East and North Africa.[216] As Simon, Laskier, and Reguer note, Mizrahim were "part of the religious and ethnic mosaic that was traditional Islamic society" and yet "Jews were but one among numerous minorities . . . subordinate [within] . . . dominant Muslim society".[217] They describe interactions between religious groups as limited, however some Mizrahi memoirs describe a much closer relationship between neighbours.[218] Offering some further insight, Abitol agrees that Mizrahim were subject to religious and political discrimination, but also explains that "prior to the modern period, the Jews, unlike their Christian neighbours, were not regarded as an alien element or as the agent of a foreign power".[219] It was only following the upheavals of displacement that the previously very "robust Judeo-Arabic tradition, once a valued and integral part of the region, came to a sudden full stop".[220]

While some Mizrahim previously dwelt within more remote areas, there was a distinct concentration of communities living within the multicultural milieu of major trading cities across the Middle East.[221] Such was the legacy of the trade networks of different historical empires and more recently European colonial systems. Western and Middle Eastern experiences and histories had long been intertwined and this relationship only intensified as a result of World War II.[222] The links of exchange were material, but they were also philosophical. Rothberg notes that:

> The period between 1945 and 1962 contains both the rise of consciousness of the Holocaust as an unprecedented form of modern genocide and that coming to national consciousness and political independence of many of the subjects of European colonialism.[223]

Importantly, this post-war period, when the region was influenced by European philosophies of nationalism and reactions for and against colonialism, is also the period in

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[216] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* vii-viii; Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 46; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 4-5; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 214.
[217] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* vii.
[218] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* vii-viii; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember.*
[219] Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 46.
[220] Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 4-5.
[221] Medding, *Sephardic Jewry,* viii-ix.
[222] DellaPergola, 'Sephardic and Oriental', 6; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* xii-xiii; Michel Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands in the Modern Period', 45. Abitol notes the close trading ties that ever increased under the Ottoman Empire, including the blurring between categories of 'Western and Middle Eastern' that occurred through European travel and cultural adoption. DellaPergola makes the point of an increase in the movement of people during and after World War II.
[223] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 7.

which Mizrahi displacement took place.[224] As time passed, Mizrahim were increasingly ostracised as highly politicised rhetoric repeatedly associated them with the oppression of European colonialism.[225] The displacement and dispersal of Mizrahim, strongly targeted in anti-Semitic terms, can generally be seen as part of a societal purge by newly established secular and religious Islamic Arab nationalist movements to consolidate their power within newly established independent nation states.[226] Seeking to establish a strongly monocultural, highly structured, and controllable society, the fluid unpredictability and diversity of multicultural equilibriums represented a threat to this authoritarian vision.[227] Importantly, as Shabi explains:

> Zionist ideology [also] clashed with the concurrent development of self-determination aspirations in the Middle East . . . these opposite national forces created seismic shifts in the Middle Eastern soils that had nourished and raised Oriental Jews for thousands of years. Multi-weave identities rapidly unravelled as both sides – Arab and Jewish – pulled hard. Terminology rapidly conflated as 'Jewish' became synonymous with 'Zionist', which became synonymous with 'coloniser' and 'enemy'.[228]

While Stillman explains that this causal relationship is also observed by "many historians and writers" he instead prefers to see the displacement of Mizrahim as part of a longer trajectory primarily associated with 'modernisation' processes instead.[229] Yet none of this is straight-forward. For those in favour, colonialism brought with it material development, lucrative business interests, European education and culture – coveted by many across social strata and background as a sign of status and 'civilisation'. Some inequalities from prior systems were addressed. Yet inequality certainly remained and, in some instances, was exacerbated.[230] Memoirs by Rossant, Aciman, and Lucette all reveal families very much acculturated by European culture, education, and business connections, yet they also mention relatives who remain less so, revealing the tension even within families over status, preferred cultural identity, and the challenges of ethnic labelling.[231]

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[224] Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 46; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 4-6; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 215-217.
[225] Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 46; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 4-6; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 215-217.
[226]Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 48; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 4; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* xxii-xxiii.
[227]Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 48; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 4; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* xxii-xxiii.
[228] Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 4.
[229] Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands,* xxii.
[230] Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 48-51; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*.
[231] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*.

Reactions to colonialism were certainly not uniform. Some Mizrahim became very closely involved, working with European colonial authorities in roles and enterprises that had previously been prevented under prior regimes.[232] Other Mizrahim, however, reacted against colonial control and joined revolutionary independence movements. The same mixed reaction can be said for other groups within Middle Eastern societies of the time, and indeed the independence movements themselves.[233] For example, memoirs by Hakakian, Somekh, and Kattan all include marked mention of the complex philosophical and political complexity and choices that that Mizrahim faced as independence movements grew in strength. Hakakian's memoir in particular details her passion and then disillusionment with the Iranian revolutionary movement.[234]

Ironically, Arab nationalist movements declared themselves to be anti-colonial, yet blatantly based their ideology of state-hood on a distinctly imperial and militaristic German model riddled with Nazi rhetoric.[235] Jews were initially welcomed within both the pan-Arab and Arab-unity branches of the Iraqi nationalist movement, until Nazi influence grew within both the movement and the Iraqi government during the 1930s which also resulted in inspiring a series of military coups.[236] Shabi notes the entangled nature of this, explaining:

> it was, some argue, Nazi only insofar as it was anti-British and anticolonial and thus [they] saw a natural ally in the Germans. Recent history shows that occupation can produce stomach-turning alliances.[237]

In his memoir, Kazzaz agrees with this perspective, reflecting that the terms 'Zionists', 'colonialists', and 'communists' all became conflated together as blanket, interchangeable labels for 'enemies'.[238] These were specifically local tensions, yet still implicated in a transnational exchange back and forth between West and East of capital, ideas, and philosophies and conflicts. This situation echoes Rothberg's observation that:

> Our relationship with the past does partially determine who we are in the present, but never straightforwardly and directly, and never without unexpected or even unwanted consequences that bind us to those whom we consider other.[239]

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[232] Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in the Modern World,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 619-620; Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* viii.
[233] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon.*
[234] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon.*
[235] Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 85-86; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 213-214.
[236] Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 85-86; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 213-214.
[237] Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 85-86.
[238] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 213-214.
[239] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.

Even during and after displacement, Mizrahim continually encountered and lived within distinctly multicultural spaces. Whether in refugee camps, resettlement centres, or the suburbs of recently arrived immigrants, be it within the newly established State of Israel, the metropolitan centres of Britain and Europe, or the 'melting-pots' of Australia, the United States of America, or a variety of nations throughout South America, Mizrahim continued to dwell among a myriad of very different national and cultural groups.[240] In doing so, they shared similar experiences and struggles to other displaced and immigrant groups – some authors recognising this while others less so.[241]

This parallels Rothberg's thoughts that "when the productive, intercultural dynamic of multidirectional memory is explicitly claimed . . . it has the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice".[242] As an example of the diversity of perspectives present in the memoirs, Aciman contemplates the personal state of 'exile' in an existential and universal sense, while Fathi embraces the discourse of the 'American Dream' and feels commonality with other immigrant groups.[243] Zonana, however, perceives displacement parallels with North American indigenous groups and communities uprooted by Hurricane Katrina.[244] And while Kazzaz notes the possibility of a shared experience of displacement between Mizrahim and Palestinians, he strongly rejects that this parallel should be drawn due to the specificity of each case, and the hostility shown towards Iraqi Jews by Palestinian refugees (which put further fuel on the fire leading to Iraqi Jewish displacement).[245]

Mizrahi experiences of dispersal inevitably involved a high degree of mobility, transnational movement, and continued involvement. In order to try and maintain connections between dispersed and extended families, it was essential for Mizrahim to retain transnational links.[246] While this is an issue that arises in virtual all memoirs, Goldin, Fathi, Zonana and Aciman at different points discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these transnational connections.[247] Distance can bring heartache, but also freedom from traditional family ties.

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240 Abitol, 'Jews of Muslim Lands', 44-65l; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.
241 Andre Aciman, *False Papers: Essays on Exile and Memory,* Picador, New York, 2000; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.* Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.
242 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5.
243 Aciman, *False Papers*; Fathi, *Full Circle.*
244 Zonana, *Dream Homes*.
245 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*.
246 Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Aciman, *False Papers*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
247 Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Aciman, *False Papers*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*

Connection can bring support, but also obligations when other relatives wish to immigrate.[248]

Multiple border crossings, transitory spaces, different destinations, separations and sometimes reunions – for some resettlement but for others continued movement – all resulted in Mizrahim creating a collective memory of dispersal but also attempted reconnection.[249] Trying to re-establish lives in new situations raises the important issue of remembrance and forgetting – how stories should be told and histories understood given such rapid change. As Morris-Suzuki has observed:

> [This] reflects a profound dilemma: in an age of global mobility and multiple, rapidly changing media, how do we pass on our knowledge of the past from one generation to the next? How do we relate our lives in the present to events of the past? Which bits of the past do we claim as our own, and in what sense do they become our property?[250]

Categories become blurred by rapid change and new situations. During and after displacement Mizrahim encountered and engaged with highly differing groups of people and their collective memories that were already present within the spaces and places they travelled through and dwelt within. These include, but are not restricted to, the collective memories of different nations, cities, local areas, other refugee and immigrant groups, indigenous peoples, and more.[251] Joyce Zonana, for instance, is particularly aware of these encounters, and her memoir is testament to her exploration and embracing of other culture's philosophies and practices, in order to better understand her present self and reconnect with her history.[252] As already mentioned, throughout the West and the State of Israel, this also involved entering spaces of already established communities where being Jewish was already dominated by and understood through Ashkenazic frameworks, accompanying European prejudices, and the overwhelming saliency of Holocaust remembrance.[253] Mizrahim, Ashkenazim, and other groups alike were (and continue to be)

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[248] Goldin, *Wedding Song.*
[249] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*
[250] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 6.
[251] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*
[252] Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
[253] Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.

faced with alternative understandings, histories, cultural difference as well as surprising commonalities.

Multidirectional memory, however, enables a more complex and nuanced understanding of these interactions between and amongst different collective memories.[254] For example, rather than always assuming an antagonistic relationship of silencing, Rothberg points out that dominant collective memories can also open up new opportunities for dialogue, creating greater space, and enabling other narratives to come forth into the public's awareness.[255] I propose that this model better matches the relationship between differing experiences and collective memories within Judaism, as shown through Mizrahi memoirs. Rothberg's model does not deny the presence of some competition and hostility, but the position he advocates enables a give-and-take process of interaction which fits better within the real-world context of historical, cultural, and ethnic diversity of people who identify themselves as Jewish.[256] It therefore could easily be applied *within* an all Jewish context, but also outside it, by considering interaction with other collective memories that are inevitably (and inescapably interlinked), such as those of Arabic Muslims and Palestinians.[257] As Rothberg argues, states "an overly rigid focus on memory competition distracts from other ways of thinking about the relation between histories and their memorial legacies".[258]

Screen memory

The dynamics of the relationship between Holocaust memory and the memory of Mizrahi displacement illustrates why a nuanced understanding of memory is so important if we are to truly grasp the complex legacies of history. Within the public realm a multidirectional conversation is occurring between remembrances of the Holocaust and Mizrahi displacement. Yet, if Holocaust remembrance has dominated for so long and is unlikely to diminish at any point soon, how should the emergence and public circulation of Mizrahi memoirs within this present space and time be seen? How has the Mizrahi voice been enabled? And why now?

Insight into this specific situation can be gained by using a concept called 'screen memory'. My use of screen memory draws on Rothberg's rethinking of Freud's concept of

[254] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29, 309-313.
[255] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-4, 16.
[256] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory.*
[257] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 11, 16-18, 21-22, 29.
[258] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 11.

Deckerinnerungen.[259] Although the concept has broader application, Freud originally developed the idea of screen memory to help understand the unpredictable process of remembrance and forgetting in an individual when someone recalls personal childhood experiences.[260] Within Freudian psychology, memory is understood at a personal level to be "primarily an associative process that works through displacement and substitution".[261] The significance and meaning of a screen memory is created through an interpretive network encompassing past experience, present recall, and the relationship between a person's conscious and subconscious mind.[262]

Within this system in an individual, a screen memory essentially operates as a type of coping mechanism for difficult experiences or trauma. The screen memory itself is understood as a mundane, comforting or, at the very least, a less confronting memory of an actual event. During the process of personal remembrance, the screen memory is unconsciously substituted as the main focus of recall instead of revealing a more traumatic one. Effectively the screen memory acts as a psychological shield while unconscious processing is still taking place.[263] When the person is more able to engage directly with the past experience, the screen memory recedes and the experience of trauma is able to be realised.[264] In other words, for each individual there are multiple remembrances held within the one mind at different levels of awareness. The coping mechanism of screen memory involves a re-directing of conscious attention before trauma can begin to be comprehended and articulated as part of the therapeutic process towards recovery. As Rothberg describes:

> Despite its apparent innocence, screen memory stands in or substitutes for a more disturbing or painful memory that it displaces from consciousness . . . The mechanism of screen memory thus illustrates concretely how a kind of forgetting accompanies acts of remembrance, but this kind of forgetting is subject to recall.[265]

These same dynamics can still be observed if the concept of screen memory is extrapolated from the level of the individual to instead be applied in the context of a collective. The insight that remembrance is intertwined with forgetting and that the *appearance* of being forgotten does not necessarily equate with loss or permanent erasure is important when

[259] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-13. One literal translation is 'cover memories,' however Rothberg in translating this concept as 'screen memories' enables its multilayered aspect to come forth.
[260] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-13.
[261] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12.
[262] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13-14.
[263] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-13.
[264] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-16.
[265] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13.

considering the relationship between Holocaust remembrance and Mizrahi memories.[266] Paris, for example, observes that in many societies where an injustice or atrocity has occurred and acknowledgement of it has been suppressed, a delay usually occurs before narratives about the past are corrected and become more inclusive.[267] She proposes that a driver for this resurfacing of memories is not only a sense of shame but also the need for justice – personal and social.[268] Where pasts appear to have been forgotten within public attention, they are not actually lost but are retained privately to resurface later. Paris explains that:

> ordinary people will remember, even when they are ordered not to . . . the victims – including their children and eventually their grandchildren – will not disappear, although they may be traumatised and cowed for many years . . . Because the experience of having been victimised travels through the generations, carrying calls for justice or revenge or both, victims will necessarily outlast – and outnumber – the leadership that lies about what happened to them or tried to deny their suffering. In the end, their stories are known.[269]

Some scholars translate *Deckerinnerungen* as 'cover memory' rather than 'screen memory'.[270] While both translations are linguistically correct, each has distinct interpretative implications. A 'cover memory' literally obscures and silences – another memory therefore is either exclusively visible or invisible in awareness in absolute terms. Yet the relationship between Mizrahi memoirs and Holocaust remembrance reveals a far more complex and unpredictable picture more aligned with multidirectional memory. Rothberg's translation as 'screen memory' also encompasses the additional processes that occur as part of *Deckerinnerungen* that become obfuscated if translated simply as 'cover memory'.[271]

Rethinking and understanding *Deckerinnerungen* as 'screen memory' and expanding it to encompass dynamics at the collective level complements the framework of multidirectional memory and both processes are observable in the Mizrahi context. When adapted to the collective level, screen memory encompasses intergroup dynamics between different collective remembrances operating within the same multicultural setting in a multidirectional way. (This parallels the holding of different remembrances within the one person's mind.) At the societal level, a screen memory can fulfil different roles, sometimes at the same time, and indeed can constitute a particular collective memory.[272] In this

[266] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 452-455.
[267] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 452-455.
[268] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 452-455.
[269] Paris, *Long Shadows,* 454-455.
[270] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-13.
[271] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-14.
[272] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13-14.

context a screen memory can act as the main focus of public attention and discussion. By expanding the dynamics of screen memory to an intergroup application, active remembrance is recognised as occurring concurrently at both highly visible and more 'hidden' levels of the public sphere.[273] In its relationship with other remembrances, a screen memory can act as a shield, a surface for projection, an initiator of dialogue, a means of recovery, and prompt of reconfiguration.[274] So, although attention may appear to be exclusively upon the screen memory within public conversations, multicultural society is nevertheless still actively engaged in the processing, negotiating, and working through of different groups' remembrances until such time as a more broadly cohesive cross-group engagement with a specific remembrance becomes possible.[275] While exclusion can and does occur, it is not the only process happening. The vital element of unpredictability is reintroduced into the mix.[276] In the event of domination, substitution, silencing, or exclusion, recovery and renewed visibility remain a real and achievable outcome for other remembrances when the timing is right.[277] In the meantime, even reactions against can become possible opportunities for articulation of different experiences and perspectives.[278] In a powerful example, Rothberg argues that:

> this shift in perspective allows us to see that while [some scholars] . . . speak of Holocaust memory as if it blocks memory of slavery and colonialism from view (the model of competitive memory), they actually use the presence of widespread Holocaust consciousness as a platform to articulate a vision of American racism past and present. This interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive, intercultural dynamic that I call multidirectional memory.[279]

Although the dynamics might be unpredictable, movement, change, and fluidity are always present. Crucially, as Rothberg has observed:

> While screen memory might be understood as involving a conflict of memories, it ultimately more closely resembles a remapping of memory in which links between memories are formed and then redistributed between the conscious and unconscious.[280]

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[273] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13-14.
[274] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13.
[275] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13-15.
[276] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 11, 18, 21.
[277] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 17; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 9, 12-13. This is not to say that struggle is absent.
[278] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3; Prentice, Devadas, and Johnson, 'Introduction – Cultural Transformations', ii.
[279] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3.
[280] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13-14.

The emergence of Mizrahi memoirs is part of an ever present process of multidirectional remapping within and between different collective memories – not only Jewish ones but also those of other diverse groups, cultures, and nations.[281] Tumblety observes that:

> scholars routinely suggest that it is the scale of destructive violence in the twentieth century that has generated the turn to memory of late: the need to work through trauma, to commemorate mass loss, to bring the perpetrators of genocide to justice, speaks to pervasive and deep-seated psychological and social needs.[282]

Crucially, Whitlock recognises that autobiography has a role in this because it is "fundamental to the struggle for recognition among individuals and groups, to the constant creation of what it means to be human and the rights that fall from that, and to the ongoing negotiation of imaginary boundaries between ourselves and others".[283] As memoir, these shifts in remapping can appear rapid, especially given the "compelling and urgent" layer of "lives at risk here and now" as narratives steeped in places of active conflict.[284] Whitlock explains that "contemporary life narrative is uniquely shaped by the extensive and unprecedented speed and power of cultural exchanges in the present" as a result of globalisation and transnational movement. Whitlock acknowledges that the concept of globalisation is flawed, but nevertheless is analytically useful when examining contemporary cultural changes.[285]

In relation to the visibility of Mizrahi remembrances, Holocaust memory may be seen in some ways too as a screen memory – yet so are other national focused narratives in different contexts.[286] In the face of critics who see Holocaust memory in competitive terms as eclipsing the experiences of other groups, Rothberg enables an ethical position of recognising coexistence and interaction rather than exclusively conflict.[287] Because of the sheer horror of the Holocaust and the enormity of its mnemonic legacy (individually and collectively), it is something that has, and will take an incredible amount of time to process. This is not to say that a state of closure will ever be reached, or necessarily should be reached, on it. My own position is one that respects the specificity of each historical event

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[281] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 14; Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 5; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.
[282] Tumblety, *Memory and History,* 5.
[283] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.
[284] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 8.
[285] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 8.
[286] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 16; Tumblety, *History and Memory,* 9-10; Fathi, *Full Circle.* In an Australian context, the discourse of ANZAC remembrance both enables and obscures memories of other experiences and frequently shapes the way war veterans tell their stories. Similarly, the discourse of the 'American Dream' and collective memory of the struggling yet successful immigrant within Fathi's memoir is one that he both shapes his story to, and reacts against – yet in both instances his own memories and story is told in relation to this frame.
[287] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 2-7, 10-11, 27-29.

and maintains that it is important, for all humanity, to nevertheless engage in conversation with Holocaust memory as well as those of others. That an upwelling of diverse Mizrahi memories has occurred amongst a multicultural plethora of very different pasts, and the dominance of Jewish history by European experiences, is significant. As Rothberg has observed, "the emergence of memories into the public often takes place through triggers that may at first seem irrelevant or even unseemly".[288]

Multidirectional and Multidimensional Entanglements

Mizrahi memoirs constitute the collective memory of Middle Eastern and North African Jewish life pre- and post-displacement. United by remembrance of this shared history, yet revealing great diversity of personal experiences, Mizrahi memoirs betray a subtle power that lies in the sheer humanity of their stories and their potential to intervene directly across perceived divides. Their existence and the multidirectionality of the memories they represent are important for the process of developing greater historical truthfulness. The "ongoing dialogue" between multiple perspectives enables redefinition in the present to occur, even as a greater understanding of the past is reached through the emergence of more voices.[289] These memoirs, therefore, have the potential to act as "soft weapons" that could shift audience assumptions about histories and identities while at the same time enabling Mizrahi authors to articulate identities of their own.[290] Whitlock argues that as "soft weapons" autobiography, and in this case memoir, can enable dialogue and cross-cultural empathy by humanising 'others', thereby making "powerful interventions in debates about social justice, sovereignty, and human rights".[291] Additionally, Morris-Suzuki argues that:

> our relationship with the past is not simply forged through factual knowledge or an intellectual understanding of cause and effect. It also involves imagination and empathy . . . this identification with others in the past in turn becomes the basis for rethinking or reaffirming our own identity in the present. By remembering a particular piece of the past, by making it own our, we create our sense of belonging to a certain group of people – whether a nation, local society, ethnic minority, or religious group. In this way we also define our place in a complicated and changing world.[292]

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288 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 17.
289 Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 28; Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 3.
290 Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 22-25.
291 Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3;
292 Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within Us,* 22-23.

Whitlock's views compliment those of Morris-Suzuki, and just like the Middle Eastern Muslim autobiographies that Whitlock analyses, Mizrahi memoirs also are "life narratives in English that trigger conversations and interactions across cultures in conflict".[293]

Collectively, Mizrahi memoirs challenge a monolithic understanding of what it means to be Jewish, opening up greater awareness of the diversity present within Judaism itself. They also break down the artificially imposed duality of a perpetual division between East and West, and Muslims and Jews, and prompt questioning of dominant discourses relating to the State of Israel, Palestinians, and other Middle Eastern nations.[294] They do so as narratives that assist in revealing the genuine connections and entanglements that occur within a relational approach to, and understanding of, identities. It should be noted that some Mizrahi narratives do follow dominant discourses, for example, Zionist perspectives.[295] Nevertheless, the sharing of their experiences still acts as a call for the need for greater inclusion within national histories.

Mizrahi memoirs provide a valuable reminder of a time of interlinked coexistence but also a warning about the presence of continued but little recognised trauma. Injustices suffered have resulted in further divisions where possible bridges could have been built (for example, between Palestinians and Mizrahim).[296] Although both Palestinians and Mizrahim experienced displacement, international recognition has focused on the ongoing suffering of displaced Palestinians while Mizrahi experiences have been virtually ignored within discussions on Middle Eastern politics. It is only relatively recently that Mizrahim have been able to speak about their experiences at the United Nations.[297] This exclusion in itself has, on the part of some Mizrahim, caused a rift and resentment towards Palestinians. For example, Kazzaz' wife Louise was a board member of the lobby group called the 'World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries' (WOJAC) who call for greater recognition for Mizrahim.[298] Kazzaz explains that:

> one of WOJAC's special projects was called 'The Forgotten Million', referencing the one million Jews who had left their homes in Arab countries due to discriminatory policies and relocated to Israel. They exceeded the displaced Palestinians in number and left behind properties with double or triple the value of all that the Palestinians had left in Israel. In short, WOJAC felt that there was an

[293] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3;
[294] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 330-354; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 213-229.
[295] For example: Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Fathi, *Full Circle.*
[296] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 442-443; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 220.
[297] Prince, 'Jewish refugees from Arab lands seek justice at United Nations'.
[298] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*

> exchange of people and wealth that the international community should acknowledge.[299]

Here there is an entanglement, but within this rhetoric suffering appears to be viewed in comparative terms rather than perceived as a potential foundation upon which to build commonality. Shabi observes that many of the left-wing in the State of Israel perceive Mizrahim as stalling the peace-process because of resentment over the losses of displacement.[300] She explains that:

> in all the political polls, the Mizrahis are shown to be more prone to solutions that use force against Palestinians; more reluctant to let go of Jewish settlements in the West Bank . . . There are countless exceptions to that statement, but the fierce animosity voiced by Mizrahis is visceral.[301]

Mizrahi memoirs, which enable their voices to come forth, therefore have a strong potential to function at both the personal and collective level, and also in a national, transnational and universal sense – depending, of course, on how they are read and received.[302] As Morris-Suzuki has observed, the creation, communication, and reception of representations of the past does not have a predetermined outcome but creates:

> chains of relationships [that may] create obscurity as well as clarity, incomprehension as well as understanding, indifference as well as empathy. Almost inevitably, [however] they create diversity: a multitude of differing accounts and images of the past.[303]

A diversity of perspectives is important because the presence of these memoirs prompts and promotes the need for dialogue, questioning, and a recognition of the strengths of diversity and multiple perspectives at a time when uniformity and divisive hostility are becoming too far ingrained.

Multidirectional memory offers a nuanced understanding of the complex interconnections and fluid dynamics between different collective memories and their impact upon group identities.[304] Individuals are enmeshed within entanglements and overlaps of the past and present, through the entwining of personal and collective memories that affect past,

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299 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*, 443.
300 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 220.
301 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 220.
302 Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 28; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.
303 Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 28;
304 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-29.

present and future.[305] Mizrahi memoirs testify to the inherently multidirectional and inseparably multidimensional interplay of human history, memory, representation, and life, which Rothberg succinctly describes:

> Not strictly separable from either history or representation, memory nonetheless captures simultaneously the individual, embodied, and lived side *and* the collective, social, and constructed side of our relations to the past.[306]

This relationship constitutes lived experience and remembrance in visceral and active terms. It has sensory, emotional, and embodied components down to the level of psyche and dream that cannot be ignored. These affective qualities form the basis of identity in the actively lived and internalised sense – in the way that past histories and present affiliations operate deeply and unconsciously as part of assumptions made about the self and others.[307] Within this dissertation I explore these aspects as an extension of memory's multidirectionality. Mizrahi memoirs as both life writing and historical accounts are representations. But they are also sites of personal and collective memory, and acts of return. Furthermore, they provide a possible platform to create narratives that reconnect and re-knit a self that has been epistemologically shattered through the trauma of displacement, or alternatively, for those for whom dispersal was liberating, a means to celebrate their preferred circumstance.[308] I agree with Whitlock's argument that:

> Life narrative plays a vital role in the public sphere as it deals in and through private lives. It renegotiates and redefines how we imagine and rehearse cross-cultural encounters and how we know and identify ourselves in relation to others . . . Contemporary life narrative touches the secret life of us; indeed it is how we come to imagine 'us'.[309]

Mizrahi memoirs are life stories that share the experience of displacement but also emplacement, that is, how people try to reconstitute themselves, their families, groups, and a feeling of home following dispersal. In light of this disruption, Mizrahi memoirs contain a strong yearning for closure, recognition, and remembrance. My dissertation thematically examines these core narrative threads in relation to multidirectional memory and the multidimensional entanglements of person and place, past and present, within the turbulence of displacement and emplacement. Transnational journeys of remembrance and

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[305] Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us,* 24; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 3: Paris, *Long Shadows,* 450.
[306] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4.
[307] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 11-12.
[308] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 10.
[309] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 11-12.

attempted return, conducted through the mind, body, and the senses, be they through narrative or physical travel itself, form a major part of my exploration. Journeys of remembrance carry implications for how Mizrahim have come to terms, or not, with their past experiences and present identities and to what extent memory can both wound and heal. In the context of sudden disruption and highly transnational movements, sensory and portable means of remembrance take on a heightened importance. Finally, when those returning encounter those remaining, the implication of divergent experiences upon identities, memories, and histories further highlight the complex multidirectional entanglements that occur when pasts and presents collide. These threads of complexity are taken up in the next chapter, *Chapter Three: Routes, Roots, and Trees*, which explores the use of tree metaphors in Mizrahi memoirs as a way of understanding origins and the experiences of displacement and resettlement.

– CHAPTER THREE –

Roots, Routes, and Trees

> To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul . . . Every human being needs multiple roots.[1]
>
> Simone Weil, *Uprootedness*

> Root-seekers . . . also become root-makers.[2]
>
> Alondra Nelson, *Rites of Return*

The shared imagery of trees acts within Mizrahi life writing as a collective symbolic language for loss and life at the same time as giving voice to a unique diversity of personal experiences and perspectives on displacement. Inspired by the natural world, organic metaphors are present within Mizrahi memoirs, but trees are particularly prominent. Upon the embodied presence of a tree's form – roots, trunk, branches, leaves, fruit – are read the full richness of Mizrahi existence and being, both individual and collective. For example, in speaking of roots, a tangible sense of connection, belonging and acceptance across distance, space, and time is expressed and established be it through family, place, nation, or religion. So too, by using the phrase 'being uprooted' and drawing upon the image of forced transplantation to new soil, memoirists can easily express the initial and ongoing trauma of displacement as well as its liberating potential in some circumstances. In the metaphorical language of trees, the memoirist's understanding of self is represented and translated botanically, for instance as terminal damage, stunted growth, or renewed flourishing depending on post-displacement outcomes. The intertwined concepts of roots and displacement are thereby understood and represented as inherently interconnected – just as the past is with the present, and the present with the imaginings of possible futures, be they in one location or many. In this chapter I consequently use the importance of tree metaphors in Mizrahi memoires as a case study for the variety of ways this metaphorical language can aid our understanding of the experience and results of displacement on the dynamics between histories, memories, and identities.

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[1] Simone Weil, 'Uprootedness' (1949) quoted in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 1.
[2] Alondra Nelson quoted in *Rites of Return,* Hirsch and Miller, 1.

As part of a process of reflective remembrance and an act of working through, choosing to link and liken humanity with trees is a choice. Patterns and metaphors are part of sense and meaning making. The choice to use tree metaphors is a highly productive one as they are an easily recognisable symbol that is primed for understanding. They therefore have strong unifying potential as well as providing a profound degree of representational flexibility. For memoirists to activate this symbolic language represents a profound act of agency in how identities, memories, and histories are created and represented. Blending together the subjective truth-telling of life writing with the emotional soul filled poetry of the affective realm, this creative expression constitutes a powerful form of witnessing. In the face of injustice the use of these metaphors represents a powerful statement of continued existence despite the attempted erasure of dispersal.

Intersection and with current debates

My case study of the rich dynamic between organic metaphors and Mizrahi life writing intersects with a number of tensions currently present in the debate over the nature and experience of diaspora and displacement. This has implications for how we understand the relationship between identities, memories, and histories. Consequently, I shall firstly provide a brief overview of the intersections that Mizrahi experiences have with diaspora studies' use of abstract models despite real-world complexity. Secondly, I shall briefly outline how Mizrahi life writing can enhance our understanding of 'roots' and 'routes' in dispersal and displacement contexts. Finally, I shall explain the importance of affect and emotions in the construction and rearticulation of identities in Mizrahi life writing before going on to investigate the importance of tree metaphors in the memoirs themselves and how these can assist in the debates mentions above.

Firstly, there is a tension within diaspora studies between the need to have abstract models and definitions for analysis while at the same time trying to be accurate to historical specificity and diversity.[3] Traditionally in the social sciences the concept of 'diaspora' was restricted to "the pragmatic case" of only using Jews and Jewish history for studies of the concept.[4] Despite this dominance, the fact remains that:

[3] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (1994): 340; James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (1994): 304.
[4] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 340.

> [F]ew have [actually] understood correctly the contested meanings that the concept of diaspora actually had for some Jews during the interwar period as well as at other points in Jewish history.[5]

The centrality of exclusively using Jewish case studies was rightly questioned by postcolonial critiques because of the genuine risk of devaluing and excluding the experiences of other displaced groups.[6] James Clifford expresses this prevalent concern during his analysis of both Black and Jewish diasporas, fearing "run[ning] the risk of making Jewish experiences again the normative model".[7] Unfortunately, however, this rethinking has produced a dangerous reluctance to engage at all with Jewish perspectives as well as an overemphasis on competitive memory models of the type that Michael Rothberg cautions against.[8] As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett rightly argues, however, it is vital to remember that being paradigmatic in the case of diaspora and displacement "is not a site of privilege" and that Jewish experiences should still be recognised and acknowledged.[9] As Rebecca Kobrin has also observed, there is far greater complexity and diversity within Jewish experiences and concepts of diaspora than most scholars realise.[10] Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, for example, uphold 'Diaspora' and "diasporic consciousness" as an "idealised" structural exemplar and foundation of identity that should replace "national self-determination" in the pursuit of honouring and preserving cultural difference, diversity, mixing and peaceful coexistence.[11] More recently, Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory offers a way out of exclusion and competitive comparisons within diaspora studies by shifting focus instead towards dialogue thereby "moving the logic of recognition beyond identitarian competition".[12]

It is also important to realise that reference to 'Jewish experiences' within diaspora studies in practice usually only actually means *European* Jewish experiences.[13] This excludes and

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[5] Rebecca Kobrin, 'Rewriting the Diaspora: Images of Eastern Europe in the Bialystok Landsmanshaft Press, 1921-45', *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (2006): 25.
[6] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 305.
[7] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 305-306, 324; This point by Clifford (1994: 324) is also directly quoted and engaged with in Gimblett-Kirschenblatt, 'Spaces of Dispersal,' 340.
[8] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2-3, 5, 7.
[9] Gimblett-Kirschenblatt, 'Spaces of Dispersal,' 340; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5-7, 18-21.
[10] Kobrin, 'Rewriting the Diaspora', 1-38; Rebecca Kobrin, '"When A Jew Was A Landsman": Rethinking American Jewish regional identity in the age of mass migration', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7 (2008): 357-376.
[11] Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, 'Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity', *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 711, 713, 721.
[12] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5-7, 18-21.
[13] Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions – Columbus, Palestine, and Arab Jews,' in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 201-232; Ella Shohat, 'Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella. Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 330-358.

ignores the histories of non-European Jews such as Mizrahim. Ella Shohat has determined that in part this is because "Ashkenazi-Jewish scholars became central to the representation of Jewish history, including Arab-Jewish history and identity".[14] Even in Israeli history textbooks, for example, "Middle Eastern Jewish history has been presumed to begin with the arrival of the Jews to Israel" following World War II, completely obfuscating the long histories of Mizrahim in the region.[15] Although Clifford has been more inclusive than most by including Sephardic experiences of the medieval Jewish Mediterranean in his study of diasporas, he does not extend this to the more contemporary experiences of Mizrahim.[16] This Eurocentric bias towards Ashkenazim within Jewish history and diaspora studies, and indeed the broader social sciences, has obfuscated the diverse histories and perspectives present *within* Jewish experiences and understandings of diaspora as well as without.[17] Closely examining Mizrahi perspectives of diaspora and displacement therefore challenges reductive assumptions about 'Jewish experiences' and provides a timely reminder of Jewish diversity. By including more accurate and representative Jewish perspectives within calls for greater diversity in diaspora studies, debates can be shifted towards a more equitable balance that still retains an appreciation of specificity and complexity.

A second tension that Mizrahi perspectives intersect with is the debate over the relationship between the concepts of 'roots' and 'diaspora'/'displacement'. These are often conceptualised by cultural studies and postcolonial scholars as being "polar opposites".[18] This conceptual split means that diaspora is appealing to theorists "precisely because it so easily lends itself to a strategic disaggregation of territory, people, race, language, culture, religion, history, and sovereignty".[19] This separation, however, is actually exclusionary rather than inclusive. As Rosanne Kennedy has argued, "a more expansive conceptual vocabulary" is needed in order to engage with the realities of diversity "if some experiences are not to be cast, once again, in the shadows".[20]

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[14] Shohat' Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206.
[15] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 347.
[16] Clifford, 'Diasporas'.
[17] Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006), xvi; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 203, 206, 214, 224; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews', 330, 336, 342, 347; Clifford, 'Diasporas', 305-306.
[18] Jarod Hayes, 'Queering Roots, Queering Diaspora', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 74; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339.
[19] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339.
[20] Rosanne Kennedy, 'Indigenous Australian Arts of Return: Mediating Perverse Archives', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 102.

The lived experiences of Mizrahim directly challenge the conceptual separation of 'roots' from 'diaspora' and 'displacement'. This adds weight to calls for a reassessment of this dominant theoretical stance for the sake of both accuracy and inclusivity. Kobrin has also noted that the case of some Polish Jewish immigrants in the United States also challenges these assumed categories.[21] Ironically, however, this division was originally made as part of an ethical shift that challenged the normative status of homogenous nation-states and instead emphasised the positives of high mobility and socio-cultural diversity.[22] Previous models stressed a teleology of "origin, scattering, and return" that restrictively privileged 'racial' and national identities over other alternatives with the effect that the complexities and liberating potential of dispersal were overlooked along with any situation that did not match this framework.[23] Within each subsequent theoretical configuration, however, either origins (roots) or displacement (routes) were singularly privileged while the other was downplayed.[24] Clifford notes that Khachig Tölölian declared that "diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment".[25] This is representative of the almost utopic flavour added to diasporic existence by scholars critiquing the nation-state. While this critique is necessary, the use of 'exemplary communities' is jarring given the lived reality for displaced people, which for many includes great suffering and ongoing issues with feelings of dislocation.[26]

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[21] Kobrin, 'When A Jew Was A Landsman', 357-376; Kobrin, 'Rewriting the Diaspora', 1-38.
[22] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal,' 339; Hayes, 'Queering Roots, Queering Diaspora', 74.
[23] Hayes, 'Queering Roots, Queering Diaspora', 74; Sonali Thakkar, 'Foreign Correspondence', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 204; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339; Kennedy, 'Indigenous Australian Arts of Return', 102-103; Clifford, 'Diasporas', 315-314; Kobrin, 'When A Jew Was A Landsman', 357-376; Kobrin, 'Rewriting the Diaspora', 1-38; Boyarin and Boyarin, 'Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity', 693-725. For example, Indigenous and settler-colonial experiences, not matching this dominate framework, were frequently overlooked and ignored. While often traumatic, displacement or diaspora can also potentially be seen as liberating by some individuals and groups (such as women, those with LGBTI orientation, religious, political or ethnic minorities) suffering oppression under repressive authoritarian governments or highly patriarchal cultural systems. This is because the very circumstances of displacement forces a disruption of continuity within 'traditionally' restrictive systems, opening up a chance to establish new ways of living and presenting greater opportunities than otherwise would have been available through the necessity of dwelling elsewhere. It should be noted that this is certainly not always the case and by saying this, I do not in any way wish to diminish the fact that the process of displacement can be, and is, highly disruptive and damaging. It is testament to human resilience and ingenuity that any positives might be brought out of the chaos of persecution, targeted destruction, and purposeful disruption of others' lives.
[24] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 303.
[25] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 303.
[26] Medicins Sans Frontiers, "'Do No Harm" Should be the guiding principle of forced migration policies', *Medicines Sans Frontiers Australia*, 17 August 2016, accessed 2017, <http://www.msf.org.au/article/statements-opinion/%E2%80%98do-no-harm%E2%80%99-should-be-guiding-principle-forced-migration-policies >; Medicins Sans Frontiers, '10 things you need to know about the Mediterranean Crisis', *Medicines Sans Frontiers Australia,* 2 December 2016, accessed 2017, <http://www.msf.org.au/article/project-news/10-things-you-need-know-about-mediterranean-crisis>.

Mizrahi accounts show that a more nuanced understanding is sorely needed valuing *both* roots and routes in more equal terms. Collectively, the memoirs show that each perspective is present in displacement experiences.[27] In other words, that means for some memoirists the liberating potential of displacement is at the fore.[28] Others instead show a stronger preference towards 'traditional' structures such as nation-states and heteronormative understandings of family.[29] In cautioning against assimilation ideology, Clifford argues that:

> Peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be 'cured' by merging into a new national community.[30]

Although I agree that a single 'cure' for all is impossible given the diverse and often subjective effects of displacement, Mizrahi memoirs also challenge Clifford's singularising assertion. While this perspective provides an important critique of state ideology, memoirists such as Joyce Zonana, Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, Roya Hakakian, and Farideh Goldin show that for some people inclusion in a new national community can bring a significant amount of solace.[31] Zonana also legitimately challenges heteronormative understandings of family while yearning for familial belonging, and while achieving a transnational lifestyle nonetheless feels a deep emotional connection to her current nation-state of Canada.[32] Along with the context of displacement, what all these diverse perspectives share is a longing for 'return' and 'connection'; although they understandably

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[27] Lucette Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007); Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue: Shoreline, 2007); Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008); Collette Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile: A Memoir with Recipes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001); Farideh Goldin, *Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003); Joshua Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad: Memoir of an Israeli Intelligence Officer* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1997); Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* (Chapel Hill: Alogonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008); Violette Shamash, *Memories of Eden: A Journey through Jewish Baghdad* (Virginia Water: Forum Books Ltd., 2008); Naim Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad* (London: Souvenior Press, 2009); Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Marking of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2007); Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); Heskel M. Haddad, *Flight from Babylon: Iraq, Iran, Israel, America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1986); David Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, Inc., 1999); Sabiha Abi David Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember* (Caulfield South: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001); Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 2004); Saul Silas Fathi, *Full Circle: Escape from Baghdad and the Return* (New York: Saul Silas Fathi, 2005); Andre Aciman, *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004); Rachel Shabi, *Not the Enemy Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[28] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Fathi, *Full Circle.*

[29] Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*

[30] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 307.

[31] Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Hakakian, *Journey for the Land of No*; Goldin, *Wedding Song.*

[32] Zonana, *Dream Homes.*

mean different things to different people.[33] Paul Gilroy and Clifford have both recognised "roots *and* routes" as being interconnected.[34] Importantly, Clifford has previously argued that 'roots' and 'displacement' are inherently the same because, regardless of circumstances, both concepts are complicit in perpetuating the same patriarchal structures and power relations.[35] So too, Gilroy has demonstrated that *both* "African origins" and Atlantic "crisscrossing" – that is "both roots and routes" – are crucial within definitions of Black identity.[36] Certainly then, Mizrahim are not alone in experiencing and articulating roots and routes as being intertwined and an inseparable aspect of post-displacement existence.

Origins and roots prompt further routes again, but emotion creates the bridge and the ties. To say that roots are an essential need of the human soul, as Simone Weil does, highlights their ontological importance as well as their affective significance.[37] It is this which forms the third tension – the role of affect and emotion. Some scholars find the presence of these greatly troubling. Feminists, for example, have found the highly emotional "obsession with origins" and a focus on 'traditional' structures such as family and nation (themes which often emerge among displaced people as well as studies of displacement) concerning because of the potential for over attachment to conservative structures and restrictive power relationships.[38] Yet the affective aspect of displacement exists and can not be ignored. Daniel Mandelson has noted the ongoing sentimental role that "country of origin" continues to have for immigrants as well as their now distant descendants among Ashkenazim within America.[39] So too has Kobrin.[40] Mendelson notes that "people always talk about 'going back' even though it's not a place you've been".[41] The same affective preoccupation and desire for return can certainly be said for many other displaced groups, including Mizrahim.[42] Eva Hoffman too speaks of the importance of emotion – affective

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[33] Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller, *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[34] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 308, 319. Clifford states (1994: 319): "The approach I have been following (in tandem with Gilroy) insists on the routing of diaspora discourses in specific maps/histories".
[35] Hayes, 'Queering Roots, Queering Diaspora', 75; Clifford, 'Diasporas', 313-314. Hayes argues along with Clifford, but to a stronger degree, regarding the "heterosexual, masculinist, and patrilineal" qualities aspects of both roots and diaspora.
[36] Hayes, 'Queering Roots, Queering Diaspora', 74-75.
[37] Weil, 'Uprootedness' (1949) quoted in Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1.
[38] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 4, 6-7. Hirsch and Miller describe this well (2011: 4), "Like most cultural theorists working during the years of poststructuralist and postcolonial debate, we are suspicious of origins and, as feminists, we are committed to challenging idealisations of home".
[39] Daniel Mendelsohn quoted in 'Memoirs of Return', Saidiya Hartman, Eva Hoffman, Daniel Mendelsohn, and Nancy K. Miller, in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 112.
[40] Kobrin, 'When A Jew Was A Landsman', 357-376; Kobrin, 'Rewriting the Diaspora', 1-38.
[41] Meldelsohn quotes in 'Memoirs of Return', Hartman, Hoffman, Mendelsohn, and Miller, 112.
[42] I discuss the desire for return more in-depth within *Chapter Five: Dreaming of Return.*

inheritance being present even in the absence of shared memory.[43] What then, if both emotions and memories *are* shared in public circulation, such as through memoir?

Emotions can fundamentally shape identities through feelings of affiliation or isolation. These foster constructions of connection or division and can act to bind together or pull apart a person from past and present collectives. In the context of expressing "loss and displacement" experiences, Svetlana Boym argues that a core sentiment is nostalgia.[44] It is this nostalgic fusion of emotive memory that speaks to "the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory, individual home and collective homeland".[45] In other words, within the public circulation of these personal stories there is a distinct shift into the realm of the transpersonal, "a zone of relation that is social, affective, material, and inevitably public".[46] This speaks to Boyarin and Boyarin's vision of diasporic 'Jewishness' as a "disaggregated identity" that is disruptive of traditional categories because "all of these [are held] in dialectical tension with one another".[47] This sentimental, nostalgic, affective, and relational linking clearly occurs within the organic metaphors used by Mizrahim to describe themselves and their experiences. This demonstrates the potential for both fluidity and rigidity in the construction of identities and understandings of self and society in the context of upheaval.

Simultaneously personal and collective, Mizrahi memoirs witness to the injustice of discrimination and displacement which in turn affects the forms of identity expressed using tree metaphors. The very act of writing itself constitutes a process through which identities and histories are reconstructed, reframed, reconfigured, and "become a way to counter the history of violence through an aesthetic of reattachment" with the aim "to rescue lost legacies, to restore connections suspended by time, place, and politics".[48] Adrienne Rich has called this "writing as re-vision . . . an act of survival", achieved as Kennedy observes

[43] Eva Hoffman quoted in 'Memoirs of Return,' Hartman, Hoffman, Mendelson, and Miller, 114. Hoffman says this in the context of discussing the unspeakability of the Holocaust within many families of Jewish survivors, observing (2011: 114): "We did receive something very powerful. We received the emotional traces of our parents' experiences or our family's experiences or our collective experiences, but not memories".
[44] Svetlana Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 151. Boym identifies nostalgia as a sentiment linking the personal and collective, whereas melancholy is restricted to a purely individual level.
[45] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory', 152.
[46] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 5; Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[47] Boyarin and Boyarin, 'Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity', 721.
[48] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9-11, 18; Hayes, 'Queering Roots, Queering Diaspora', 74; Thakkar, 'Foreign Correspondence', 207. Hirsch and Miller note (2011: 10): "This is especially true of descendants of groups that have been subjected to extermination or expulsion".

simply by "refus[ing] the silence" and bringing "experience into visibility".[49] By making their experiences publically visible through memoir, Mizrahi memoirists therefore also participate in a multilevel process of personal sense and meaning making. What occurs is that "roots-seekers . . . also become root makers". [50] That is through the selection, description, and identification with a certain configuration of roots, identities are themselves created, constructed, and performed along with the potential of realising new and different configurations in new and fluid circumstances.[51]

This tension of identities that span and flex between origins and new lives is evident within the metaphors used within Mizrahi life writing. Their narratives offer a useful perspective that can add to the rich conversations on roots and routes but also how the displaced try to come to terms with the past, present, and possible futures in the highly disrupted context of displacement. Writing as reorientation and reconfiguration of identity is far from simple and is complicated by personal subjectivity and social circumstances. Hoffman has astutely observed that the recording and writing out of traumatic experience can help to process and separate oneself from it, aiding in distinguishing the past from the present.[52] This added distance can provide fresh perspectives, change one's relationship with past experiences, and open up new possibilities and choices over present and future being. Memoir writing then, can be seen as part of this essential process of sense and meaning making which helps enable writers to increase present agency.[53] Alistair Thompson reflects on the constructed and often fluid nature of such a stance, observing that "[m]emories are 'significant pasts' that we compose to make a more comfortable sense of our life over time, and in which past and current identities are brought more into line".[54]

The crucial outcome of this active writing process is that roots and the past become less determining, open to reflection, reconsideration, renegotiation, and indeed rearticulation – all driven by and created through personal needs in new social contexts for the purposes of the present rather than simply for the sake of the past.[55] Clifford calls this "relational

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[49] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9-10.
[50] Nelson quoted in Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1.
[51] Nelson quoted in Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1.
[52] Hoffman quoted in 'Memoirs of Return', Hartman, Hoffman, Mendelsohn, and Miller, 121.
[53] Joan Tumblety, *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source and Subject* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2, 4.
[54] Alistair Thompson quoted in *Memory and History,* 4.
[55] Margaret Homans, 'Adoption and Return: Transnational Genaeologies, Maternal Legacies', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 186; Tumblety, *Memory and History*, 2, 7; Clifford, 'Diasporas', 307.

positioning" a form of "entangled tension".[56] For Hannah Arendt, however, this creative rearticulation is an essential act of human freedom; that is, to choose an identity and home not purely linked or restricted by birth but rather through choice, creative action, and world awareness.[57] Yet it should be noted that despite this creative potential for "affiliative relations" with a myriad of possibilities, themes of continuity and family repeatedly resurface in the context of displacement and calls for recognition.[58] Even if there is a diversity of how connection is conceptualised, amidst this potential for rearticulation the use of metaphors by Mizrahi memoirists not only aid in articulating displacement experiences but also reveal a shared longing for connection inn post-displacement contexts. What follows is an exploration of this performative and relational rearticulation by memoirists through the lens of tree metaphors. I then move to focus on the three main ways tree metaphors are mobilised in Mizrahi life narratives. That is, how tree metaphors are used in the telling of roots, the articulation of different reactions to displacement (uprooting), and the potential for flourishing in new locations – all of which are active choices in the construction of identities and the positioning of the self in relation to others as well as past, present, and possible futures.

The importance of tree metaphors

People yearn to see "some sense and pattern to their lives" and context as well as language creates the meanings and abstract symbols through which we understand our world.[59] Creative imagery and metaphor can assist with the process of telling and listening, of sharing, describing, negotiating, adapting, and if needed, changing meanings. If used well, metaphors resonate with imagination and emotion, activating broader cultural codes, such as core iconography or particular narrative tropes. This is part of the back and forth process of sense and meaning making; the bringing of the personal into dialogue with the social and then back once more to the personal.

The telling and sharing of one's story to another is a dialogue, even if done through the medium of memoir.[60] However in order for the story to be properly understood – that is,

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[56] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 307.
[57] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory', 164.
[58] Thakkar, 'Foreign Correspondence', 207-208. Thakkar uses the term 'affiliative relations' borrowed from Edward Said.
[59] Phil Macnaghten, 'Nature', *Theory, Culture, & Society* 23 (2006): 348.
[60] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*. Writing is often done with an 'imagined' reader in mind, be it a family member, editor, community, or simply just another interested human being out there somewhere. Memoirs can be seen as dialogic narrative transmitters in the sense that there is an articulator (the writer) and a receiver (the

to be truly 'heard' and received – it must be somewhat comprehensible to the audience. This can present a challenge when sharing accounts of unprecedented historical events and exceptional disasters such as mass displacement. Many people, for example, who themselves have never encountered similar circumstances may find it initially difficult to imagine or relate to such experiences.[61] Given the unprecedented nature of the displacement, however, this lack of a prior reference point is, however, also the same for many Mizrahim who were dispersed. In this way, the need to shape a comprehensible life story through writing can have the added effect of aiding the memoirist in their own process of sense and meaning making, therefore assisting the possible recovery of greater wellbeing.[62] Joyce Zonana, for example, specifically reflects in her memoir that:

> Language, I like to think, will make *my* past present, bringing continuity and coherence to a life marked by loss.[63]

Symbols provide a powerful way to communicate meaning and the natural world encompasses a rich source for finding shared reference points, potential shared understandings, and unifying patterns for coherence.[64] Within writing, metaphors are one way to activate core cultural symbols and narrative tropes. Throughout the memoirs under study, organic metaphors are drawn upon as a symbolic referential language that aids expression of personal experience. Read separately, and together, they reveal both personal and collective understandings of history, home, identity, and belonging, and the lived negotiation of these within the ongoing legacy of displacement. Emerging repeatedly within these texts, the metaphorical image of the 'tree' is especially strong in this process.[65]

Trees, as a sight common across most of the globe, provide an almost universal symbolic reference point that can be imagined or related to in some way.[66] Consequently, they are a possible source of cross-cultural commonality and provide opportunities for empathy even

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reader). 'Conversation' can take place through reviews, critique, but also the discussion that is prompted within society if such a text resonates (or is promoted) strongly enough.

[61] Barbara Backer Condon, 'Imagination: The *What-if* in Thinking', *Nursing Science Quarterly* 27 (2014): 204-210.

[62] Kent D. Harber and James W. Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory*, ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 359-387.

[63] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 26.

[64] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.

[65] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, xi; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*, 192-194; Goldin, *Wedding Song*, 9; Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31, 374; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 108-109; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 435; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 162; Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 58, 225; André Aciman, *False Papers: Essays on Exile and Memory* (New York: Picador, 2000), 39, 86; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 219, 226, 284; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 47, 61.

[66] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 347-348.

when communicating subjective experiences across different backgrounds and cultures.[67] Due to their relative neutrality trees have the potential to form a unifying image. Yet through also being highly relatable, they can be especially potent symbols when imbued with additional meanings.[68] Trees provide an easily identifiable parallel between a person and the natural world – an opportunity for people to contemplate both nature and themselves. People 'read into' trees their place in time, the cycle of their own lives with the changing seasons, their relationship to place, as well as a sense of personal uniqueness.[69]

Whether drawn upon consciously or unconsciously, the presence throughout the memoirs of organic metaphorical symbols like trees is far from benign in effect. Within these narratives, the imagery of trees is used in a very personal way. But the imagery is also culturally loaded, steeped in religious or political rhetoric, imbued with personal nostalgia or melancholy in the articulation of identities. In what follows, I explore how memoirists' metaphorical reference to trees can aid in explaining the personal importance of origins, the effects of displacement, and understandings of subsequent post-displacement life.

The Roots of the tree

Tree metaphors are often used in Mizrahi memoirs to conceptualise and describe heritage and connection to place.[70] This is not a practice unique to Mizrahim, but also emerges within other cultures. For example, indigenous North American philosophies and performances of history (across several tribal groups) frequently use analogies of trees and forests to represent "epistemological diversity" as well as a "mnemonic metaphor" within oral histories and rituals tracing tribal and personal origins.[71] Western culture too has a long history of using genealogical 'family trees' in tracing and expressing the origins of people, pasts, and places. Indeed, Macnaghten observes the universality that:

> Trees are regularly a central feature in people's sense of place; they are alive yet also fixed in the landscape. Trees mark history in 'lived terms'.[72]

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[67] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348; Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), vii-viii. There are, for instance, commonalities in the use of organic metaphors between Mizrahi and indigenous North American narratives of people and pasts, which makes for an interesting cross-cultural conversation in itself.
[68] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.
[69] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.
[70] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194; Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 58; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 435; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 219-220, 226, 284; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3; Aciman, *False Papers,* 39, 86; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 47, 61.
[71] Nabokov, *A Forest of Time,* vii-viii.
[72] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.

The use of tree metaphors in Mizrahi memoirs certainly constitutes a form of shared imagery. Yet this is neither uniform nor static. Within individual texts this symbolic language is used with great flexibility to express a tangible sense of personal connection to land as well as family, religion, and nation – all in subjectively differing degrees and combinations. I shall now explore some of the key ways tree symbolism is mobilised in these ways.

Using particular types of trees or plants to describe idealised abstract qualities or the distinctiveness of specific cultural or national groups is not uncommon, and has long been a tradition in the Middle East.[73] Within Biblical scriptures revered in common by Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, Lebanon is strongly associated with cedars while Israel is likened to an olive tree.[74] In more contemporary times, the discourse of political Zionism draws upon the qualities of a resilient cactus (the 'Prickly Pear') found in the region which is seen to exemplify the idealised qualities of *sabra* – Jews born within the State of Israel.[75] With strongly autochthonous tones, each *sabra* is said to be highly resilient, springing from the very soil of Israel itself.[76] Person, land, and nation are metaphorically bound together within this expression of identity. In his memoir, Haddad recalls a conversation with a fellow Israeli named Dov, who draws on the metaphor of the *sabra*:

> 'So God didn't give us oil. Instead, he gave us plants that grow where no sane plant would drop a seed. *Sabra* plants' . . . I was baffled by the reference to *sabra.* Naturally I knew the word for native-born Israelis; derived from Arabic, it meant a cactus fruit, but the analogy escaped me. As Dov explained it, the human *sabra,* like the fruit, is prickly and forbidding on the outside, but sweet and soft within. 'The cactus and that castor plant are stubborn forms of life. Defiant forms, but able to adapt, and nicer than they seem at first'.[77]

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[73] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.

[74] Lebanon's close association with cedars is mentioned for instance in Psalm 92:12, Ezekiel 31:3 and Isaiah, 2:13. (New King James Version) Olive trees are highly symbolic throughout the Torah. Those blessed by God are likened to olive trees, vital and filled with growth (Psalms 52:8, 128:3). Olive trees were one of the five species growing in the land of Israel that signified its abundance according to divine promise (the others being pomegranates, figs, date palms, and grape vines). The olive tree was directly identified as a symbol for Israel by God in Jeremiah 11:16.

[75] Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 116; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 278. Shabi explains the overlapping meanings that come with this, noting "*Sabra* is [also] the Hebrew for 'prickly pear' and a description of the native-born Israeli – like the fruit, spiky on the outside but soft and sweet on the inside. Seeing this fruit in situ [however] is almost certain evidence of a former Palestinian village, since those natives cultivated the fruit around their homes". Reference to the sabra plant here jointly links Israelis and Palestinians while at the same time being used to distinguish difference.

[76] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 217-219; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 116; Clifford, 'Diasporas', 308. Drawing upon Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, Clifford makes the distinction between autochthonous being a discourse stressing a 'natural' connection to land, whereas indigenous discourses stress 'historical' continuity.

[77] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 278.

Drawing upon this broader discourse, Mizrahi memoirists use organic metaphors to express strong links to land and nation. Benjamin exemplifies this approach in representing her understanding of self at the poetic beginning of her memoir as follows: "I am Iraq, my tongue is her heart, my blood her Euphrates, my being from her branches formed".[78] This is a line from the 1957 poem *Fi dhikra al Maliki* by the Iraqi poet Muhammed Mahdi Al-Jawahiri. Benjamin's use of this poem is powerful because with Al-Jawahiri being a Shia Muslim man and Benjamin a Jewish woman, yet both share a soul-filled love for Iraq. This parallel speaks to the inter-faith understanding and cross-cultural commonality that Benjamin tries to emphasise throughout her work.[79] Individually, this line also enables Benjamin to clearly express a profoundly close and emotional relationship with her homeland and nation – Iraq. Benjamin represents herself as created, shaped, and imbued with life both from and through her original and ancestral land. This symbolic statement is amplified because of its location at the opening of her life story as the first glimpse, but also established core, of her identity.[80] Her relationship with Iraq is positioned as literally one of embodiment: land, body politic, and person as one entity, interchangeable, united, and whole. The use of this metaphor – entwining physical personhood, being, origins, and ontology – implies the infusion of existence within person and nation as being wrought through, and dependant on, *lived* practice and presence. The imagery is vivid, physical, and organic.

Like Benjamin, Jawary draws upon the organic in her description of her relationship with her Iraqi homeland, metaphorically likening herself to a tree with "roots well entrenched".[81] Rather than the whole nation, however, Jawary locates and fixes her 'rootedness' more locally. In specifically geographic terms, she identifies this as the banks of the river Tigris combined with the capital city of Baghdad.[82] Here, as part of the local Jewish community, Jawary enjoyed a vibrant life and felt part of a continual local history along with a direct and tangible link to her rich cultural heritage and ancient ancestry.[83] Jawary emotively concludes her memoir by dedicating it to Baghdad and declaring her never ending love for her original beloved city and the source of her roots, declaring:

[78] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi.
[79] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi.
[80] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi.
[81] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194.
[82] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 192-194.
[83] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194.

> Baghdad, *City of Destiny, City of my Birthplace, City of Love, City of my Ancestor* – my right to you is great, ancient, and eternal. . . You are the city of my destiny *Madinat al Salam,* City of Peace – my inheritance in you is firm and old, *Lady of Antiquity*.[84]

When considering roots, a recurrent theme, particularly among Iraqi Jewish writers, is the antiquity and previously unbroken continuity of their community. This trajectory is conceptually linked with the land itself regardless of the historical changes of kingdoms, territories, or contemporary nation-states.[85] Haddad clearly outlines this widely held Iraqi Jewish understanding of historical continuity:

> Jews . . . had inhabited Iraq for centuries before the Arabs started to arrive, and to this very day – and till the last of us departed – Iraqi Jews remained the oldest recognised *continuing* community of Jews in the entire world.[86]

Kattan also draws on this perspective in his complex personal negotiation of being both Jewish and Iraqi. He firmly articulates that a close relationship to land is integral to identity and historical origins.[87] Kattan writes that, "Our origins had more to do with geography than beliefs . . . We were Jews. We knew it. Everyone knew it. But we were also children of this land, children of the country".[88] This is what Boyarin and Boyarin observe as "myth of autochthony" that is prevalent across many cultures and which stresses the centrality of land, place, and space as the centre of meaning.[89] Importantly, Clifford observes that "indigenous historical experience . . . stress[es] continuity of habitation, aboriginality, and often a 'natural' connection to the land".[90] This often central discourse, that indigeneity involves a direct connection to land and country, emerges also within some Mizrahi narratives.[91] Shamash explains this perspective in an Iraqi Jewish context:

> For us, nothing had changed: we felt ourselves secure and integrated, rooted in the country as we had been since biblical times. We were truly indigenous, here for a thousand years before the Arab-Islamic conquest. It was our home! And we enjoyed [prior to displacement] a neighbourly relationship with other communities.[92]

These claims of indigeneity are made despite the context of displacement, which here can also be said to elevate the rhetorical importance of articulating a prior history of continuity.

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[84]Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194.
[85] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 320; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 60; Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 58.
[86] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 320.
[87] Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 60.
[88] Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 60.
[89] Boyarin and Boyarin, 'Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity', 699, 714.
[90] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 308.
[91] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 308.
[92] Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 58.

The central focus on continuity and rootedness in understandings of self and community directly contrasts with perspectives on Jewish identity that stress Diaspora as negative, which often occurs within Zionist discourse.[93] Following the unprecedented horror of the Holocaust, the newly founded State of Israel was situated within nationalist narrative as a utopic destined haven to ensure non-repetition of atrocity and the ongoing safety and survival of the Jewish people through a "return to origins located in the Middle East".[94] As Boyarin and Boyarin argue:

> [T]he Jewish conception of the Land of Israel is similar to the discourse of the Land of many (if not all) 'indigenous' peoples of the world. Somehow the Jews have managed to retain a sense of being rooted somewhere in the world through twenty centuries of exile from that someplace (organic metaphors are not out of place in this discourse, for they are used within the tradition itself).[95]

Shohat observes that this has created a binary of opposites where Mizrahi or Judeo-Arabic culture is disdained in opposite and negative terms as a sign of '*galut* (diaspora)' as opposed to the privileging of the State of Israel.[96] She explains that "a corollary of the notion of Jewish return and continuity in *Eretz Irsael* was the idea of rupture and discontinuity with diasporic existence" which was seen as life outside of the State of Israel, no matter how long the person or community had dwelt there.[97] Political Zionist discourse privileges Ashkenazic perspectives and historical experiences which view 'uprooting' and dispersal as the norm rather than the exception because of the relatively frequent European pogroms.[98] Shohat observes that "the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa for the most part had stable, 'non-wandering' lives in the Islamic world . . . Ironically, the major traumatic displacement took place in recent years when Arab-Jews were uprooted".[99] Instead of valuing their alternative experiences and perspectives, Mizrahi histories and experiences are often subsumed into a political Zionist teleological trajectory that views the formation of the State of Israel as a point of stability rather than as one of the triggers of displacement.[100] Consequently, from this viewpoint, all Jewish communities outside the State of Israel are

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[93] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 205; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 331.
[94] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 216-217; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 331. This is called (2006: 331) "*Kibbutz Galuiot* – the 'ingathering of the exiles.'
[95] Boyarin and Boyarin, 'Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity', 714. In the case of the Mizrahi memoirists discussed here, this sense of 'being rooted' is expressed in relation to their birth nations, such as Iraq and Egypt, rather than the State of Israel.
[96] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 205.
[97] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 331.
[98] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 213-214, 223. Shohat (2006: 213) notes that Mizrahi history is also more often than not 'read' through an Ashkenazic lens which is "morbidly selective [in] 'tracing the dots' from pogrom to pogrom"' rather than a genuine examination of the whole of historical experience within the region.
[99] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 223.
[100] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 213-214, 223.

seen as Diasporic, while Jews settling within the Jewish nation are considered as achieving the culmination of Judaic destiny and being.[101] Shohat explains that within this thinking:

> [T]he 'Diaspora Jew' was an extraterritorial, rootless wanderer, someone living 'outside of history' . . . [comparatively] as the masculine redeemer of the passive Diaspora Jew, the mythologised *sabra* simultaneously signified the destruction of the diasporic Jewish entity.[102]

This model of Diaspora and Jewish identity does not match the identities and experiences of continuity articulated by those Mizrahi memoirists I have just discussed.[103] Clifford also argues that "diaspora cultures, constituted by displacement, may resist such appeals" to indigeneity, continuity, and a "'natural' connection to the land" on the basis of "political principle".[104] This he identifies as being an "anti-Zionist" position, with diaspora seen as challenging Zionist autochthonous claims.[105] Yet Mizrahi experiences show that in this case there is a different dynamic than Clifford would suggest. These accounts challenge Zionist discourse not through embracing diasporic discourse, but rather by rejecting it altogether. Instead, a counter claim of indigeneity is made with connection to a different land than that of the State of Israel, which Zionist discourse would otherwise assert. At the same time this Mizrahi historical trajectory also challenges Iraqi nationalist discourse that also stress an ancient and homogenous continuity, despite its modern foundation. As Clifford has observed, both "diasporist and autochthonist histories" can function as "'minority' claims against a hegemonic/assimilationist state".[106] Yet nevertheless in the case of Mizrahim, original nation-states continue to retain a strong presence in their life narratives and provide sources of nostalgic affiliation and a means to articulate roots.

Strong differences in historical experiences underpin Mizrahi arguments for a distinct cultural identity compared to Ashkenazim and directly challenge Zionist frameworks that assert a universal Jewish experience.[107] Haddad considers that Iraqi Jews should be

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[101] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 217; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 333. Shohat (2006: 333) explains that "within the Zionist view, Jews from West Asia and North Africa arrive from obscure corners of the globe to Israel, the Promised Land, to which they have always already been destined. In this way, Mizrahim could be claimed as part of the continuous Jewish history and geography whose alpha and omega is in the Land of Israel, a land that the Zionist movement purported to represent".

[102] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices',

[103] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 214.

[104] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 308.

[105] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 308.

[106] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 309.

[107] Shohat, *Taboo Memories,* xvi, xix; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 203, 213-214, 222-225; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 342. Shohat (2006: 214) identifies how Eurocentric and Zionist perspectives have skewed historical writing about Mizrahim to the extent that "the selective readings of Middle Eastern history, in other words, make two processes apparent: the rejection of an Arab and Muslim context for Jewish institutions, identity, and history, and their unproblematised subordination into a 'universal' Jewish

understood as separate from the 'catch all' Zionist category of Diaspora.[108] He therefore claims a unique identity for himself and his community by tracing a different, separate, and deeper place-centred historical trajectory to those of Ashkenazim and other Jewish communities worldwide.[109] Haddad explains that, "We hadn't known diaspora until now. Unlike the Ashkenazim, our history had been unbroken".[110] In doing so, he effectively claims authentically deep roots for Iraqi Jews while considering most other Jewish communities entirely 'rootless' until the opportunity of reconstructing them through proxy by connection to the State of Israel.[111] Shamash agrees with this perspective, also arguing that Iraqi Jews' unique and continuous "roots" meant they did not share the Ashkenazi need for a new 'Jewish homeland' because they already had one.[112] Continuing this theme, Kattan understands Iraq as 'God's own kingdom of blessed abundance' rather than the State of Israel as both religious and political Zionist narratives would otherwise argue.[113] He also emphasises the importance of possessing a strong historical consciousness in order to maintain community cohesion and integrity, stating:

> No group, no government, [had ever] dreamed of depriving us of loyalties or our past . . . Our origins had more to do with geography than beliefs . . . We were Jews. We knew it. Everyone knew it. But we were also children of this land, children of the country. And that was something we had to shout, constantly cry out, for fear it would be forgotten and that we would be deprived of our share of the wealthy which God had bestowed on this kingdom, his own.[114]

Not all Mizrahi memoirists, however, conceptualise themselves and their roots as oppositional or an exception to Zionist discourse. Some are very much influenced by the teleological understanding of history that Zionism represents.[115] It is also important to note that an awareness of national or more local history does not necessarily lead to feelings of 'rootedness' to the homeland of one's birth. A prime example of this is the alternative of instead feeling a sense of 'rootedness' within religion which can in turn shape what histories one feels most connected to. Fathi's memoir, for example, provides a clear

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experience," that is, an Ashkenazic one. She goes on to argue (2006: 222-223) that "the pervasive notion of 'one people' reunited in their ancient homeland actively disauthorizes any affectionate memory of life before the State of Israel".

[108] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 108-109, 320.

[109] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 108-109; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194. Haddad claims continuity throughout Iraq, while Jawary focuses on continuity in the context of Baghdad specifically.

[110] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 320.

[111] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 108-109. Haddad overtly states (1986: 108-109): "I know without a doubt now that a Jewish state [that is, Israel] was needed for the cast-outs of a score of countries, for those of the Diaspora who hadn't really sunk their roots in centuries of roaming. In Iraq, however, we had rooted deeply and I intended to remain – and make some changes".

[112] Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 58.

[113] Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 60.

[114] Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 60.

[115] Fathi, *Full Circle*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*

example of how different emphases in historical narratives can shape personal identities differently as well as how displacement experiences can be perceived.[116]

Fathi and his family were also Iraqi Jews, however, unlike more secular members of their community they retained a strong belief in religious Zionism although they did not actively pursue this until exiled from Iraq.[117] For example, both Somehk and Kattan's memoirs are written from a very different perspective because although each identities as Jewish, both were involves in the highly secular and literary circles of Baghdadi society while Fathi's family appears to have been far more religious.[118] In Fathi's memoir his family is portrayed as holding a strong understanding of historical continuity and maintained a tangible personal connection to the ancient history of Mesopotamia by frequently visiting, reading, and discussing ancient historical sites.[119] Instead of interpreting these sites as part of a nationalist Iraqi narrative, which many texts of the time would have stressed, Fathi's family interpreted them in light of references made to them in the Torah.[120]

Consequently, Fathi representation of his understanding of identity is very multifaceted from the formative period of childhood onwards; a perspective that was further reinforced by travelling widely as an adult.[121] Having grown up within a milieu of histories, cultures, and beliefs, Fathi's exposure as an adult to numerous multicultural contexts and his own flexibility within them reflects Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory.[122] Rothberg describes his memory as "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative".[123] This echoes Fathi's experiences throughout his lifetime where he constantly had to adapt, negotiate, and rearticulate his relationship with numerous collective identities (for example, nationalities).[124] Throughout his memoir he consistently

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116 Fathi, *Full Circle.*
117 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31, 51, 55; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*. Fathi's father was placed on a government blacklist for being a 'Zionist traitor' during the time of public executions of prominent Iraqi Jews and seizure of their private assets. His family had in no way betrayed Iraq, but were singled out as part of this politically motivated purge and possibly for their open religious belief. They could be considered religious Zionists in the sense that they retained and prayed for (2005: 31) "the historical hope of the Jews for a Promised Land".
118 Fathi, *Full Circle*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*.
119 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31-32.
120 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 32. Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No.* Hakakian also provides an example of the highly selective nationalist teaching of history but within an Iranian context.
121 Fathi, *Full Circle.* Fathi's memoir details his transnational travels in depth across his lifetime including his time in Iraq, Israel, Brazil, Korea (South Korea and DMZ), and the United States.
122 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3; Fathi, *Full Circle.*
123 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3.
124 Fathi, *Full Circle.*

reflects back on what these changes mean to his core understanding of self as a Jew originally from Iraq.[125]

As an adult, Fathi clearly articulates some of this complexity to a colleague who falsely assumes he is a Muslim because of his ethnicity and appearance.[126] Fathi explains to him that, "I was born in Baghdad, Iraq. As such, yes, I am Arab by nationality, but I am Jewish by religion and heritage".[127] This strong multiplicity enabled Fathi to have different possible 'roots' to draw upon when confronted with displacement and dispersal to numerous locations rather than being restricted to a singular concept of homeland. Understanding his heritage through religious Zionism also instilled within him from an early age a personal connection to the land of Israel (in addition to Mesopotamia) along with a nebulous desire to one day 'return'.[128] This resulted from his family's teaching of history, as he describes:

> These cozy family times always ended with a pledge that someday we would return to our old homeland Israel. There, we would live in freedom and pride, without any fear . . . The historical hope of the Jews for a Promised Land began to take root in our young hearts though at that time in our lives, it was cast as a magical place, an Eden where milk and honey really flowed on the ground.[129]

In other words, as a child Fathi viewed Israel as his "spiritual homeland" where authentic roots also resided and a utopic existence might once again be found.[130] This understanding of self only came to the forefront during the struggle for safety and survival because of the violent rejection of diversity within wider Iraqi society that found expression in vilification and ultimately expulsion and displacement.[131] As Fathi explains reflecting back on his family's reading times, "We had not [yet] experienced the oppression first hand that would etch that longing and hope across our souls and drive us [physically] towards Israel".[132]

The ability to possess multiple understandings of 'roots', in combination with being able to draw upon utopic Zionist discourse, granted Fathi remarkable psychological flexibility and resilience as an adult.[133] While fleeing Iraq, the perspective that we was moving towards his truly destined home enabled him to retain a sense of purpose and hope, rather than be

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125 Fathi, *Full Circle.*
126 Fathi, Full Circle, 233.
127 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 233.
128 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31.
129 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31.
130 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31, 67, 233, 314.
131 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31, 50-51.
132 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31.
133 Fathi, *Full Circle.*

flooded with the devastation of losing his only place of connection.[134] Although the sense of utopia would ultimately be lost through disillusionment, Fathi's continued understanding of himself and identities as a diverse multiplicity enabled him to achieve remarkable adaptability in the long term. This also enabled him to feel a connection with the 'melting pot' national philosophy of the United States of America as well as feel a strong resonance with the abstract commonality of universal humanity.[135]

Like Fathi, Kazzaz also achieved a remarkable level of personal resilience through possessing an understanding of self and identity that was not exclusively fixed on a singular place.[136] Removing a focus on both nationalism and geography, Kazzaz instead places centrality on religious belief in Judaism and the wisdom of the Torah.[137] Through this perspective, Kazzaz draws inspiration from the original exile to Babylon:

> For a while at least, it didn't matter that the Jews were not in Jerusalem worshipping in their Temple because of the Torah, their heritage and 'Tree of Life,' was alive and flourishing in their midst.[138]

Here, the Torah stands at the symbolic and life giving core of Jewish history and religious practice in both a collective and personal sense. It resonates with imagery of that represents it as an Eden-like wellspring of ongoing vital life force.[139] Kazzaz places crucial emphasis on Judaic religious text and belief as the core source of meaning – both of which are also highly transportable.[140] This is vital because of the fast paced nature of change, especially during displacement and dispersal.[141] Maintenance of religious faith and belief enables the construction of a sense of unbroken cultural and religious continuance and an ongoing connection to others and a higher purpose regardless of place or geographical location. For Kazzaz, this is the heart of being (and staying) Jewish.[142] He write of himself and his family that:

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134 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 56, 66-67.
135 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 189, 191. Fathi details his thoughts: "I was most impressed. America has a big heart, the biggest on earth. It felt good to be part of it . . . I must find a way to be part of this great country . . . I would find a way to play a meaningful part in this great democracy, the land of opportunity. I must say here. America must be my new, permanent home". Fathi ultimately joins the US army as a way of becoming a citizen.
136 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*
137 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*
138 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 169.
139 This metaphoric understanding is shared with Christianity, many in the West being familiar with this symbol either in this guise, or in terms of folklore and classical mythology with a wide variety of different narratives describing the Fountain of Youth.
140 Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (London: Verso, 2005), 86.
141 Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us*, 86.
142 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 38.

> Religion was the foundation of our lives – shaping our daily habits, molding our attitudes, and defining our ethics. It was more than a tread in the tapestry of our lives – it was the very fabric itself. And yet, there was no obsession in the way which we practiced our religion. Faith was, quite simply, the fundamental component of our existence . . . And because we infused daily life with Jewish meaning, it became full and profound. The holidays, rituals, dietary laws, and the blessings we recited over our meals all endowed the mundane with something beautiful and holy. Everything we did was connected with a spiritual purpose, and thus our simple activities acquired another level of meaning. In that dimension, the individual found an inner security, a sense of belonging, and a connection with God – the very foundation of self- confidence and self-worth.[143]

Being uprooted

Where and what roots are considered to be has implications for how the self, community, and displacement are understood. Roots as a metaphor, however, also provides a powerful language for expressing loss. To have roots in the first place leaves open the possibility of being 'uprooted'. Mizrahi memoirists, for example, draw upon organic imagery and liken themselves and their communities to trees being torn asunder in order to express the trauma of their displacement.

A profound connection to homeland, when severed, can bring with it the trauma of separation. This is the subtext present within Benjamin's poetic introduction to her memoir, speaking of self and nation as embodied and inseparable.[144] Revealing a personal and emotive understanding of homeland and identity, her use of a well known line of poetry implies that Benjamin's very being was created from the "branches" of Iraq.[145] While these are linked to the waters of the river Euphrates, the word also activates an association with trees, thereby likening the nation (and its ancestral peoples) to a primordial 'mother tree' where life does not exist without its (or their) presence.[146] Read in the context of Mizrahi displacement, the organic metaphorical image bears witness to Benjamin's personal anguish and pain. It poignantly asks, if the person is separated, absent, or ceases to exist, what then is Iraq? Does the previously singular entity shatter, with a myriad of shards living on, carried within each person having left her boarders? Does permanent departure

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143 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 38.

144 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi. As previously quoted: 'I am Iraq, my tongue is her heart, my blood her Euphrates, my being from her branches formed'.

145 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi.

146 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi. My first reading of this line I had the impression of tree branches, similar to the 'Tree of Life' as previously mentioned by Kazzaz in reference to the Torah. My subsequent readings have revealed the alternative (and more direct) interpretation of 'branches' being a reference to the structure of the river Euphrates. Either interpretation, I believe, could be valid and does not lessen the central point of embodiment of person and nation as implied by the poem's line as a whole.

rent apart and cause the 'death' of each, through the violence of separation? Or does something else emerge entirely?

Organic metaphors enable memoirists to describe and make sense of a rapidly changed post-displacement reality. At a universal level, the "rhythmic pattern of persistence and change" observable in trees can easily be read as a parallel for changes occurring in human life.[147] Like Benjamin, Jawary feels a deep personal and historical connection to her original homeland of Iraq.[148] It is, however, the *land* itself to which she feels the most attachment rather than the *nation* itself.[149] This ambivalence is not surprising given the betrayal many Mizrahim felt at the national structures that were ideally meant to protect rather than destroy the people they supposedly represented.[150] Resettling in Australia, Benjamin contemplates what the loss of her homeland and beloved city of Baghdad has ultimately meant for her:

> Now I am like a tree that has been transplanted with care. The tree had its roots well entrenched on the banks of that river they call *Dijla* (Tigris). The tree survived the process, but did not thrive. The aim was too high and the prospect too short! The end of time – empty.[151]

This same imagery and narrative pattern is echoed by Sabar's father, Yona, who was originally from the city of Zakho in Kurdish territory within far northern Iraq.[152] He confides to his son, who relates this within his memoir, that: "I feel like a tree uprooted . . . You can plant it somewhere else, but it will never be the same".[153]

The type of tree chosen for use in metaphor can also have special significance that helps the memoirist to express a distinct heritage or national identity. For example, for Iraqis, this preferred symbolism is often the date palm tree.[154] Easily associated with being Iraqi, date palms form a clever and emotive metaphor for Shabi's parent's narrative of being

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147 Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.
148 Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194.
149 Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194.
150 Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus,* 2nd ed. (London: Saqi, 2005).
151 Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194.
152 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 284.
153 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 284.
154 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 1-2. Considered a quintessentially Iraqi dish, Shabi's Iraqi Jewish parents "have a particularly devoted relationship with the [date] palm fruit," Shabi writing that "It's the dates that really clinch their Iraqi origins. A habit that clung to them as thickly as the Arabic language, music and customs. My parents migrated twice, first to Israel and then to England – but maintained their Iraqi-inspired date consumption throughout". Previously dates played a very important role in the Iraqi economy being prized for their exquisite quality and considered national treasures. In *Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food* I explore the sensory aspects linking food and memory more in depth. The fact that Shabi's parents' continued their consumption of dates remains a tangible and transferable aspect of their heritage and lived identity.

displaced.[155] Within this family's story, their fate was pre-empted and intertwined with the date palm trees that covertly made their way to Israel before the dispersal of Iraqi Jews.[156] Shabi shares that:

> In the late 1930s, or so the story goes, Jewish settlers in Palestine smuggled date palms out of Iraq, out of the fertile valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and into the soils of the soon-to-be Israeli state. But, my parents say, the stolen shoots never bore fruit as delicious as the original, magnificent Iraqi dates. How could they having been transplanted into a foreign land? . . . A short time later, 125,000 [Iraqi] Jews, my parents included, pulled up roots and left Iraq, migrated en mass to Israel . . . They'd borne all kinds of fruit – cultural, linguistic, artistic, religious, and professional – living alongside Arab and Muslim peoples, for the most part in peace, as good neighbours. Now they like the smuggled palms, were sowed into the new soils of Israel. And this land, they say, seemed unaccountably hostile to Middle Eastern and North African Jews – so they didn't grow right either.[157]

The choice of the date palm is particularly significant because it contrasts with the olive tree which has close personal associations for Israeli Jews.[158] The olive tree is considered resilient, easily transplanted, and able to thrive even in the harshest conditions within the soil of the State of Israel.[159] Within Shabi's family's narrative, however, in the date palm's experience, forced transplantation instead inhibits their previously glorious growth rather than enabling them to thrive.[160] Within the common language of organic metaphor then we see the tensions and interplay between Zionist narratives and Mizrahi narratives of resettlement within the State of Israel. For Shabi's parents, their personal story speaks of the loss of their homeland, but also their frustration and disillusionment with the far from inclusive Israeli society of the time.[161]

Despite the damage of uprooting and transplantation, this narrative of a lack of potential growth does not always necessarily carry down to the next generation's understanding of themselves.[162] Common to the narratives of Jawary, Sabar's father Yona, and Shabi's parents is that separation from their ancestral lands of origin through being uprooted and transplanted was damaging and personally stunted their growth.[163] They all, however, had

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155 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3.
156 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3.
157 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3.
158 Aciman, *False Papers,* 86.
159 Aciman, *False Papers,* 86.
160 Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3.
161 Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.* Haddad had a similar experience of alienation and disillusionment while living within Israel, detailing this throughout his memoirs.
162 Separation from heritage and loss of cultural and historical knowledge, however, is considered an ongoing issue.
163 Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 194; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 284; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 3.

previously well established lives within Iraq and something tangible to lose. The possibility for pragmatism on the issue of growth, however, emerges when considering their descendants. For instance, although Sabar's father, Yona, personally felt "like a tree uprooted", he specifically decided not to return to live within Kurdish territory, ultimately deciding there were greater opportunities for his children by continuing to live in the United States of America.[164] In the Egyptian case, Lagnado ultimately came to the same decision by realising that despite her personal nostalgia for Egypt, she had created another separate life for herself and her family in America that she wasn't willing to relinquish by returning in practice.[165]

Nevertheless, the experience of damage to roots and stunted growth is different from perceiving you have lost your roots entirely and that they are unrepairable. Each stance has implications for personal ongoing emotional and psychological wellbeing, especially in the case of choosing (or being forced) to relocate again or not. Each time such a scenario arises, the benefits of a move have to be considered against the added impact of reencountering loss – a challenge sometimes made more extreme for those who are still overwhelmed by feelings of that their roots have already been destroyed. This is a recurrent theme that emerges strongly within Aciman's reflections on his displacement from Egypt.[166] He explains:

> It is precisely because you have no roots that you don't budge, that you fear change, that you'll build on anything, rather than look for land. An exile is not just someone who has lost his home; he is someone who can't find another, who can't think of another. Some no longer even know what home means.[167]

This intense fear of any form of change, stemming from the original loss of home, is expressed specifically using organic metaphors that reference different soils and the risks of transplantation:

> It [that is, any change in anything] reminds me of the thing I fear the most: that my feet are never quite solidly on the ground, but also that the soil under me is weak, that the graft did not take. In the disappearance of small things, I read the tokens of my own dislocation, of my own transiency. An exile reads change the way he reads time, memory, self, love, fear, beauty: in the key of loss.[168]

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164 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 219-220, 226, 284.
165 Lagnado, *Man in the Sharkskin Suit,* 331-332.
166 Aciman, *False Papers.*
167 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39.
168 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39.

Aciman's narrative differs from those already discussed in this chapter – they describe the trauma of being uprooted followed by stunted growth in new soil, while Aciman's image is one of being uprooted followed by complete loss of roots and any chance to even the smallest regrowth. He describes how displacement has personally caused permanent and ongoing feelings of spatial and temporal dissonance that cannot be rectified by attempted returns or resettlement.[169] Although Aciman's experiences are Mizrahi, his representation of his post-displacement state directly echoes Black experiences of living within a different "syncopated temporality – a different rhythm of living and being" where "linear history is broken" and a changed sense of time and a distinct rupture in continuity is continually felt and precipitated by ongoing diasporic disruption.[170] With any sense of historical grounding lost, Aciman feels forcibly transformed into a state that he describes as being perpetually 'diasporic'.[171] Despite frequent travel and the appearance of being nomadic, 'diasporic' in this subjective sense means being trapped within a static and stifling state of *internal* non-movement.[172] This implies that Aciman will always carry the trauma of that initial displacement with him. He represents this as a fear of further changes and an ever present anxiety about the degree, or lack, of a sense of belonging to any person or place that constantly undermines him in every location and situation he finds himself in.[173] From this perspective, the damage to roots severely torn, or indeed, completely removed, is irreparable.

Aciman therefore sees loss of roots as a permanent situation once done, which prompts the subsequent sense that a perpetual loss of any secure sense of home, meaning, and belonging has occurred.[174] This perspective has implications for the children of the displaced as well as future generations. Kazzaz too has also directly observed that the rupture of displacement has severely impacted on the ability of some Mizrahi parents to retain a sense of a historical and personal past they feel able to teach their children.[175] As a consequence of this situation, the loss of history perpetuates the sense of being "adrift" within the next generation, many of whom feel utterly "estranged from family roots".[176]

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169 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39. Aciman makes multiple return visits to Egypt but never a permanent move. He finds the 'nostalgia' trips useful for thinking, but appears to still suffer the same melancholic dissonance nonetheless.
170 Clifford, 'Diasporas', 318. Clifford here is discussing Paul Gilroy.
171 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39.
172 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39.
173 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39.
174 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39.
175 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 435.
176 Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 435.

There are troubling implications if Aciman's concept of inescapable trauma and perpetual irreparability is expanded from the personal level to that of the collective. This is not in any way to dismiss the validity of his viewpoint not the depth of his personal grief. If the authenticity of displacement and the identity of an exile equates to, or necessitates, existing within an internal limbo in a state of inescapable melancholic suffering, this is indeed highly problematic given the state of ongoing and incurable pain. Given that collectively within Mizrahi memoirs there is an ongoing thematic longing to once again feel or re-establish a connection to history, place and people, if viewed entirely from Aciman's standpoint, this is a longing will never be fulfilled. Such a position undermines the potential for personal agency and removes the possibility of any improvement in wellbeing at the risk of losing the validity of that identity. Within this, however, pain imprisons and fear destroys the possibility of hope. A total absence of hope is not only tragic – it is dangerous. Without any roots a tree ultimately dies.

Flourishing within new lands

The presence of hope, however, is not truly absent but can be found within the narratives of other Mizrahi memoirists who use organic metaphors in such a way as to rethink their experiences, express resilience, and the possibility of flourishing in the future.[177] This tends to be the case for memoirists who express a more flexible understanding of self or have multiple alternative sources of 'roots' upon which they can base their identity. In their narratives, this appears to help with an improved sense of wellbeing in the longer term as well as a greater possibility of being able to recreate a sense of place and connection to others in new locations.[178]

Fathi, as discussed previously, is a clear example of someone whose multifaceted understanding of identity put him in good stead for coping with the profound upheavals of displacement.[179] As a child, being instilled by his parents with an understanding that he possessed a plural identity appears to have enabled him a high degree of psychological flexibility. Rather than being shattered by the loss of one foundation, he had the possibility of transferring that original attachment and reorienting himself towards an alternative

[177] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*.
[178] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*.
[179] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 233.

understanding of his identity, especially when it became evident that there was no option of remaining in Iraq without risk to his life.[180] It is worth noting that Fathi also may have had a psychological advantage because of his young age.[181] Older Iraqi Jews, for example, despite their religious belief, had formed stronger emotional and material attachments to their homes of origin as a result of their long life experience.[182] Shamash, for example, describes how older relatives and members of the community, who felt particularly attached to their properties and businesses, kept delaying their departure from Iraq until it was too late to leave. They then had no option but to endure the increased repression, public executions, imprisonment, torture, and constant surveillance under the dictatorships that followed.[183]

For a young boy like Fathi, however, at the time, having the psychological flexibility of being able to see the State of Israel as an alternatively destined home rather than only Iraq gave Fathi a positive and strengthening hope for the future.[184] He describes setting foot for the first time within the State of Israel after being a refugee:

> When we finally stepped off the aircraft and our feet touched Israeli soil, we all kneeled down and kissed the ground . . .We young Jewish children were home at last. . . It had only taken 2,600 years.[185]

From this perspective, Fathi's experience of initial displacement was not necessarily a crippling loss of home but rather a transformative (even liberating) process through which return to what he now considered to be his true home could be enabled.[186] Here, by virtue of a belief in Zionist discourse, the soil is not perceived as foreign or unstable but as beloved and benevolent.[187] The religious Zionism that had been instilled in him by his parents was further ingrained by political Zionist youth workers who were overseeing the care of displaced Jewish children within the resettlement camps. It is worth noting that these formative influences have shaped Fathi's identity as well as his life writing.[188] It was only later when Fathi found it necessary to seek his fortune elsewhere that feelings of displacement manifested more greatly. In his memoir, flying from the United States to visit

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[180] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31, 50, 56.
[181] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 55. When they were smuggled out of Iraq, in danger of their lives, Fathi was ten years old while his younger brother Yeftah was eight and a half.
[182] Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 216-222.
[183] Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 216-222.
[184] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31, 67, 233, 314.
[185] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 67.
[186] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 347.
[187] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 347.
[188] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 31, 67, 233, 314.

relatives still living in Isarel, Fathi recalls that, "I kept thinking about how many times I had made this flight, how often I have been uprooted, and what was in store for me when I landed this time".[189]

Haddad provides an excellent example of an older Iraqi Jew, who like Fathi, also had a multifaceted understanding of self that balanced both religious Judaism and Iraqi nationalism.[190] He was, however, initially quite content to pragmatically remain physically within Iraq despite intense difficulties while at the same time view the State of Israel as his spiritual homeland.[191] Haddad recalls discussing this perspective with political Zionists who struggled to understand his desire to stay in Iraq rather immediately evacuate to the newly formed State of Israel.[192] He describes telling them as an Iraqi patriot:

> Eretz Israel, of course, was ours in spirit, I assured them, but we [already] had a homeland . . . it might be difficult for you to understand, but we've been settled here for twenty centuries, since the Second Temple. This is home. We have the right to be here, and if we have to, we'll defend that right. We need your help, not your ideology.[193]

The intense anti-Semitism, violence, oppression, and exclusion that Haddad and his community experienced at the hands of fellow Iraqis, however, and their inability to recognise the subtleties of the Iraqi Jews' perspectives, ultimately destroyed his sense of belonging and rootedness to Iraq as a nation.[194] Haddad reflects on his shift of perspective, describing his feelings (or rather absence of them) when ultimately leaving the country:

> Knowing that I'd never see Iraq again, I expected waves of sadness to wash over me. Instead, I was surprised – and sad – to find I felt no sadness. The only feeling was of emptiness, or rather, *blankness*. The love I'd borne my native land had been obliterated, erased as if it never was, entirely expunged by Jewish blood. I'd mourn my home, but not my homeland.[195]

The Iraqi nation's collective rejection of pluralism and the effects of violence and injustice that resulted acted to separate out, prune off, or deactivate a particular branch within Haddad's personal understanding of his identity. Importantly, this disjuncture occurred

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189 Fathi, *Full Circle,* 347.
190 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
191 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 92.
192 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 92.
193 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 92.
194 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 108-109, 213-214, 320.
195 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 214.

while he was still *within* Iraq.[196] With ties of belonging and emotion severed, Haddad's concept of being Jewish became detached from a nation based understanding of identity. When in the State of Israel, Haddad re-paired his understanding of being Jewish once again to a national framework – this time the State of Israel.[197] Haddad writes that:

> Until this very second, I'd been nurturing some fairy tales, but finally I faced up to the cold, hard, total truth. Our house was lost. Our line was ended in Iraq. Everything we owned was in this tent. Our only hope was Israel. Our only home was here.[198]

But when ultimately disillusioned, Haddad actively separated out these aspects of his identity (that is being Jewish with being of a specific nationalist) out from each other once again.[199] Haddad details his increasing disillusionment throughout his memoir.[200] Here, however, he writes about beginning to voice to others his increasing awareness of the ethnic, social, political, and economic divisions present in Israeli society, asking:

> Why were the camps so bleak and barren? Why, with willing hands to work, was living space so scarce? Why were we building big hotels, wasting short supplies on tourists? And overriding all the rest, why didn't *Ashkenazim* ever talk to us as equals and ask us for our opinions, if only in connection with our own [Mizrahi] affairs?[201]

In this passage Haddad's shift towards a heightened understanding of himself as specifically Mizrahi rather than belonging to a more universal understanding of being Jewish or Israeli can clearly be seen. Haddad repeated configurations in his understanding of self demonstrates the active process of a person seeking to retain but also reconfigure elements of their identity in new contexts and collectives, but also the importance of fluidity and flexibility needed when negotiating this and attempting to recreate identities in a displacement context.

The need for fluidity and multidirectionality emerges also within Aciman's discussion with Elias Freij, the Mayor of Bethlehem of the time.[202] Within this particularly volatile area, olive trees, people, and territory claiming are strongly linked together both in discourse and in practice, with groves being actively used to establish settlement claims. Rather than

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196 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 214.
197 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 248, 260.
198 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 260.
199 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 275, 316-317, 321.
200 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
201 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 175.
202 Aciman, *False Papers,* 84-86.

emphasising division, Freij uses the metaphor of the olive tree in an expanded sense for building cross-community commonality.[203]

Within a highly volatile multicultural context, such as Bethlehem, a static or oppositional model of memories and identities simply does not work, and in fact leads to intense conflict. The lives of people who dwell within this space depend on a finely balanced (but easily disrupted) equilibrium, with Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities all having a stake in the significance of this place (as is the case within Jerusalem).[204] Active multidirectionality in the form of reciprocity and shared responsibility between all groups is essential for peace to be maintained.[205] Using Bethlehem as a smaller example, Freij argues that in regions of high tension like the Middle East more broadly, a distinct effort needs to be made to fuse the image of the olive tree to concepts of peace and unity rather than to exclusivity in identity or territory.[206] Aciman relates Freij's perspective:

> The mayor of Bethlehem agrees with Itzhak's view of olive trees [as linking person and land]. The mayor should know. His family, I am told, owns olive groves and has done very well. But, the mayor adds when we're talking in his office, the trees shouldn't just tie you to the land. They should bind people together as well. Olives, I am reminded are a symbol of peace. Mayor Freij dreams of a loose federation of Benelux-type states that will include Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. 'Everyone must learn to live together since everyone is destined to live together,' he says.[207]

The olive as a 'symbol of peace' is a different reading of the 'binding together' aspect of this tree in metaphor, one that expands towards universality rather than the exclusivity of settler claims. This alternative genealogy for the metaphor situates the olive tree as a unifying signifier of hope after chaos and catastrophe. Within religious narrative, this alternative genealogy is established in the story of Noah following the catastrophic Flood in the moment where the dove brings back an olive branch as evidence land has re-emerged in fulfilment of God's promise of peaceful, productive, continued existence within a new Covenant.[208] This is a narrative shared by all Abrahamic religions: Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike. Here, there is a symbolic linkage between people and land. But within this narrative the olive tree is additionally symbolic of the continuation of Noah's family tree, which by extension in this discourse is the tree symbolising the continued existence of the

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[203] Aciman, *False Papers,* 86.
[204] Aciman, *False Papers,* 86-89, 92.
[205] Aciman, *False Papers,* 88-92.
[206] Aciman, *False Papers,* 86.
[207] Aciman, *False Papers,* 86.
[208] Genesis 7:1-9:19. (New King James Version)

whole of human kind, not just the house of Israel.[209] This pairing of narrative and symbol is an example of a philosophical approach that can offer healing and future hope.[210]

Unfortunately, although potentially empowered, this perspective can also be highly idealistic. The problem with the concept of the universal is also its abstractness. In practice, people often begin yearning for distinction and protection of their own self interest, which easily leads to a break down that manifests itself as the age old 'tragedy of the commons'. Aciman illustrates this well in his memoir in his representation of a fight that breaks out on the Mount of Olives between two boys – one possibly Jewish the other potentially Muslim.[211] What they share in common is that both boys are of a similar age, they are together at a site of multi-religious significance, they ostensibly live in the area, and it is easy to image that they might be friends. Enter capitalism. Both boys are hawking mementos to tourists. One boy sells olives tree branches while the other sells palm fronds.[212] Universal imaginings and symbols of peace are harshly brought to down to earth by the life necessities for each boy of defending the core territory each needs to survive and protect their livelihood in the 'hawking to tourists' business.[213]

This episode demonstrates a convergence of the symbolism of trees, memory objects, commodification, and the negotiation of present practicalities – all of which unfortunately end, as sadly it too often does, in conflict. This pattern also easily mirrors larger political conflicts where nations increasingly stake out and defending essential resources. In light of this, to return to the model of future hope offered by Freij's reading of the olive tree metaphor, there is also the legacy of traumatic memory to contend with.[214] Aciman implies that traumatic memory of conflict has tainted the ground upon which an olive tree of unity might hope to grow.[215] He writes:

> This land is awash with memory, driven by memory, and memory, like spite is bottomless. Nothing is ever forgotten, much less, forgiven, and time is a revolving door, where faith runs loops around fact and fact turns into fiction, fiction into history, and history into enduring gall. Between you and everyone else here [in Israel and the Middle East] there is – as Rousseau said of his lifelong devoted mistress – not the least spark of love.[216]

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[209] Genesis 9:15-9:19. (New King James Version)
[210] Edward Hoffman, *The Way of Splendor: Jewish mysticism and modern psychology* (London: Random House, 1981).
[211] Aciman, *False Papers,* 94-95.
[212] Aciman, *False Papers,* 94-95.
[213] Aciman, *False Papers,* 94-95.
[214] Aciman, *False Papers,* 87-88.
[215] Aciman, *False Papers,* 87-88.
[216] Aciman, *False Papers,* 87-88.

History and memory here appear to act as barriers to peace and unity. This dynamic is not unusual in places of disputed territory and a long history of conflict.[217] Yet it is also the catch-22 of history and memory – both are needed in order for there to be the potential of a true break in the cycle of repeated mistakes and recurrent atrocities.[218] It is for this reason that Dirk Moses argues that traumatic memory influences present politics in the Middle East.[219] As Rotbherg's model of multidirectional memory shows, however, there is a far greater degree of human agency and choice in favour of change than Moses would suggest.[220] Importantly, this is also why Hannah Arendt herself came to the conclusion that forgetting – even if feigned – is absolutely fundamental to the process of forgiveness that enables people and indeed societies to achieve a new harmony following conflict.[221] It is the inability of most to truly forgive in the face of past atrocities that leads to the re-eruption of old conflicts and the disintegration of joint parties that had hoped to re-knit back together.[222] Here again, when there is a pathological excess of memory, we see the importance of multidirectionality and flexibility, the ebb and flow, the give and take of negotiation, and the importance too of letting go.

As part of the process of letting go, there is the potential for creative re-weaving and re-construction towards new understandings of self and community. Aciman's personal concept of 'roots' and 'home', as represented in his writing, is particularly land and location based.[223] He provides an example of someone who has not been able to let go of the past or move beyond a state of perpetual loss.[224] This is not the case for everyone. Lagnado, for instance, even when given the opportunity to return permanently to the beloved location of her origins specifically decided against it.[225] Sabar's father Yona, made the same decision despite feeling "like a tree uprooted".[226] Although Yona always missed his Kurdish hometown of Zakho, he also saw the importance of having a portable, flexible, and more abstract sense of historical rootedness and belonging. That is, a historical understanding of

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217 Erna Paris, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001).
218 Paris, *Long Shadows*; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958).
219 Dirk Moses, 'Paranoia and Partisanship: Genocide Studies, Holocaust Historiography and the 'Apocalyptic Conjuncture', *The Historical Journal* 54 (2011): 615-645.
220 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory.*
221 Arendt, *The Human Condition.* .
222 Paris, *Long Shadows*; Arendt, *The Human Condition.*
223 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39
224 Aciman, *False Papers,* 39.
225 Lagnado, *White Sharkskin Suit,* 331-332.
226 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 219-220, 226, 284.

self based within language and culture, rather than solely tied to a singular, specific place.[227] Nevertheless, it should be noted that at many times he questioned his decision to leave the land of his ancestors. Sabar writes of Yona that, "He had thought that he could take his past with him, box it up, and replant it in fresh soil. Now he wondered whether that was just self-serving bunk".[228] Yona, however, maintained a personal pragmatism about the future in light of improved opportunities for his descendants, feeling there were far greater options in the West compared to current possibilities in the remote mountains of his Kurdish-Jewish ancestors.[229] His struggle was thus:

> Past and future wared inside him. He could go home, back to his mother, his roots, his people. Or, it seemed to him, he could go anywhere . . . Yona saw his choice. Behind him were home, family, history. Ahead, America, where free of roots, you could fly.[230]

Yona's perspective on being 'rootless' is ultimately one of pragmatic optimism in high contrast to Aciman's more melancholic mode as previously discussed.[231] Yona, however, moved locations but took his roots with him. Although living in America, Yona dedicated his life to trying to record and preserve the history of his people and their fast disappearing language of Aramaic.[232] Arguably, and ironically, this might only have been possible given the training, recognition, and academic opportunities he could access by living away from Iraqi Kurdish territory. The survival of this knowledge – and in fact its growth and that of his family more broadly – was therefore dependant on his having left.[233]

Zonana also possesses flexibility in her understanding of roots, enabling her a similar degree of pragmatism that ultimately enabled her to recover a sense of wellbeing after the trauma of displacement and disconnection.[234] This flexibility is easily illustrated by her choice of two metaphors to describe her relationship with her roots – that of a tree as well as a vine – each of which I will now discuss in turn.[235] Importantly, in each case, Zonana makes her focus *people* rather than place.[236] It is a conceptualisation of roots that is not fixed, but more fluid and flexible and that easily enables shifts, movement, and adaptation to new circumstances.

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227 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 219-220.
228 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 219.
229 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 220.
230 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 220, 226.
231 Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise.*
232 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 3-4.
233 Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 3-4.
234 Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
235 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 61-47.
236 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 61.

Zonana uses the metaphor of a tree to describe her family, but it is not a standard 'family tree' in accordance to the typical genealogical model based off paternal inheritance.[237] In this case, the image she creates is reflective of her new found peace with her Mizrahi heritage and the strength she draws from reacceptance by her mother after previous estrangement. Her family tree is therefore distinctly matriarchal, and described in the language of sacred iconography:

> We were a triptych, Allegra and Nelly and I, united by blood and bone and skin, mirroring one other across continents, through time. No one else in the family looked as we did. We were the vital core, the strong truck of the family tree . . . I pictured to myself an unending sequence of women and girls, mothers, daughters and grandmothers and granddaughters, faces and bodies and eyes reflecting back into the past and forward into the future.[238]

Such an image creates a feeling of unity and stability. Zonana positions herself, along with the women closest to her, at the heart – the "vital core" and "strong trunk" – of this, her family tree.[239] Combined with elements of the temporal, she is fully centred in the present, no longer torn by the rent in existence and temporality prompted by displacement.[240] Within this configuration the centrality of personhood makes geographic place irrelevant – these women dwelt in different locations and yet Zonana re-establishes and retains a sense of connection and rootedness through her ongoing relationship with them.[241]

This same person-centric uncoupling of the conceptual linkage between 'roots' and a singular geographic place is also expressed in another organic metaphor as used by Zonana, that of a vine.[242] This provides a slightly different emphasis, but complements similar understandings reached using the tree analogy. Zonana describes her extended family as so: "The family was a vine, not a tree, a tangle of interwoven relations".[243] Note that this is not the matriarchal genealogy she previously described as a tree, but rather her extended family as a whole which encompasses all blood relatives. As a single entity, a vine, unlike a tree, is not restricted in growth to one location, but can tangle, weave, and sprawl across a multiplicity of supporting structures. Vines also can have multiple sets of roots, and can recover and regrow from multiple parts if sections are separated, uprooted, or destroyed. In

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[237] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 61.
[238] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 61. Allegra and Nelly are Zonana's mother and grandmother respectively.
[239] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 61.
[240] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 11, 173, 178-179.
[241] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 61.
[242] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 47.
[243] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 47.

the context of displacement, this particular analogy offers a way of viewing self and family as being actively able to retain vital connections in light of a new transnational configuration. Connections can be repaired and retained, despite physical distance from one person to another. Vines, if too closely entangled, can risk suffocation; so, if seen in this way, distance can also be seen as a possible attribute, along with the option of enjoying incredible flexibility.

Zonana's use of metaphor in the case of both tree and vine encompasses and recovers the transnational, trans-temporal, and interfamilial aspects of lives geographically displaced and emotionally disrupted. Her imaginative use of analogy speaks of the ability to create a personally direct, secure, and embodied connection to the past and her family regardless of time and place.[244] This perspective contrasts with that of Aciman and can be seen to offer a way out of the seemingly inescapable pathology of displacement as reflected in the perpetual melancholic dissociation described in his writings.[245] Coming to terms with a new configuration also lessens the perceived imperative of return as the longed for 'cure' to suffering caused by a loss of home and history – an increasingly impossible option for most Mizrahim given the current upheavals in the Middle East. It also re-establishes feelings of historical connection in a way that enables a new continuity to be formed that traverses new and multiple places and spaces. Today, with increasing numbers of people being forcibly displaced, or voluntarily choosing to seek their fortunes elsewhere in the world, such a framework of person-centric rather than purely place-centric history may lessen suffering and offer a greater sense of meaning in such a rapidly changing world. In this sense, life writing becomes an ideal medium through which to write about and explore concepts of history, both personal and collective.[246]

Conclusion

Organic metaphors provide a metaphorical and symbolic framework that are used by Mizrahi memoirists in a post-displacement context to not only to express pain and mourning but also to prompt different understandings of identity, connection, continuity, growth, and balance.[247] Such a language creates a fluid and living past, one based upon real and present needs, opening up the potential for memories and histories strengthen and heal in a configuration that favours multidirectional multiplicity rather than a silencing

[244] Zonana, *Dream Homes*.
[245] Aciman, *False Papers*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*.
[246] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'.
[247] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.

singularity. Within this configuration, concepts of roots and routes are in practice inherently intertwined for Mizrahim rather than being exclusively separate and challenge several assumptions present in debates over the concept of diaspora. What is evident is that Mizrahi memoirists' relationship to the past is no static but instead flexible, adaptable, and open to renegotiation in new situations, be it through choice or necessity. The affective and sentimental are integral in this process of remembering, identifying, and articulating affiliative identification and new configurations of self – subjectivity and emotional needs acting to shape and construct the 'person,' the 'people,' and the 'past' with whom connection is tangibly felt.

As separate narratives but also a body of texts active within global circuits of consumption, Mizrahi memoirs visibly call for awareness, acknowledgment, and recognition of injustice. The use of tree metaphors provides an easily understood symbolic language that is primed towards empathy and understanding. As life writing they also meet a fundamental human need for reflection and working through, increasing agency for reimagining and re-narration both personally and collectively. Fundamentally in the face of the disruptive and destructive (although sometimes liberating) effects of displacement, this provides a method of reconnection and selective reorientation in differing ways. That is, within these memoirs tree metaphors at times act as declarations of irreparable damage and exclusion, but alternatively also enable a framework in the pursuit of repair and belonging to pasts, presents, and futures consciously chosen rather than assumed. Within this spectrum of possibility – that is between witnessing the past and looking to the future – exists a present uniting and common yearning among Mizrahim for a sense of stability, purpose, and belonging within the diversity of circumstances present in the realities of post-displacement life.

This complex dynamic has been demonstrated throughout this chapter by looking closely at the use of organic and tree metaphors in Mizrahi life writing. As Macnaghten has clearly said, "we can concur that people want to see some sense and pattern in their lives, that this requires their lives to be set in a wider context, and that nature on many occasions provides that context".[248] Life writing and the creative use of metaphor provides an easily accessible mode through which Mizrahi memoirists are enabled not only to revisit and reconfigure

[248] Macnaghten, 'Nature', 348.

their loss in new and different ways, but also narrate and recreate new understandings of their identity and those of others in new locations.[249]

As the diversity of approaches and interpretations discussed throughout this chapter shows, there is a myriad of different ways that memoirists can use metaphors to help themselves express or come to terms (or not) with their experiences of displacement, and the collectives they may wish to distance themselves from or reconnect to.[250] Tree metaphors offer a language of human unity, while at the same time allowing for this diversity of subjective experience, personal understanding, and individual choice. This reveals a powerful and ethical symbolic language, one that speaks to the multidirectional nature of memory as well as the multidimensionality of life, both personal and collective. We turn now to look at another highly affective dimension of Mizrahi life writing, that of the senses and cuisine.

[249] Macnaghten, 'Nature'; Arendt, *The Human Condition*; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'.
[250] Arendt, *The Human Condition*; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'.

– CHAPTER FOUR –

Sense-scapes and Soul Food

> Food will not erase 40 years or 50 years of abuse . . . It won't unite anybody.[1]
> Shady in Daraghi, *Lebanon: Launching a Falafel War Against Israel*

> For at its core traditional Judaism truly believes that you are what you eat, or perhaps more accurately, how you eat.[2]
> Jay A. Eidelman, *Be Holy*

> [M]erely eating the hot round loaves of pita bread was a crucial step in retrieving our lost life.[3]
> Lucette Lagnado, *White Sharkskin Suit*

Mizrahi memoirs are infused with reference to foodways and sense-scapes. A sensitive reading reveals the cross-cultural fluidity of food and its meanings in addition to the fixed-form record that distinct recipes offer. This chapter argues that the senses and foodways are integral to identity formation, the telling of histories, and the performance of memories and meanings between generations and across communities in space and time. Foodways and remembered smellscapes present a bridge between individual experience and collective familial and cultural practices. Cooking and consumption stand as active practices that link past and present through memories both sensory and embodied. The memoirs' use of foodways demonstrates a multilayered, entangled, and interwoven exchange of histories, memories and identities that spans multidirectional and multidimensional movements of human experience. These dynamics are part remembrance and part emplacement – part celebration and part education. Always memory-filled and emotive, they also stand as highly political at both subtle and overt levels of play.

Here, in the context of Mizrahi memoirs, I bring a heightened awareness and appreciation of senses, emotions, and locatedness into conversation with Michael Rothberg's concept of

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[1] Shady quoted in 'Lebanon: Launching a falafel war against Israel', Borzou Daraghi, *Los Angeles Times*, 7 October 2008, accessed 2015, <http://www.latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2008/10/lebanon-lauchi.html>. Shady is a manager of Barbar fastfood chain in Lebanon and is cynical about food uniting people.

[2] Jay A. Eidelman, 'Be holy for I am holy: food, politics, and the teaching of Judaism', *Journal of Ritual Studies* 14 (2000): 46.

[3] Lucette Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 226.

multidirectional memory and Paul Rodaway's calls for an increased awareness and appreciation of the role of human senses and emotions in spatial and geographic systems.[4] Rodaway specifically argues for a return to studying "the fullness of a living world or everyday life as multisensual and multidimensional situatedness in space and in relationship to places".[5] Recognition of geography and an awareness of the dimensions of place and home, as well as the further dimensions of multilayered temporalities, are integral here because of Mizrahi displacement and dispersal. This is a context of refugees and immigrants, of migrations and repeated re-migrations of women, men, and children in their search for a safer space to call home.

Within this chapter, foodways form an ideal context in which the importance and fluidity of senses, emotions, meanings, and memories can be observed and demonstrated. The previous chapter, *Chapter Three: Routes, Roots, and Trees*, examined tree metaphors and the concepts of 'roots' and 'routes' in Mizrahi memoirs as a language of both life and loss. We turn now to the senses of smell and taste, which manifest themselves perhaps most strongly, although not exclusively, through foodways and the realm of cuisine. Through examining the role that foodways and sense-scapes play in memoirist' representations of memories, identities, and histories, we can explore more deeply the complex dynamics of memory. Memory and meaning are shown to be inherently fluid, multidirectional, multidimensional, and multisensory and easily able to make an impact on lives across generations.

Terminology and complex contexts

Before the main discussion it is important to clarify some terminology that will be applied throughout this chapter. The terms 'cuisine' and 'foodway' are sometimes used interchangeably. They do, however, have different nuances which it is important to identify. 'Cuisine' usually refers to culturally archetypical styles of cooking and preparation, including formal techniques used within a kitchen or food preparation area.[6] Comparatively, the concept of a foodway is far broader. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a 'foodway' as "the traditional customs or habits of a group of people concerning

[4] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense, and Place,* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[5] Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, ix, 4.
[6] Oxford University Press, *Oxford English Dictionary: the definitive record of the English language,* 'Cuisine, s. v.', 2015, accessed 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45611?redirectedFrom=cuisine&print>.

food and eating".[7] Compared to the term 'cuisine', the concept of foodways requires us to place more emphasis on practice and process, on lived experience and flexible dynamism. It also encompasses an appreciation of a group's customs and cultural habits in relation to food and eating. Both cultures and habits, however, can change over time and what is ultimately considered 'traditional' can also be highly subjective.[8] In this sense, using the term cuisine has much more of a static connotation than reference to a foodway.

Within the complexities of food, the senses, and memories, the added dimensions of belief and belonging also needs to be acknowledged. It is for this reason that the concept of 'soul food' is also present in this chapter.[9] Reference to soul food is often associated with African American cuisine, especially that of the rural southern United States of America.[10] Here, however, 'soul food' is used in its broader and more general sense of "food for the soul" and "spiritual nourishment".[11] As the Oxford English Dictionary explains, there is also a strong emphasis placed upon "such food being closely associated with family and community life and hence with emotional and spiritual comfort".[12] In relation to the memoirs, the familial, community, emotional, and spiritual (or philosophical) dimensions are closely intertwined. Judaism and the practices of *kashrut* lend the foodways under discussion the added importance of being guided by religious food laws and the festive and liturgical calendar.[13] Furthermore, the emotional attachment to people, places, and memories of comfort that certain foods can bring are especially heightened given the context of displacement, movement, and resettlement.[14]

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[7] Oxford University Press, *Oxford English Dictionary: the definitive record of the English language,* 'Foodway, s. v.', 2015, accessed 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/262118?redirectedFrom=foodway&print>.
[8] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of tradition*, Canto ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Gillian Polack, 'Food and family fictions – exploring the origins of an Australian Jewish cuisine', Unpublished and used with author permission; Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi, *Jerusalem* (London: Ebury Press, 2012); Ghassan Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, Ethnic Food, and Migrant Home-Building', in *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sydney's West*, Helen Grace, *et al.* (Armadale: Photo Press, 1997).
[9] Oxford University Press, *Oxford English Dictionary: the definitive record of the English language,* 'Soul food, s. v.', 2015, accessed 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/292490?redirectedFrom=soulfood&print>.
[10] Oxford University Press, 'Soul food, s. v.'.
[11] Oxford University Press, 'Soul food, s. v.'.
[12] Oxford University Press, 'Soul food, s. v.'.
[13] Polack, 'Food and family fictions'; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*; ABC, 'Taste of Memory', *Compass*, 29 March 2015, accessed 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s4191928.htm>; Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The most important things to know about the Jewish religion, its people, and its history* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Jonathan Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1998), 222-223; Ezra Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', in *Modern Judaism,* eds. Nicholas de Lange and Miri Freud-Kandel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 205-207.
[14] ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West'; Lisa Law, 'Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong', in *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Cultural Reader*, ed. David Howes (Oxford: Berg, 2005); Mardi J. Horowitz and Steen P. Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory*, ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992); Michelle Leichtman, Stephen J. Ceci, and Peter A. Ornstein, 'The

Cuisine and foodways always have cultural and political aspects that impact on understandings of social inclusion or exclusion.[15] It is important to note that across all the memoirs there is no strict or uniform Mizrahi cuisine to which all individuals adhere.[16] Nevertheless, there are broad patterns and unifying themes within their representation. These will now be outlined before being explored as themes in greater depth in the chapter itself.

Firstly, although some memoirists self-identify as secular, throughout all memoirs Judaism provides a distinct framework within which food is encountered, prepared, and understood.[17] Kosher food laws render Jewish foodways unique.[18] They continue to remain foundational to some understandings of Jewish identity.[19] Many memoirists who frame their culinary experiences and identities in this way do so to either identify with or to dis-identify (that is, distance themselves) from Jewish religious beliefs and identity.

Secondly, by virtue of history and geography, Mizrahi foodways are inevitably Middle Eastern in tone and flavour through the very influence of the region itself. This legacy

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Influence of Affect on Memory: Mechanism and Development', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992).

[15] Gassan Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', in *Sociology: Place, Time & Division,* eds. Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 342-346; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.

[16] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a Life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellvue: Shoreline, 2007); Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008); Collette Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile: A Memoir with Recipes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001); Farideh Goldin, *Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003); Joshua Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad: Memoir of an Israeli Intelligence Officer* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1997); Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008); Violette Shamash, *Memories of Eden: A Journey through Jewish Baghdad* (Virginia Water: Forum Books Ltd., 2008); Naim Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009); Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2007); Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); Heskel M. Haddad, *Flight from Babylon: Iraq, Iran, Israel, America* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1986); David Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press Inc., 1999); Sabiha Abi David Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember* (Caulfield South: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001); Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 2004); Saul Silas Fathi, *Full Circle: Escape from Baghdad and the Return* (New York: Saul Silas Fathi, 2005); Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999); Andre Aciman, ed. *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Stanley Abramovitch, *Survival to Revival: A Memoir of Six Decades in a Changing Jewish World* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2008); Rachel Shabi, *Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[17] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*

[18] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207;

[19] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.

results in dishes that draw upon and celebrate local ingredients and traditions. Such dishes have always existed in dynamic exchange and interaction with other foodways of the region, especially Islamic.[20] This fascinating interweaving builds upon the Sephardic root of most Mizrahi culinary practices and distinguishes them from European Jewish foodways, that is, the Ashkenazic.[21]

Thirdly, the period covered by the memoirs includes the rise and growing influence of European cuisine within the Middle East. This shift resulted from colonialism and the involvement of European powers in the region, yet, at a domestic level, was driven through the novelty and high status granted to European foodgoods. Some memoirists' families already had very European-inspired foodways as a result of retaining close ties to relatives within Europe, especially among Egyptian trading families. But for others this incorporation was a new trend.[22]

Fourthly, as a result of displacement, Mizrahi foodways have been shaped by the refugee and migration experience. Rapid changes often occurred between multiple unfamiliar settings across different countries. This traumatic experience of being uprooted can heighten the sensory aspects of familiar cuisine which acts as a fundamental component of emplacement – that is, reestablishment and the creation of home.[23] Additionally, encounters and interactions with new foodways in new homelands can heighten the perception of difference. Yet this experience can also foster feelings of belonging, through experimentation with novel cuisines and the creation of hybrid dishes.[24]

Lastly, Mizrahi memoirs reveal the importance of foodways as a conduit of memory and knowledge. They offer an opportunity for demonstrating shared belief and identity, be it religious or geographic, as well as a means of intergenerational communication and bonding. Furthermore, the inclusion of specific recipes within some memoirs enables readers to cook and experiment in a shared relationship of experience and consumption.[25]

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[20] Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem.*
[21] Polack, 'Food and family fictions'; ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem.*
[22] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile;* Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember.*
[23] Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West'.
[24] Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
[25] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*

Now that some of the important threads relating to foodways in the memoirs have been outlined, we shall look at the diversity of Mizrahi foodways before I identify some of the specifics that make Jewish cuisine unique compared to others. It is important to understand each of these as we consider the relationship between foodways, memory, history, and identity.

Mizrahi Foodways

Mizrahi foodways are highly complex.[26] As with other Jewish communities around the world, Mizrahi foodways constitute a mix of regional and local cuisines often adapted in accordance with *kashrut* (Jewish food practices and traditions), depending on the level of religious devotion of the family or person.[27] Foodways described in the memoirs constitute a mix of traditional Sephardic dishes in combination with kosher versions of local Middle Eastern cuisine and European fare.[28] In this instance, the communities and societies that Mizrahi memoirists were part of were (and, for some, are) Iraqi, Iranian and Egyptian. In very general terms across the memoirs, rice was a staple, as was fish, lamb, poultry, eggs, with cucumbers, lettuces, tomatoes, and eggplants being common ingredients. A variety of fruits such as melons, apricots, and citrus complemented dishes, and herbs, spices, dried fruits, seeds and nuts abounded. Yoghurts, sweet pastries topped with pistachios, and strong tea or Turkish coffee were also favourite treats. As the twentieth-century, with its social shifts and upheavals, was very much a time of a complex interplay of influences, European pastries, breads, and biscuits became increasingly popular among Mizrahim as signs of status.[29]

It's important to briefly overview some of the examples from the memoirs themselves in order to appreciate the sheer diversity of everyday food and dishes that the memoirists

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[26] Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*; Polack, 'Food and family fictions'.
[27] Polack, 'Food and family fictions'; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*; ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.
[28] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somkh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.
[29] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somkh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*.

describe. Originally from Egypt, Lucette Lagnado describes the dishes of her Syrian Jewish grandmother Zarifa:

> She prepares the meats and chicken and rice that were her speciality, cooked in the style of Aleppo, with a hint of fruit. There was also stuffed eggplant – white, not black, because black brought bad luck.[30]

From Iran, Roya Hakakian recalls her mother's food at a sumptuous Passover seder:

> The trays of rice topped with mounds of currents and almond shreds drew the most attention . . . soon the plats of rice crusts, nearly fried, filled with saffron, passed hands and were finally placed at the centre of the *sofreh*, amid the plats of mint, basil, and radishes.[31]

From Iraq, Violette Shamash mentions the treats she enjoyed associated with Shavuot, in the lead up to also celebrating the Feast of Pilgrimages (*'Iid el-Ziyaaghah*):

> All night as the [prayer] vigil continues, small glasses of Turkish coffee are served by the women, and by day-break there is *kaahi* ready for breakfast: crisp, sweet deep-fried puff pastry dusted with icing sugar to be eaten piping hot.[32]

Also from Iraq, Benjmain describes in detail the traditional sweets that both she and her grandmother, Regina, loved:

> There were syrupy *baklawas* – stuffed full of chopped nuts, cut into diamond shapes and piled into tall, sticky heaps – and trays of deep-fried, bright orange *zingoolas,* which dripped syrup and were shaped like scribbles. On the sales counter, star-shaped *masafans* were made from honeyed ground almonds sat beside crunchy sesame snaps, and trays stacked with coconut macaroons jostled cardboard boxes brimming with pale sugared almonds and powdery cubes of Turkish delight. But it was the *aloocha* that Regina eyed greedily. These were sticky toffee stars that stuck to your teeth and had to be sucked off slowly . . . following the intoxicating aroma of freshly baked goods that extended from the bakery and into the street like a beckoning finger. The pastries from Taht al-Takia were sought after all over Baghdad; warm date cookies that crumbled as you put them in your mouth, pillowy *sambuseks* and chewy *malfoof.*[33]

From a wealthy trading family in Egypt who enjoyed both European and Egyptian cuisine, Aciman describes the luxurious English-styled breakfasts he and his relatives would enjoy together:

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[30] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, 28.
[31] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*, 58.
[32] Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 197.
[33] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 62.

> Breakfast at my great-grandmother's was always served *à l'anglaise*, a custom I had only seen practiced in the movies and which made me feel as though I had entered the most luxurious hotel in the world, where the fresh morning air is always tempered by the welcoming smell of exotic flowers, buffed floors, and hot beverages, butter, toast, and eggs. You helped yourself to whatever you wanted on the buffet and then sat down, while a servant poured coffee, tea, or chocolate. The butter was curled into neat oyster-shaped shells. The dried toast was covered with an embroidered purple cloth, the eggs were kept warm in a large bowl, there were plenty of cheeses and jams. As for the brioches, there were so many of them lumped together in a basket, it was clear you could help yourself to many more than just one.[34]

Finally, Vivianne Shinassi-Silver, also from Egypt, provides an excellent description of some of the dishes she remembers her grandmother making:

> Being in Nona Esther's home brought many delights, food the chief among them. Her delicious meals would often consist of stuffed artichoke hearts, meat-filled zucchinis, okra in tomato sauce, and my most coveted of desserts, kataifs – pockets of fried dough stuffed with pine nuts, cinnamon and raisins, and covered in warm honey.[35]

All of these passages are illustrative of the diversity of Mizrahi foodways and types of food the memoirists enjoyed and considered worth including in their life-writing. Additionally, such reminiscences help us easily appreciate the complexity present in these representations of memories, the senses, relationships and identities. For example, the passage by Schinasi-Silver above provides a good overview of the type of cuisine both she and her family enjoyed in Egypt; yet it also represents a nostalgic reminiscence of a fond moment shared between grandmother and granddaughter.[36] It demonstrates a moment of intergenerational sharing – one which includes the transmission of culinary knowledge and cultural practice through the joint sharing and consumption of food.[37] It is also a highly sensory remembrance recalled fondly and located within a safe and familial environment. The delicious delights revealed here are both the consumption of sumptuous dishes and the safe enjoyment of personal relationships.[38] Furthermore, it is worth noting that the recollection of this memory for the purposes of creating this narrative probably occurred while Schinasi-Silver was living in the West.[39] Although writing this passage enabled the author herself to record and relate a personally treasured time, such episodes also provide a

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[34] Aciman, *Out of Egypt*, 170-171.
[35] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 50.
[36] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 50.
[37] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 50; ABC, 'Taste of Memory'.
[38] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 50.
[39] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*.

predominantly Western public readership with a touch of the exotic.[40] Places, people, food, history, emotions, memories, and locations are here inter-layered and intertwined. Amid this diversity, however, it is also crucial to understand what makes these foodways distinct.

Kashrut and soul-food

Historically, religiously, and culturally, cuisine has always held an important place within Judaism. Jay Eidelman, historian and curator at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, is adamant: "for at its core traditional Judaism truly believes that you are what you eat, or perhaps more accurately, how you eat".[41]Adherence to Jewish foodways, through obeying religious dietary laws, is one among several ways of establishing the borders of Jewish identity.[42] Within the universal human need for nourishment, eating kosher stands as a means of asserting difference and uniqueness when compared to other cultures.[43] For Mizrahim dwelling within predominantly Islamic societies of the Middle East, their foodways have helped them retain the borders of belonging to a distinctly Jewish history, tradition, and identity, while at the same time fully participating in a strongly multicultural context.[44]

Jewish foodways are an integral part of living tradition and Judaic epistemology and present a complex multilayered and multidimensional relationship between the sacred and mundane as well as the past and present.[45] According to religious tradition, Jewish dietary laws are part of foundational precepts designed to guide humanity's relationship with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation.[46] The fundamentals of these practices are established within the Torah itself, firstly from the book of Genesis but also within

[40] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Ella Shohat, 'Gender and the Culture of Empire: Towards a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 17-69.
[41] Eidelman, 'Be holy for I am holy', 46.
[42] Polack, 'Food and family fictions'; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*; ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.
[43] Polack, 'Food and family fictions'; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*; ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207; Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', 342-346.
[44] Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*; Hage, 'Insiders and Outsides'. It is also worth mentioning that historically Islamic food laws originally derived from Jewish practices of kashrut.
[45] Polack, 'Food and family fictions'; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*; ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207; Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', 342-346.
[46] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.

Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.[47] In other words, dietary laws are established as fundamental to Jewish foodways – the narrative within Genesis firmly establishing and emphasising food as essential for existence and crucial to both physical and spiritual wellbeing.

Food is framed through Jewish religious discourse as inherently meaning-laden and firmly situated within divinely established categories of allowed and forbidden.[48] Writing in the twentieth century, Rabbi Isaac Klein interprets this permission to consume meat within certain restrictions as part of a compromise on God's part.[49] Living flesh contains the "breath of life", while blood in turn is also directly associated with life form. The spilling of it means violence and death, both of which were in uncontrolled excess during the period of corruption and iniquity that characterised post-Eden and pre-Flood existence.[50] Klein argues that God concedes the eating of meat to humanity post-Flood and controls is through specific restrictions of preparation and consumption, in order to curb and control the violence associated with the spilling of blood.[51] These precedents, established within Genesis and built upon through God's dialogues with Moses and Aaron within Deuteronomy and Leviticus become clarified and fully incorporated into Jewish social and religious law.[52] Blood is specifically framed as universally taboo across all animal types, with particular symbolic emphasis placed on the association of blood with life. Furthermore, the ban on its consumption is specifically linked with it being reserved for sacred, sacrificial, and salvation purposes:

> For the life of flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul . . . therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is in the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.[53]

Here, it is made explicit that a fundamental aspect of inclusion and exclusion from being considered part of the Jewish people is obedience to food laws. This is emphasised also, firstly in Leviticus:

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[47] *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments: King James Version,* Nashville: Tomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.
[48] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.
[49] Klein quoted in Eidelman, 'Be holy for I am holy', 47.
[50] Genesis 6:11-13, 17. (KJV)
[51] Eidelman, 'Be holy for I am holy', 47. (KJV)
[52] See specifically Leviticus 11, 17:13; Deuteronomy 14, 17:20. (KJV)
[53] Leviticus 11-14. (KJV)

> For I am the Lord your God: ye shall sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I *am* the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God, ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy. This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.[54]

And secondly, within Deuteronomy:

> For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.[55]

These Torahic passages emphasise and reiterate clearly that food laws establish and reaffirm in practice an identity that is distinctly Jewish, separated out and distinguished from the universal.[56] The covenant with God is remembered and affirmed through adherence to prescribed consumption practices. These directly transform the act of food creation, preparation, and consumption from the mundane to the sacred through classification and inclusion within a category of holiness that emulates the divine. The existence of this elevated category, however, also creates a dichotomy between a status of purity and acceptance and a second status of defilement and exclusion. This is transparently stated through emphasis on *chosenness* and *difference*; on demarcating oneself and one's community as undeniably unique from others through possessing a distinct foodway inseparable from a particular relationship with God.[57]

This prohibition against pork, the consumption of blood, and mixing meat with dairy are usually historically considered to be at the vital core of these prescriptions. They also form the basis of the development of kosher slaughtering practices and meat preparation.[58] Taken as a whole, however, these Torahic passages also form the main textual base upon

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[54] Leviticus 11: 44-47. My emphasis added through underline. (KJV)
[55] Deuteronomy 14:2-3. My emphasis added through underline. (KJV)
[56] Leviticus 11:44-47; Deuteronomy 14:2-3. (KJV) Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.
[57] Within the narrative of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, God also specifically establishes which types of animals are permissible to be eaten and which ones are rendered taboo.(See Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, 17:20 for the biblical list and detailed specifics) For our purposes here, I will not go into greater detail apart from to note the core precedents of finned and scaled aquatic life and cloven-hoofed grazing animals being deemed permissible for Jewish consumption (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). Nevertheless, whilst swine can be classed in this latter category, they are firmly established as a particularly notable exception: Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they *are* unclean to you.(Leviticus 11:8) (KJV)
[58] Eidelman, 'Be holy for I am holy', 46.

which priestly and later rabbinical interpretation has been made and expanded upon for thousands of years. This thereby has created a highly complex system of religious and cultural food laws that separate Jewish foodways from those of the universal.[59]

Today, Jewish foodways as outlined in Torahic and rabbinical dietary laws may appear to some outsiders to be highly restrictive. The degree of this restriction, however, depends on the level of an individual's religious orthodoxy and the cultural milieu in which she or he lives. In everyday life, however, Jewish foodways are frequently dynamic and pragmatic to local circumstances as well as core principles.[60] This can be seen throughout the memoirs, for example in Egypt, Aciman's family equally enjoys both Egyptian dishes and European fare with little thought to kashrut and when living in the United States of America Zonana seeks to master festive dishes for Thanksgiving and Christmas as well as adapt and maintain the Middle Eastern Jewish dishes of her family.[61] One famous example of this pragmatism is from the Torah itself, describing Daniel during captivity in Babylon. Access to 'kosher' meat in the Babylonian court was impossible. Daniel therefore adapted his foodway in this context to a purely vegetarian one, thereby carefully ensuring he offended neither God nor the Babylonian king.[62] As Eidelman aptly emphasises, "focusing on food highlights the interplay between ideology and practice".[63]

Jews are not the only people within the Middle East to possess religious food laws. Islam too prescribes particular eating practices, shaped by religious and cultural principles. Based upon their shared Abrahamic roots, the original basis for Judaic and Islamic eating restrictions ultimately stem from the same source.[64] Like Judaism, Islamic practices also designate specific categories of permissible and impermissible but follow distinctly different prescriptions. These principles of categorisation are also extended to people, labelling groups and individuals as ritually clean and unclean, included and excluded.[65] Just as Judaic foodways shape understandings of Jewish identity, so too Islamic foodways construct

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[59] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.
[60] Polack, 'Food and Family Fictions'; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem;* ABC, 'The Taste of Memory'; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 578-579, 642-643, 699-702; Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism*, 222-223; Kopelowitz, 'Jewish identities', 205-207.
[61] Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*.
[62] Daniel 1:8-16. (KJV)
[63] Edeilman, 'Be holy for I am holy', 49; Polack, 'Food and family fictions'.
[64] The Dunedin Jewish, Christian and Muslim Community Liaison Group, 'Understanding the Three Abrahamic Faiths', accessed 2016, <http://dunedininterfaith.net.nz/DJCMCLG.pdf>.
[65] Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders'; The Dunedin Jewish, Christian and Muslim Community Liaison Group, 'Understanding the Three Abrahamic Faiths'; Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross*.

distinctly Muslim ones. For both, it is vital for their religious and spiritual wellbeing.[66] For Mizrahim in the twentieth century, living in Middle Eastern countries meant that the majority of the societies they were part of were (and are) Muslim. The question of how to maintain a unique foodway and minority identity, whilst also respecting majority culture and practice, was an inescapable part of life and celebrating feasts such as Passover played a critical role.[67]

Memory transmission and Passover

Repeatedly, throughout Mizrahi memoirs, family and food are stressed as the foundation on which the authors' previous lives had been built.[68] For many memoirists, the passing of time itself was marked through the comforting rhythms of daily family gatherings for meals, the weekly open house visiting day (*k'bul*), as well as Sabbath celebrations, and the keeping of annual religious high-holiday festivities such as Passover. Feasts and particular foods also marked the passage of life, with births, marriages, and deaths likewise communally marked in turn.[69]

The celebration of Passover is important for religious reasons, but it has education and remembrance at its core.[70] Foodways and consumption practices are directly linked to religious and historical remembrance and cement a certain understanding of Jewish identity. The Jewish obligation to celebrate Passover is clearly established within Exodus and Deuteronomy.[71] This feast is devised as a commemoration of God's granting of freedom from captivity in Egypt. Although the first celebration of this feast occurred just before the departure from Egypt, subsequent celebrations remember this first event.[72]

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[66] Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross;* The Dunedin Jewish, Christian and Muslim Community Liaison Group, 'Understanding the Three Abrahamic Faiths'.
[67] Haya Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists: The Jewish Community of Zakho in Iraqi Kurdistan* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2009; Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Jews in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); Zion Zohar, ed. *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus,* 2nd ed. (London: Saqi, 2005); Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003); Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression,* 2nd ed. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Publishers, 2002); Peter Y. Medding, ed. *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[68] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Sabiha Abi David Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 30; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 37, 75.
[69] Benjamin, *Last Days,* 35; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 64, 132; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 68, 85, 87; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 25, 29, 39, 61; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 58; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 262, 28; Victor Perera, *The Cross and the Pear Tree: A Sephardic Journey* (London: Flamingo, 1995), 155; Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 197; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 30-32; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 37.
[70] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy.*
[71] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy.*
[72] See Exodus 12:1-13, 10; Deuteronomy 16:1-17. (KJV)

Importantly, the foods served during Passover celebrations all have ritual symbolic meaning. Categories of sacred and mundane, permissible and forbidden are established within the selection of ritual dishes to be included in the meal. Stress is placed on ritualised and 'proper' preparation throughout. This sacred feast elevates preparation and consumption beyond normal foodway practices to demarcate the sacred. For example, all leavened bread within the house in the week leading up to the feast is banned; the consumption of the unleavened form only is allowed.[73] Preparation and consumption practices are also overtly fused with education and religious and historical remembrance:

> And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this *place*: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.[74]

The prescribed steps and core aspects of the Passover feast are described within Exodus. Throughout this narrative emphasis is placed on pedagogy and the sacred feast is constructed and described specifically as means of education. That is, through the repeated celebration of the Passover feast, knowledge of the original Passover event and its meaning are passed on to succeeding generations of Jews so that this history of slavery, redemptive freedom and a uniquely special relationship with God is never forgotten but rather retained as an embodied form of knowledge and belief.[75] Within Exodus, God instructs Moses and Aaron thus:

> And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations . . . by an ordinance for ever . . . And thou shalt shew thy son . . . And it shall be a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.[76]

The narrative of Exodus provides an explicit statement of Jewish communal continuity and uniqueness, as well as the reaffirmation of a specific destiny, which is remembered, learned, and relearned through continued ritual practice in conjunction with Jewish foodways down the ages. It is important to note that Passover is intended as a *specifically* Jewish-only feast. Passover ritually demarcates identity – that is, who is and who is not considered to be a Jew

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[73] Exodus 12:3-9, 15, 13:6-7; Deuteronomy 16:3-4, 8. Prime examples are the sacrificial lamb recalling the blood of protection and the bitter herbs to recall the affliction of servitude. (KJV)
[74] Exodus 13:3. See also Exodus 13:8-10. (KJV)
[75] Exodus, 12:14, 12:24-27, 42, 13:14. (KJV)
[76] Exodus 12:14, 13:8-10. (KJV)

and a member of the Jewish community.[77] Within the first Passover, this demarcation was done through marking the doorposts with sacrificial blood of the Passover lamb. In this instance, an overt declaration of identity (both personal and familial) and submission to divine protection were necessary for both physical and spiritual survival; together they fused communal and religious identity. The extension of this, in addition to the longing for the Promised Land, is an overt rejection of assimilation within Egyptian society and a distinct separation, symbolically, spiritually, and physically, of the Jewish and Egyptian peoples.[78] Although memoirists differ on how clearly they view the separation between themselves and their non-Jewish compatriots, the Passover feast also easily provided a narrative of separation and departure through which dispersal and displacement could be understood.[79] An inherent part of this type of narrative is the process of distinguishing who is considered an 'insider' or 'outsider'. Both Jewish and Muslim foodways do this in varying ways. The delineation of differences and commonalities through foodways will now be explored as represented in the memoirs.

Separate and shared

Some memoirists represent their encounters with traditional Islamic culture and foodways as restrictive and negative. Stanley Abramovitch, an Ashkenazi Jew from Europe, uses his memoir to describe his employment and career based in the Middle East with the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.[80] In the case of Iran, although on paper the *dhimmi* laws had been legally abolished in the 1920s, Abramovitch writes that these hierarchical and exclusionary practices were socially and culturally ingrained and persisted nonetheless.[81] The implications of this are that within broader society there persisted a view that that Jews were of *dhimmi* status, were inherently inferior to Muslims, and continued to constitute a ritually unclean underclass.[82] In some particularly traditional areas, being designated as ritually unclean meant that Jews were unable to touch, buy, or sell produce in Muslim markets because they carried with them the risk of defiling the items on sale as well as the seller.[83]

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[77] Exodus 12:43, 48. (KJV)
[78] Exodus 12:13, 12:23, 13:8-10, especially 12:43-48. (KJV)
[79] See for instance Aciman, *Out of Egypt*.
[80] Abramovitch, *Survival to Revival*.
[81] Abramovitch, *Survival to Revival,* 39.
[82] Abramovitch, *Survival to Revival*, 39. Abramovitch is speaking specifically in this case of Iran, although the belief that Jews remain ritually unclean in comparison to Muslims also persisted throughout other countries within the Middle East.
[83] Abramovitch, *Survival to Revival,* 40.

Growing up in Iran, both Farideh Goldin and the rest of her Iranian Jewish family adhered to kosher food practices. They thereby distinguished their foodways from those of the surrounding Muslim majority.[84] Even as a child, Goldin experienced the highly political (and emotional) consequences of social inclusion and exclusion brought about through negotiating different food practices and the identities they conferred. In one instance, Goldin was extremely hungry after accidentally being left home alone all day at her family's newly purchased, but still bare, house. Local Muslim children playing in the street presented a potential opportunity for friendship and sustenance. Yet deep suspicion on both sides prevented this outcome.[85] Goldin recalls:

> They circled me with wondering eyes. Their suspicion of the Jews wasn't surprising to me . . . I was afraid to ask for a piece of bread or a glass of tea. What if the food wasn't kosher? What if they poisoned it to kill me? Would they allow me to touch their utensils anyway? They surely feared that I would make them *najes* [unclean].[86]

Such were the challenges faced by those in the situation of being one of the very few Jewish pupils in a traditional and predominantly Muslim school.[87] Goldin explains that she based her assumption of her peers' perspective and potential reactions to her on her own prior experiences with other Muslim children in the neighbourhood. Previously, she had been subjected to other children's prejudice after naively drinking from a water spout at school. Her Muslim peers blamed her, as Jewish, of ritually defiling the water and their angry reaction "caused a near riot" as a result.[88] As a consequence of this reaction, Goldin's Muslim classmates requested a solution of a singular designated water spout to be restricted for Jewish use. In turn, the teachers did not reprimand the rioting students but instead directed Goldin for 'hygiene' reasons to drink water only from her hand in the future and not from the spout itself (which other students did freely).[89]

Heskel Haddad, in his representation of his own boyhood experiences, describes a high degree of division between Jewish and Muslim communities in Baghdad.[90] Generally, he and his family had little personal interaction with Muslims. If they did, they "rigidly

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[84] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 64. Goldin's narrative describes how even as a child she was so anxious about keeping kosher that spilled some milk from her baby sister's bottle over food classed as 'meat' caused her incredible worry, necessitating her throwing it out, and bringing trouble from her family on both accounts.
[85] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 118-119.
[86] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 119
[87] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 119.
[88] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 119
[89] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 119.
[90] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*. The amount of division or integration and interaction between Jewish and Muslim communities in Baghdad and Iraq more broadly differs between memoirists.

observed" certain "tacit codes of conduct" because "We didn't 'drop in' on *M'silmin* [Muslims] as we did among ourselves [Jews]".[91] Haddad explains:

> House visits were confined to strictly ceremonial occasions. On holidays, both Jewish and Islamic, we paid our ritual respects; there wasn't any casual, unplanned communication.[92]

Major life stage rituals such as weddings, however, presented an opportunity for closer cross-community encounters as both Jews and Muslims had shared reasons to cross paths and eat together. For example, an interesting confrontation occurred between Jewish and Islamic ritual purity practices when Haddad and his father were invited along to an Islamic wedding feast.[93] Haddad writes that he had to be careful to still observe kosher practices and restrict himself to permissible sweets – this was challenging as he felt hungry and yearned for the delicious-looking meat.[94] Naim Kattan, also a Baghdadi Jew, recalls attending a feast with his grandmother (who was held in high esteem by local Muslims) celebrating an Islamic coming-of-age circumcision ritual.[95] Like Haddad, Kattan and his grandmother politely but carefully refrained from eating the food there:

> Our hosts had not pushed their hospitality to the point of inviting us to appreciate a huge variety of dishes.[96]

In both situations, the compromise of limited or restricted dishes retained ritual purity for both the Jewish guests and Muslim hosts. It also helped protect ideals surrounding hygiene – his grandmother's main personal concern – which constitutes a counter-narrative of Muslims being perceived as second-class, unclean, and unhygienic.[97]

Kattan is himself not overly bothered by the separation of dishes at the feast but instead views and represents it as a novel experience.[98] Haddad, however, is very deeply troubled when he encounters a similar separation as a wedding guest. He describes being subtly observed by attentive Muslim servants who meticulously separated out from the others each and every dish he and his father ate from.[99] They have the option of all dishes, rather than pre-selected restrictions as before – but with the knowledge that everything they

[91] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 27.
[92] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 27.
[93] Haddad, *Flight From Babylon,* 27.
[94] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 27.
[95] Kattan, *Farewell Babylon,* 44-45.
[96] Kattan, *Farewell Babylon,* 45.
[97] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 27; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 45.
[98] Kattan, *Farewell Babylon,* 45.
[99] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 27-28.

decide to take for themselves then prevents others from sharing that dish too.[100] These are highly entangled situations – the effort to be hospitable and inclusive but maintaining borders at the same time. His father later explains to Haddad:

> To the *M'silmin* [Muslims], all *Y'hudim* [Jews] are unclean – like pigs to us. Any dish we ate from was contaminated, and required *alk* – hanging. Our plates will soak all night, separate from all the others, then be set up on the highest shelf, stored as inaccessible as can be managed in order that no *Milsim* [Muslim] might by accident defile himself by eating from them.[101]

Within the attempt to share a common meal, we may observe common elements in foodway ritual practice as well as the presence of inclusion and exclusion. That is, that even though both Jews and Muslims involved in the event were actively concerned with ritual purity according to their respective foodways, each partook of the feast without jeopardising either belief set.[102] Although there is a possibility for pragmatism, the existence of exclusion, however, remains. Haddad's representation and perspective of his own boyhood experience is shaped through the guidance and commentary of his father. He therefore sees the episode as an example of minority exclusion and latent anti-Semitism.[103] He wonders: "If *friends* regard us in such a light, what might be anticipated from strangers?"[104] Haddad, his father, and other Baghdadi Jews had, and have, very good reason to be concerned about increasing anti-Semitism and violence in the community in light of increased politicisation of Arab nationalism.[105] While acknowledging this reality, it is unfortunate that these potential points of interfaith connection and communication were missed and, instead, in part because of the tense political atmosphere of the time, the celebration was read as an episode of exacerbating and learning about difference rather than as a shared moment and opportunity for dialogue. Sabiha Jawary, for instance, also describes a wedding feast in Baghdad.[106] Her representation of difference, however, is not exclusionary, but rather emphasises how very similar it was to Muslim weddings:

> The banquet was also devoid of any dairy product, according to Jewish dietary laws. If the wedding had been a Moslem one, the food would have been much the same except that butter would have been used instead of oil and cheeses and yoghurts would have been served with the meal.[107]

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[100] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 27-28.
[101] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 28.
[102] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 27-28; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*, 45.
[103] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 28.
[104] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 28.
[105] Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*.
[106] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 36.
[107] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*, 36.

It is important to note that these exclusionary situations were not the experiences of all Mizrahim. Other memoirists, when describing times spent with their Muslim friends, emphasise strong and genuine feelings of commonality and inclusion.[108] Like Haddad, David Kazzaz is also a former Jewish resident of Baghdad, but his narrative constructs a very different perspective of personal interactions with Muslims.[109] Kazzaz instead views the ritualised foodways of Jews and Muslims within his city as different yet complementary.[110] Kazzaz illustrates his perspective using an example of a friendly exchange with Muslim neighbours that occurred after his family's Passover celebrations. Religious observant Jewish families, in the lead-up to Passover, do not eat leavened bread or cultured yoghurts. Kazzaz explains:

> In general, a sense of cooperation and respect existed between the two communities [in Baghdad] for a number of years. Certainly, the Moslems were aware of some of our Jewish customs. After Passover, for example, one of my father's business associates brought us a large tray of freshly baked bread, a bowl of yoghurt, and dates. Yoghurt was popular among all Iraqis, enjoyed almost daily, and it was often eaten with a sweet fruit such as dates . . . The 'break-the-bread-fast-tray', offered in friendship, said a lot of things – that the Moslems acknowledged our customs, that they respected us, and they wanted to reach out to us in a gesture of generosity and friendship.[111]

Despite distinguishing Jews and Muslims within Baghdad as separate communities, through this particular instance of respectful interfaith understanding of foodways, Kazzaz describes a social relationship characterised by mutual respect, negotiation, and understanding.[112] Certainly, Muslims could easily understand the challenges of fasting and could see a parallel within the fast of Ramadan.[113] Here we also see a shared national and regional culture of fasting as well as a shared love of yoghurt consumption.

Different rituals - similar foodways

These examples from Mizrahi memoirs are illustrative of the representations of religious observance of purity rituals by both Mizrahim and Muslims within their respective

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[108] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*.
[109] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*, 80.
[110] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*
[111] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 80.
[112] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 80.
[113] The Dunedin Jewish, Christian and Muslim Community Liaison Group, 'Understanding the Three Abrahamic Faiths'.

foodways. As we have seen, foodways may differ completely but they may also, vitally, be grounds for mutual understanding. It needs to be noted, however, that in very generalised terms Mizrahim and Muslims in the Middle East share virtually the same regional cuisine.[114] By the very fact of sharing life within the Middle East for countless generations, along with the necessity to utilise local ingredients, the types of food and dishes eaten are extremely similar. Cuisine is adjusted one way or the other depending only on individual's degree of religious observance, and of course, her or his religion.[115]

Basic Middle Eastern cuisine is virtually the same for Jews and Muslims alike, if viewed from a purely secular perspective.[116] Within major trading centres, the spread of secularism and the influence of European foodways have seen many people shift towards a more generalised consumption of food that does not situate religion as the primary focus of identification and lived practice.[117] Instead, focus has shifted towards alternative social and political philosophies such as capitalism, nationalism, and communism.[118] In globally-connected urban centres, such as Baghdad and Alexandria, where the mix of travellers and spread of ideas was more rapid than the 'peripheries', more generalised and fluid understandings of culture, ethnicity, regional, and national frames have predominated.[119] In the context of Iraq, Marina Benjamin observes that by the end of the nineteenth century the Jewish community of Baghdad was "so thoroughly integrated" within the cosmopolitan community that most Jews ate exactly the same food as their Muslim compatriots.[120]

These more general perspectives demonstrate interesting entanglements of international influences with local situations. An excellent example of the combined influences of secularism and European culture upon local foodways and identities appears in the cuisine-focused narrative of Collette Rossant's memoir, *Apricots on the Nile.*[121] Rossant reflects upon her memories of being a young girl growing up in Egypt and describes dishes and records recipes of the foods she and her grandparents regularly shared.[122] Rossant's Jewish grandparents were secular and did not follow kashrut. Religion was simply not the primary locus of their identity. The absence of kashrut within the household is perhaps best

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[114] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember;* Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*.
[115] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember;* Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*.
[116] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 36; Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*.
[117] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember;* Ottolenghi and Tamimi, *Jerusalem*.
[118] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*.
[119] Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West';
[120] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 20.
[121] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile.*
[122] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile.*

exemplified by one of Rosannt's favourite dishes enjoyed each week by the family: 'Mussels Mariniere', consisting of copious herbed shellfish sautéed in a generous amount of butter in a French style.[123]

As represented in Rossant's memoir, in circles of the secularised Alexandrian social elite, to which Rosannt's grandparents belonged, the central meaning of foodways emanated from concepts of class and ethnicity, not religion.[124] Instead, high value was placed upon European culture as the epitome of civilisation. Appreciating the nuances of this framework was important. For instance, Rosannt's gentle grandfather loved everything English while her assertive grandmother instead adored everything French.[125] This Francophile obsession infused every aspect of her life and identity.[126] Rosannt's grandmother conspicuously used French language in conversation. Her ornate mansion was adorned with French-styled windows and sumptuous Louis XVI furniture. Within this highly ornate environment the family would enjoy French cuisine.[127] Although they were geographically located within Egypt, their environment was physically, socially, and culturally constructed towards presenting an appearance of French culture and way of life.

The emulation of 'Europeanness' among the social elite, however, could be said to exacerbate and reinforce a class-based dichotomy. To be considered 'civilised' and of good social standing was to emulate 'Europeanness' in dress, behaviour, interactions, and consumption. Conversely, anything associated with 'Arabness' and the Middle East itself was considered 'low-brow', even 'barbaric' and to be shunned if possible – except for things considered 'exotic' or part of 'antiquities'.[128] Rosannt's grandmother, for example, genuinely feared for the potential social disgrace and downfall of her granddaughter through her being too 'Egyptian'.[129] She would regularly admonish Rosannt for her behaviour, hoping to 'educate' her towards more 'appropriate' behaviour by crying:

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123 Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile,* 8-9. Rossant's grandmother also shows for all ingredients herself in the main market, rather than a specifically Jewish one, which usually kosher goods were restricted to. There is mention of her inspecting and purchasing all meat and poultry herself, but there is no mention that this is kosher, and also unlikely given it being purchased from the mainstream market (see Rossant: 2001: 46, 51-52).
124 Rosannt, *Apricots on the Nile.*
125 Rosannt, *Apricots on the Nile,* 9.
126 Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile.*
127 Rosannt, *Apricots on the Nile,* 8-9.
128 Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
129 Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile.*

> *Une jeune fille de bonne famille ne fréquent pas la cuisine!* (A young girl of good breeding does not go into the kitchen!) . . . Get out of there . . . You are not Egyptian, you are French![130]

This statement demonstrates the importance placed upon the appearance and perception of nationality as well as a strongly class-based and racialised demarcation of space within the production and consumption of cuisine.[131] Within this perspective, being 'Egyptian' is clearly associated with lower-class labour and being crass, while to be 'French' is to cultivate and emulate appropriate 'lady-like' gentility and to enjoy the privilege of being waited upon rather than to serve. Although she was Jewish, in Rossant's grandmother's house foodways and social relationships were not about religion at all but rather all about status, with a focus on a very cultivated French-orientated Europeanised identity.[132] Ultimately, it did not matter if the dish were European or Middle Eastern as long as a distinct distance was maintained between the mode of production and consumption in order to protect her class status. Class in this instance becomes more important than national identity. If Rossant's grandmother entered the kitchen, her visit was always brief and she conducted it in the role of an overseer:

> Grandmaman would sniff once or twice, order *lahma mahshiya* (thin slices of marinated beef stuffed with Kashkaval cheese and onions and baked) for dinner, and sail out of the kitchen to join my aunts on the terrace.[133]

The valuing of 'Europeanness' in both behaviour and foodways was not just restricted to Alexandria. In Iraq, associations with British or European culture were frequently held in high regard by the Jewish community because, as in the Egyptian case, they were strongly associated with colonial power and being upper class.[134] Rather than being viewed as occupiers, the British were keenly welcomed as "liberators and protectors" by most in the Jewish community of Baghdad because of maltreatment by previous regimes.[135] Many therefore adopted British foodway practices as a valued and worthwhile 'civilising influence'.[136] Marina Benjamin remembers her great-grandmother Salha being completely

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130 Rosannt, *Apricots on the Nile,* 8.
131 Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*, 8.
132 Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile.*
133 Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile,* 53.
134 Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon.*
135 Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews.*
136 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 56-57.

enamoured by the British, and she changed her own foodways accordingly.[137] Benjamin recalls this cultural change:

> She began offering her guests milk with their tea, and instead of serving it in small hour-glass shaped tumblers, as was the Baghdadi custom, she dusted off her virtually unused china and began using that instead. She started buying Lyon's biscuits and tea cakes from the shops that had sprung up to cater to British tastes, ignoring Ezra's [her husband's] complaint that they were flavourless.[138]

Social display and standing was placed above enjoyment of the food itself. Again, this was not only restricted to Jewish Baghdadis but some Muslim Baghdadis followed such trends as well.[139] So far we have explored some of the important religious and social factors that tie foodways and identities closely together. We now turn to look in more detail at the workings of the senses and memory, which are inherently important in understanding the emotional and psychological weight that different aromas and dishes can have, especially in the context of displacement.

The senses and memory

Foodways, with their full engagement of the senses, enable a different experiential mode through which to experience and explore memory, meaning, and histories. Our human senses play an integral role in the formation and recall of memories.[140] It is vital, therefore, to be aware of the role that senses play in our understanding of memory dynamics. Psychologists have repeatedly found that smell- and taste-prompted memories are far more intense and emotive than those purely of the visual realm.[141] Overall they leave deeper mnemonic imprints and can produce more vivid recall compared to other forms of memory. J. Douglas Porteous, a scholar who researches geography, explains that in this context aromas are "immediately evocative, emotional, and meaningful".[142] This is an important point to note when considering the memoirs because food, families, and eating are a prominent point of focus for many of the authors.[143] A distinguishing characteristic of

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137 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 56.
138 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 56.
139 Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somehk, *Baghdad, Yesterday.*
140 J. D. Porteous, 'Smellscape' *Progress in Human Geography* 9, (1985): 356-378; George Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood: A Theoretical Integration', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 93-110; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; David Howes, ed. *Empire of the Senses*: *The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).
141 Porteous, 'Smellscape', 359; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'.
142 Porteous, 'Smellscape', 360.
143 Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's*

the memoir genre in general is that personal memories take centre stage in creating biographical and historical narratives of the person, and depending on their focus, also their family, community and sometimes nation.[144] That smell- and taste-oriented memories are so strong and intense, in terms of both imprinting and recollection, makes such memories an ideal source of inspiration for authors. Our senses also mediate, shape, and therefore determine our perception of what reality is in every given moment.[145]

Sensory mediation in turn informs what is retained in memory and what can therefore be drawn upon by authors constructing their narratives. The authors' personal 'archive' of sensory memories and associations produced, and produces, their own firsthand knowledge of the world as both a person and historical witness.[146] In turn, communicated through narrative in the mode of memoir, these representations mediate and shape readers' understandings of the personal historical reality that the memoirists experienced.[147] Mizrahi memoirs are filled with sensory references. Consequently, when examining the dynamics between foodways and memories, it is important to be aware that both a unique vividness and the processes of mediation occur at the same time.

As previously mentioned, Mizrahi memoirs frequently contain a rich description of culinary encounters, past and present, as well as instances of re-accessing experiences through triggered odour memories. Throughout her memoir, Joyce Zonana displays a keen awareness of sensory memory. Zonana is very conscious that she easily recalls and relives memories of her mother's cooking from her Egyptian childhood while enjoying the sensory pleasure of creating the same tabouleh in her new home in Canada.[148] She describes

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Paradise; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somkh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.

144 Helen Buss, 'Memoirs', in *Encyclopedia of Write Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms, Vol 2*. (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 595-597; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*.

145 Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 3, 12; Robbin W. Thorp, *et al.,* 'Nectar Fluorescence under Ultraviolet Irradiation', *Science* 189 (1975): 476; Heather M. Whitney, *et al.,* 'Floral Iridescence, Produced by Diffractive Optics, Acts As a Cue for Animal Pollinators', *Science* 323 (2009): 130-133. Our understanding of existence and reality is limited by our state as physical beings and also the capacity of our senses to inform our perceptions. Without a doubt, our senses dictate what can be determined about the world and mediate human experience. A simple example of sensory mediation is in an everyday interaction with flowers, that is, viewing them while casually walking by. Our senses of sight, and perhaps smell, constitute the reality of what the flowers appears to be in that moment of our perception. The reality of these same flowers to a bee, however, who can discern the complexity of the iridescent ultraviolet pattering on its petals and the fluorescence of its pollen, will be entirely different. To discover this level of the flowers' physical existence and thereby know this additional aspect of reality, we require the aid of high level scientific technology to bring this into the realm of our own sensory perception. It otherwise remains unknown to us as our senses mediate reality and leave out that which is beyond our natural physical sensorial capacity to discern.

146 Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 3, 12; Buss, 'Memoirs'.

147 Buss, 'Memoirs'.

148 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 137.

her enjoyment of the tactile sensation of using her hands to toss all the vegetables, herbs, and soaked bulgur together.[149] Zonana explains:

> When the tabouleh was done, I would gratefully lick my hands, savouring the bits of bulgur and parsley, the tang of lemon, and the warmth of cumin.[150]

Touch, taste, and intermingled smell, here, are integral to this description of repetition, recreation and remembering. Smell alone, however, can act quite uniquely as an intense recall trigger for enmeshed memories of sensory experiences.[151] This is because our sense of smell is integral to our primal survival warning system, which constantly unconsciously monitors the environment, matching up aromas against stored memories and associations linked to safe and unsafe circumstances. This places the familiar at the heart of our feelings of wellbeing.[152]

The process of memory formation in a culinary context presents a clear illustration of the multilayered, multidirectional, and multidimensional dynamics of remembering. Sensing, forming a memory, and remembering itself are all *active* processes. The strongest types of memories are those that are retained and do not fade over time. These require strong definition at the point of imprinting.[153] One of the ways this can occur is through a person experiencing a *combination* of strong sensory inputs at the point in time that that the memory was initially formed.[154] In the context of cuisine, for example, taste and smell become virtually indistinguishable when consuming food or drink.[155] To illustrate further, the senses of taste and smell are engaged in savouring, or being repelled by, flavours and aromas. But touch is also involved in the enjoyment of unique textures of dishes in the mouth, or feeling its heat or chill with your hands; as is sight, in appreciating the food's appearance. Finally, there is also hearing, in the commotion of preparation, conversation among companions, or familiar background noises like music, sounds of the home or street. More recently, hearing has also been shown to have an effect upon on taste,

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149 Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008), 137.
150 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 137.
151 Trygg Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory* (New York: Praeger, 1991)*,* xii, 3, 8-10, 14, 79; Porteous, 'Smellscape', 358; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'.
152 Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory,* xii, 3, 8-10, 14, 79; Porteous, 'Smellscape', 358.
153 Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory,* 6, 94, 112, 117; Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 62, 70; Horotwitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Mandler, 'Memory Arousal and Mood'.
154 Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory,* 6, 94, 112, 117; Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 62, 70; Horotwitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Mandler, 'Memory Arousal and Mood'.
155 Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory,* 6, 94, 112, 117; Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 62, 70.

especially at altitude on airlines.[156] All our senses come into play, even if we are not consciously aware of it at the time. And, in the case of forming and retaining memories, such times, if perceived as personally significant, are frequently encoded in memory with particular clarity because of this strong holistic engagement of the senses. All this, of course, is also intermingled with emotions, which make such memories intensely personal, distinctive, and subjective.[157]

In other words, in the creation of a single new memory a strong combined multilayering occurs through the inputs and information from multiple senses and sources. All our biological senses work together to register the surrounding environment.[158] In synchronicity, the mind draws upon previous reference points in memories of past experience as part of the process of comprehension and decision-making. *This* is the link between the lived, the remembered, the present moment, and past experience – all of this goes into the process by which present occurrence becomes encoded as memory.[159] Multidimensionality is also easily demonstrated in the context of cuisine, especially within 'odour memories', as Trygg Engen terms them. Odour memories are a form of embodied memory which is triggered by reencountered aromas.[160] Odour memories are especially strong because they were initially formed in intermingled contexts along with other senses, like those described above.[161]

Crucially, during this subconscious recall and recognition process, whole episodes of past significance (either positive or negative) can sometime be brought back suddenly into our direct awareness – like a 'flashback' – through smell associations acting as integrated memory retrieval 'tags'.[162] The effect is immediate; as Engen describes, it is "as though time had stood still".[163] These are an intense form of recall, a means of mentally and physically

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156 Katia Moskvitch, 'Why does food taste different on planes?', *BBC Future,* 12 January 2015, accessed 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20150112-why-in-flight-food-tastes-werid>; Ria Misra, 'Why is airline food so bad?', *BBC Autos,* 16 November 2016, accessed 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/autos/story/20161115/why-is-airline-food-so-bad>.
157 Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory,* 6, 112; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'.
158 Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 28.
159 Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'; Kent D. Harber and James W. Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory*, ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 359-387.
160 See Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory.*
161 See Engen, *Odor Sensation.*
162 Engen, *Odor Sensations,* 5, 7, 14.
163 Engen, *Odor Sensations,* 5.

re-experiencing the past because these flashbacks are highly emotive, including "the *feeling* of a remembered event".[164]

Aroma triggered memories have this intense immediacy because, unlike pictures or sounds which can be re-imagined at will, our sense of smell requires a "physically present odor" in order to activate recall and remembrance.[165] Another unique aspect of this form of memory is that it resists forgetting because it is integrated with our primal alert system. Nor does it start to fade or decrease with time, unlike memories generated by sight or sound.[166]

Consequently, aroma-triggered memories provide an intense, resilient, and unique form of recall, enmeshed with emotion, grounded in the here-and-now, flinging a person's conscious awareness back in time to experientially relive the past, even if only for a moment or two. And it is these moments of recall, revival, of reliving, that make their way into Mizrahi life writing – through recollections sparked by encounters with aromas and familial cuisine – that make some of their descriptions of past life so vivid.

Collette Rossant, for instance, in *Apricots on the Nile,* describes how the scent of hugging her mother as an adult would prompt a flashback of shopping in the Egyptian markets when she was a child of four years old.[167] Pungent herbs are also potential sensory memory triggers for Rossant, thanks to the unconscious yet educational efforts of her family's cook Georgette. Rossant explains:

> She would stop in front of a stand piled with fresh herbs – thyme, marjoram, tarragon. She'd squeeze a leaf or two between her fingers and sniff . . . And I would smell and approve her choice.[168]

As an adult, Farideh Goldin, an Iranian Jew, reencountered a melange of familiar aromas from cuisine when conducting interviews with other Mizrahim in resettled apartment blocks within the State of Israel. After feeling extreme nausea moments before from claustrophobia, the smells of familiarity and home brought a mouth-watering sense of calm, relief, and reassurance.[169] This demonstrates how particular aromas can infuse spaces with meaning and associations of home. This is vital for creating a sense of home and

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[164] Engen, *Odor Sensations,* 77. My emphasis.
[165] Engen, *Odor Sensations,* 79-80.
[166] Engen, *Odor Sensations,* 81, 119.
[167] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*, 4.
[168] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile,* 8.
[169] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 33.

place, especially during and after periods of high transience.[170] Sudden reencounters, if triggering odour memories, can certainly bring joy at remembering, but they also have the potential to prompt an overwhelming sense of loss.

As just discussed, enmeshed memories of sensory experiences have a particular staying power. So too in each present moment our senses continue to perform as our means of knowing the world around us. Yet, importantly, the senses can also act as a type of temporal bridge between both past and present states of being. The process of matching up aromas against stored memories also activates links and association with safe and unsafe circumstances and environments.[171]

To further illustrate how smell can create a grounded sense of emplacement, or awareness of the lack of it, I would like to touch upon the concept of 'smellscapes', coined by J. Douglass Porteous, because of its crucial role in the "evocation and remembering of places".[172] A 'smellscape' encapsulates the relationship between our senses, the environment, and our perceptions of it, directly linking people with place, time and meaning through impressions and memory association of smell. This is holistically combined with our other senses, and importantly, emotions.[173] Whether someone is aware of it or not, a smellscape encapsulates the familiar unique melange of aromas that permeate places frequented, forming part of the normal experiential world in which we live, interact and which we call home.

Within Mizrahi memoirs, elements of smellscapes appear within rich descriptions of authors' previous homelands, when they describe the world that was. Within Iraqi Jewish memoirs, a prime example emerges during descriptions of life within the city of Baghdad. Several of the memoirists share common memories of smells, which suggests that collective memory is constituted in part through smellscapes of the city, river, and market. This presents a collective example of a familiar and shared smellscape that was encountered and remembered in common: for instance, when walking the streets, being repulsed by the putrid smells of old alleyways or encountering the pungent aromas of a myriad of spices in the markets, and the tantalising wafts from tasty street-food; during the dry season,

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170 Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West'; Law, 'Home Cooking'.
171 Engen, *Odor Sensations and Memory,* xii, 3, 8-10, 14, 79; Porteous, 'Smellscape', 358; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Ornstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'.
172 Porteous, 'Smellscape', 356-378; Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 62-63, 68.
173 Porteous, 'Smellscape', 357-359, 362; Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies,* 64, 70-71, 179; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'.

knowing the river Tigris had fallen and how far away it was, simply by the stench of stagnant decay as the slow pooling water awaited the rain; or recalling the savour of the distinctive aromas and the taste of cooking fresh fish during seasonal picnics on temporary river islands.[174]

Other Mizrahi authors, not only those from Baghdad, recall the smellscapes of treasured orchards and gardens and revel in exotic fruit and citrus blossom scents.[175] Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, for example, recalls enjoying gardens in Egypt:

> What I loved most about our last villa was its garden. It was filled with all the summer flowers imaginable: roses, tuberoses, jasmine, oleander, gardenias, a huge magnolia tree, jacaranda, sweet pea, each with its special fragrance wafting through the open shutters at night.[176]

The emotive importance and long-term salience of these remembered smellscapes is perhaps most poignantly illustrated when, at her father's deathbed in an alienating American hospital, Schinasi-Silver lovingly tries to conjure a last glimpse of their treasured Middle Eastern world. As her father slowly slips away, she sprinkles orange-blossom water on his forehead so that "he could smell his favourite scent one last time".[177] Originally from Egypt, Lucette Lagnado also describes how, when in America, her own father anguished over being unable to re-experience the aromas of his homeland and was consumed by the loss. She explains:

> To my father, the flowers of America were odourless and lifeless . . . a fact that filled him with a kind of existential despair, a sense of all that was wrong with our New World.[178]

Both the examples from Schinasi-Silver and Lagnado show that aromas can easily be imbued with both positive and negative connotations and, by association, so can locations and spaces.[179] This insight is critical in understanding the importance that the senses, memories, and foodways have in the process of emplacement and homemaking for those who have been displaced.

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[174] Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad,* 18, 28; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 278; Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* 164-165; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 138-139; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember,* 51-52; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday,* 39.
[175] Kattan, *Farewell,* 43-44; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 37, 88; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, 220;
[176] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 37.
[177] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 88.
[178] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 220.
[179] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 37, 88; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, 220.

Hospitable smellscapes and habitable landscapes

People bring their culture with them, including the scents, aromas, and foods that make them feel in familiar surroundings and at home.[180] Earlier in this chapter we discussed the importance of sensory memory and especially of smell as a powerful imprinting and retrieval tag for personal memory. The memoirs contain vivid examples of Mizrahim trying to relocate themselves in the sensory and emotional landscapes that make up home and belonging in a post-displacement context.

Andre Aciman's great aunt, an Egyptian Jew from Alexandria, succeeded in recreating a sense of home, place, and belonging. After much movement throughout her life she ultimately settled where her senses allowed her to recapture her preferred smellscape and be at relative peace with past and present, ever drifting between the two. She confided to Aciman during one of his visits:

> Perhaps this is why I've chosen to live in Venice – because no matter where you turn there is always water close by, and you can always smell the sea, even if it stinks; because there are mornings when I wake up and think the clock is turned back and I'm on the Corniche again.[181]

This passage reflects the sensory simulation of a previous home and the entanglement of past and present through the emotional attachment to multiples places all at once. It is a multidimensional state of being that blurs and overlaps places, spaces, and times in the here-and-now.

After displacement, food became even more important for Mizrahim as one of the few ways for the displaced to capture tangible recollections of previous homelands, especially as most were only able to bring very few possessions with them. Unlike the smellscapes of *entire* locations, which are themselves normally impossible to replicate (although Aciman's aunt got very close), sensory memories of cuisine and recipes learnt by heart are highly transportable and re-creatable.[182] A familiar smellscape, through cooking, can once again become an integral element within a house, transforming it into a home. David Kazzaz, an Iraqi Jew, is quite adamant that cuisine cements families together as well as the Jewish community as a whole. Across the generations, with each and every family following a similar daily cycle revolving around the sharing of food, Kazzaz describes this as a

[180] ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Law, 'Home Cooking'.
[181] Aciman, *Out of Egypt,* 81
[182] ABC, 'Taste of Memory'; Law, 'Home Cooking'; Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West'.

"comforting continuum" of "predictable and harmonious patterns".[183] He emphasises that the sharing of food and time together created shared meanings and had the effect that "across space and through time, life had continuity and definition".[184] Displacement not only severed the expected continuum of this temporality but also shattered a sense of place, space, belonging, and drove extended and immediate family apart. Indeed, these memoirs also demonstrate the sheer resilience Mizrahim possessed in managing to maintain their rich cultural heritage, using cuisine as one means of reconnection.

The memoirs show that when there are obstacles to recreating cuisine, the loss of the elements which are so important to the emotional wellbeing and affective elements of a home space become most apparent. Initially, familiar and essential ingredients were virtually impossible to source.[185] Within the mass refugee camps in the State of Israel frustrations often reached a boiling point over inappropriate rations.[186] Consequently, a black market in basic Middle Eastern goods flourished, enabling those who could afford it a much needed small taste and smell of home.[187]

Mizrahim who eventually resettled within the United States entered a very different society and an unfamiliar mix of foodways. Used to being able to easily source freshly farmed produce directly from urban markets, they were instead confronted by the aggressively commercialised American food industry, where purchases of highly processed foodstuffs occurred in alienating mass supermarkets rather than friendly market street stalls.[188] Simply put, this experience fed the stomach but was not emotionally or spiritually satisfying. It was not 'soul food' in any sense of the word. This bewilderment and dissatisfaction over basics was so common that in New York the Mizrahi community found their own solution through establishing alternative supplies. Enterprising young men began with door-to-door bread deliveries and worked up to establishing local Middle Eastern speciality stores.[189] Lagnado explains that:

> They . . . stocked only Middle Eastern delicacies, realising early on that merely eating the hot round loaves of pita bread was a crucial step in retrieving our lost life.[190]

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[183] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 37, 58.
[184] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 37.
[185] Perera, *The Cross and the Pear Tree,* 169-170; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 248, 261-262.
[186] Perera, *The Cross and the Pear Tree,* 169-170; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 248, 261-262.
[187] Fathi, *Full Circle,* 90.
[188] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 205.
[189] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 226.
[190] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 226.

Ghassan Hage and Lisa Law, who have worked closely with migrants, both have observed that traditional cuisine – its ingredients, aromas, and tastes – are crucial elements in the process of home-building and re-establishing renewed sense of security and place.[191] Managing to recreate a smellscape, or experiencing an odour-memory-flashback, can be valuable reminders of what was important, what can be treasured, and what should be retained in the future – such as, for many, the (re)gathering of family around a table.

Many Mizrahim write that, once resettled, they took great pleasure in re-establishing familiar and treasured routines such as continuing to make and share tea and Turkish coffee with others. Not only did this practice serve as a means of individual re-anchoring and reassurance, but recaptured a vital aspect in rebuilding an authentic sense of hospitality.[192] Benjamin, for example, writes of her grandmothers that:

> In the matter of arranging her domestic affairs, as in all other things, Regina was a dynamo, her vim and sparkle disguising the fact that apart from a huge, battered baking pan in which she made syrupy *baklawa* perfumed with rose water, a nest of curvaceous pots for brewing Turkish coffee and a couple of fine carpets, very few things from Baghdad life were arrayed around her.[193]

Once ingredients were accessible, many felt great pride in being able to reproduce more authentic Middle Eastern cuisine, as well as the new types of western food many grew to enjoy. Most Mizrahi women had learned to cook through either their mother or their mother-in-law, and so reproducing favourite family dishes effectively re-established an ancestral and familiar continuum of tradition.[194] This reconnection is made all the more vital because venerated gravesites and most precious family heirlooms had to be left behind.

Indeed, the transmission of treasured recipes is vital to ensuring that some of the richness of Mizrahi cultural heritage remains a part of *lived* experience into future generations. That the majority of memoirs include descriptions of traditional food, and that a considerable number have recipes at the end, or even – in the case of Rossant – recipes in the main body of text, reveals the centrality and importance of cuisine as a major part of the cultural

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[191] Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West', 99-153; Law, 'Home Cooking', 224-241.
[192] Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile,* 63; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 61; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 241-242; Aciman, *Out of Egypt,* 33, 121, 263; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad,* 19; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 167; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 8.
[193] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 8.
[194] Aciman, *Out of Egypt,* 84; Kattan, *Farewell,* 45, 101; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 49; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 37, 58; Fathi, *Full Circle,* 32.

history that Mizrahim wish to remember, express, retain, share, and celebrate.[195] Within the context of memory, recipes and food are turned into a commodity but also offer an opportunity to co-consume and importantly, also learn.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have explored how the senses and foodways impact upon memories and identities, both past and present. I not only looked at how Mizrahi foodways are unique through being Jewish, but also how they are inherently connected to the region of the Middle East in which they emerged. In looking at the importance of religious food laws, the similarities and differences between Mizrahim and their Muslim compatriots demonstrated how foodways can force people apart as well as bring them together. Next, I examined the extremely close relationship between the senses and memory and how this manifests itself in the memoirs as nostalgic longings as well as a way to recreate and re-establish home. I also analysed at how food can be a vital conduit of cultural knowledge between generations, especially in post-displacement contexts. Overall, I demonstrated that memories and identities as expressed through the foodways represented in Mizrahi memories are inherently multidimensional, multilayered, and highly complex. It is this complexity and multidimensionality that I shall continue to explore in the next chapter as we move from the realm of taste and smell to that of dream.

[195] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*.

– CHAPTER FIVE –

Dreaming of Return

> Here emotions are not regarded as distinct from meaning systems; there is no cleavage between cognition and emotion. Our proposed relational theory of emotionality involves views of self, other, and transactional scripts.[1]
>
> Mardi J. Horowitz and Steen P. Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion and Response to Trauma'

> To some extent the desire for return always arises from a need to redress an injustice, one often inflicted upon an entire group of people caused by displacement or dispossession, the loss of home and of family autonomy, the conditions of expulsion, colonisation, and migration.[2]
>
> Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller, *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*

> Memoir has become historically important as well, as a central means of testifying to events so horrific that we are sometimes tempted to deny their very existence, or to minimise their extent and effect . . . [There is a] close connection between the act of testifying and the memoir form . . . [underscoring] the continuing power of the memoir to revise both history and literature, the two discourses from which it traditionally draws.[3]
>
> Helen Buss, 'Memoirs'

Return is a powerful theme that deeply resonates for those who were displaced as well as for their descendants.[4] Although return is a concept that can mean different things to different people, it is a theme found throughout all Mizrahi memoirs in this study; as is dream which is closely linked to return.[5] Given its significant presence across these texts,

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[1] Mardi J. Horowitz and Steen P. Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma' in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 356.
[2] Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller, *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 7.
[3] Helen Buss, 'Memoirs' in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms,* ed. Margaretta Jolly (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 596.
[4] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-18.
[5] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-18; Lucette Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007); Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue: Shoreline, 2007); Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008); Collette Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile: A Memoir with Recipes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001); Farideh Goldin, *Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003); Joshua Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad: Memoir of an Israeli Intelligence Officer* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1997); Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008); Violette Shamash, *Memories of Eden: A Journey through Jewish Baghdad* (Virginia Water: Forum Books Ltd., 2008); Naim Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009); Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2007); Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of*

what work does 'return' do in relation to the dynamics of memory, history, and identity of Mizrahim? And how does dream shape this relationship? Return can be understood in multiple ways and also has close links with both memory and nostalgia.[6] The *Oxford English Dictionary* shows that even at its most basic, return, like memory, is not static but is fundamentally active, multidirectional, fluid, has the potential to be neutral, destructive, or restorative in different contexts and has the ability to "cross divides" in time, places, and spaces.[7] For example, return can be purposeful and may involve "senses relating to autonomous action", "to come or go back to a place or person", "to go back or revert to (also into) a previous condition or state".[8] Return can be viewed in a negative sense as in "to rebound", or as a positive as in to "return to oneself (also one's senses, one's sense): (a) to regain consciousness, to revive; (b) to resume one's usual or true frame of mind or character".[9] Return is also emotional, as in "to feel in return, reciprocate (a feeling)" and ontological, as in "to become again".[10] Dreams are also inherently active and can be understood as "a series of images, thoughts, and emotions, often with a story-like quality, generated by mental activity during sleep" or as a "vision or hope for the future".[11] Like memories, dreams can be deeply emotional, sensory, and can involve personal desires "to hope or long for" to a range of extents from brief imaginings to intense delusions.[12]

Baghdad (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); Heskel M. Haddad, *Flight from Babylon: Iraq, Iran, Israel, America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1986); David Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of Iraqi Jews* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press Inc., 1999); Sabiha Abi David Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember* (Caulfield South: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001); Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 2004); Andre Aciman, *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Saul Silas Fathi, *Full Circle: Escape from Baghdad and the Return* (New York: Saul Silas Fathi, 2005); Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004).

[6] Svetlana Boym, 'Off-modern Homecoming in Art and Theory' in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 151-165; Oxford University Press, 'return, v.1' in *Oxford English Dictionary: The definitive record of the English language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), accessed 2017, < http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164596?&print>.

[7] Oxford University Press, 'return, v.1'. OED; Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)*;* Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 8.

[8] Oxford University Press, 'return, v.1'.

[9] Oxford University Press, 'return, v.1'.

[10] Oxford University Press, 'return, v.1'.

[11] Oxford University Press, 'dream, n.2 and adj.' in *Oxford English Dictionary: The definitive record of the English language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), accessed 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/57600?rskey=cJbsZw&result=2&isAdvanced=false&print>.

[12] Oxford University Press, 'dream, n.2. and adj.'; Oxford University Press, 'dream, v.2' in *Oxford English Dictionary: The definitive record of the English language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), accessed 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry57602?rskey=cJbsZw&result=4&isAdvanced=false&print>; Oxford University Press, 'dream, n.1' in *Oxford English Dictionary: The definitive record of the English language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), accessed 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/57599?rskey=cJbsZw&result=1&isAdvanced=false&print>.

In this chapter I understand return as multidimensional, encompassing these different meanings and as possessing and implying a multiplicity of senses, actions, dreams and desires. The desire for return is often expressed in dreams, both while sleeping or daydreaming. As such I also view dream metaphorically as connected to desire and fantasy, but also literally, as in the experience and representation of dreams while asleep. I bring this view of return and dream into conversation with the differing representations and intensions present in Mizrahi memoirs. In doing so, I follow the call of Marianne Hirsch and Nancy Miller to examine the "desire" and "performance" of return and to highlight the "connective work" that memory studies in this context can offer.[13] I first examine the relationship between return, nostalgia, memory, and dream before looking in-depth at four examples of dream narratives in memoir. I then expand upon this to investigate how the desire for return can impact on how we view these texts themselves and their ability to do connective and restorative work not only for memoirists themselves but also in circulation to readers.

The desire to return

There can not actually be a return or the desire for return without a disruption or disconnection having taken place.[14] The desire for return pervades all Mizrahi memoirs as part of the legacy of displacement and dispersal.[15] Such an experience has caused an irreversible conceptual rupture between people and their relationship to place, space, and each other and has fuelled the phenomenon of nostalgic yearning through the need to rebuild and reform essential connections.[16] The experience of displacement itself has also affected memories of home (or homes) and intensified reflection upon themes of belonging and exclusion.[17] In some memoirs, these aspects so dominate the author's own lived sense of self that preoccupation with the problem of 'home' (especially the 'loss of

[13] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 8.
[14] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 7.
[15] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-18; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*.
[16] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-18; Boym, 'Off-modern Homecoming'.
[17] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-18; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*.

home') and the yearning for 'return' becomes overwhelming, sometimes to the point of obsession.[18]

In a context of disruption and dispersal, the desire for return is often also discussed in conjunction to 'diaspora'.[19] I discuss the complexity of the meaning of 'diaspora' and the metaphors of belonging used in the memoirs in *Chapter Three: Routes, Roots, and Trees*. I raise it briefly here again because although Mizrahi experiences can be seen as diasporic, the effects of displacement and nostalgic longings for return occur in this case outside of the usual framework of scenarios that diaspora theory recognises as 'diaspora'.[20] Rosanne Kennedy rightly argues that theories of diaspora are currently too narrowly defined and limit conceptualisation to "forced movement of a population from a home to one or more areas outside the original nation".[21] Current theories exclude Indigenous experiences of "removal and resettlement" that occur *internal* to the nation that settler-colonial societies establish.[22] It is important to make this distinction because some Mizrahi memoirists also speak of feeling displaced *before* having physically left their original homeland. As a result of rapid social changes and intensifying anti-Semitism their compatriots and home cities were rendered unrecognisable.[23] Consequently, when I refer to displacement, disruption, and disconnection, I do so in a broad way which includes the physical nature of these experiences (as in both internal and external displacement) as well as recognising the inseparable psychological, ontological, and emotional aspects.[24] All of these factors do not necessitate that those involved have already actually moved physically in location from one place to another. In this sense, displacement and longings for return should be seen within the broader context of the problems of modernity and alienation and not just a limited view of diaspora as a singular event.[25]

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[18] Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*. Aciman is preoccupied by the concept of perpetual exile, Lucette Lagnado's father is trapped in melancholic longing for return to Egypt, Zonana is focused on the concept of 'home' throughout her life, and Schinasi-Silver is driven to achieve closure.

[19] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-18; James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (1994): 302-338; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (1994): 339-334.

[20] Clifford, 'Diasporas'; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal'; Rosanne Kennedy, 'Indigenous Australian Arts of Return: Mediating Perverse Archives' in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 88-104 '.

[21] Kennedy, 'Indigenous Australian Arts of Return', 102.

[22] Kennedy, 'Indigenous Australian Arts of Return', 102.

[23] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Goldin, *Wedding Song;* Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound.*

[24] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-18; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Gassan Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders' in *Sociology: Place, Time & Division,* eds. Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 342-346; Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions: Columbus, Palestine, and Arab-Jews' in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006), 201-232.

[25] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return*; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal'.

The longing for return is not unique to Mizrahim but is a deep current in broader human feeling and yearning for 'roots' that has surfaced as a result of modernity and "hypermobility".[26] Simone Weil argues that having a sense of 'rootedness' is a fundamental need of "the human soul."[27] Displacement directly impacts upon this, often disrupting a previously assumed continuity of personhood and home. Hirsch and Miller draw upon Weil and modern history to argue that twentieth-century modernity, as the "era of hypermobility", is uniquely distinguished by the interlinked states of "displacement and dispossession" as well as this desire for roots and return.[28] As James Clifford notes in relation to diaspora, such "visions . . . are always entangled in powerful global histories".[29] The yearning for return originally sprang out of the fragmented chaos caused by the upheaval and turmoil of World War II, subsequent post-war instability, reoccurring conflicts, refugee crises, unprecedented migrations, ongoing international tensions, and the atmosphere of pervading uncertainty that continues to persist today in the early twenty-first century.[30]

This context and the concept of 'hypermobility' has implications for how we understand the movements of people and information, and therefore also the representations of return in Mizrahi memoirs and their circulation as texts. Hypermobility is created and sustained through the development and use of modern travel and advanced communication technologies. These not only feed globalisation but also act to shrink the perception of space and time.[31] Clifford calls this situation "new global movements" and argues that the discourse of diaspora "is loose in the world for the reasons of having to do with decolonisation, increased immigration, global communications, and transport – a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations".[32] Given this context, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett rightly asks:

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[26] Simone Weil quoted in Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,'* 1. I discuss the concept of 'roots' and 'routes' more in-depth in *Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees*.
[27] Simone Weil quoted in Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,'* 1; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 342; Clifford, 'Diasporas', 306.
[28] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 342; Clifford, 'Diasporas', 306.
[29] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 302.
[30] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* xii, 1-2; Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, '"Do No Harm" Should be the guiding principle of forced migration policies', *Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia*, 17 August 2016, accessed 2017, <http://www.msf.org.au/article/statements-opinion/%E2%80%98do-no-harm%E2%80%99-should-be-guiding-principle-forced-migration-policies>; Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, '10 things you need to know about the Mediterranean Crisis', *Medicin Sans Frontiers,* 2 December 2016, accessed 2017 <http://www.msf.org.au/article/project-news/10-things-you-need-know-about-mediterranean-crisis>; Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, *The Pulse: Global Displacement*, Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia Quarterly, September 2015.
[31] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 342-343; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 1-20.
[32] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 306.

> As people, goods, and information move faster and further than ever, what does diaspora mean? This hypermobility not only divides and disperses people and activities that once occupied contiguous space – and not only or necessarily by means of violence – but also collapses spaces of dispersal by abbreviating the time it takes to get from here to there.[33]

In this ever changing state of flux, diaspora and displacement can appear to lose their meaning.[34] Even if we change words and labels, the psychological, affective, and ontological impact of displacement and dispersal on the women, men, and children who have experienced it firsthand is not reduced.[35] As Medicins Sans Frontiers witness daily, "seeming permanent loss of liberty and loss of hope" that displacement and often indefinite periods of detention that can come with it "causes the most serious mental trauma" in addition to physical traumas suffered along the way.[36] Fundamental human suffering does not just disappear.[37] Given this tension between words and what is, apart from the legal realm, the meaning – or the absence of meaning – that terms like diaspora, displacement, and dispersal might have lies ultimately in the realm of subjective experience. These meanings can be, and are, constructed and performed via such texts as memoir.[38]

Gillian Whitlock has clearly recognised that the circuits of globalisation have enabled memoirs to move and circulate to a wider readership than ever before.[39] So although the hypermobility of modernity has led some to expand and question the meaning of movement itself, it also collapses that and brings the myriad of human stories that shape and construct the meanings of displacement closer to readers worldwide. The implication of this is that if we seek to understand displacement, we also need to engage with subjectivity, memory, affect and the blurring between fantasy and 'reality' that can come with this. Hirsch and Miller rightly propose a shift away from the "celebration of rootlessness and diasporism" to instead make "space for the persistent power of nostalgia, and the magnetism of the idea of belonging, even while casting a critical eye on the obsession with roots".[40] They observe that:

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[33] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 342-343.
[34] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 342-343.
[35] Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, 'Do No Harm'; Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, '10 things you need to know about the Mediterranean Crisis'; Medicine Sans Frontiers Australia, *The Pulse: Global Displacement*.
[36] Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, 'Do No Harm'; Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, '10 things you need to know about the Mediterranean Crisis'; Medicine Sans Frontiers Australia, *The Pulse: Global Displacement*.
[37] Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, 'Do No Harm'; Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, '10 things you need to know about the Mediterranean Crisis'; Medicine Sans Frontiers Australia, *The Pulse: Global Displacement*.
[38] Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Buss, 'Memoirs'.
[39] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5, 7-9.
[40] Hirsh and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 5.

> This dual vision can combine the desire for 'home', and for the concreteness and materiality of place and connection, with a concomitant, ethical commitment to carefully contextualised and differentiated practices of witness, restoration of rights, and acts of repair.[41]

Here I follow Hirsch and Miller's call to make space for the "power of nostalgia" and the "magnetism" of belonging by looking closely at the often overlooked realm of desire and dream.[42] Often in Mizrahi memoirs, it is through the narration of dreams that the combined affective power of nostalgia and return (accompanied by the desire to belong) can be seen most explicitly. Firstly, I shall provide a brief overview of the close relationship between nostalgia and memory, and memory and dream, before looking at four specific examples of dream narrative from memoir. Following this, I will go on to view memoir writing itself as an means of return and an "act of repair" through which narrative becomes a fundamental mode of rearticulation and empowerment against the ontological trauma and dissonance of displacement.[43]

Nostalgia and memory

Nostalgia, memory, dream and return are all closely interlinked. I view nostalgia, as Svetlana Boym does, as not only closely entangled in the dynamics of power but also present in numerous plural and subjective forms.[44] Boym explicitly defines nostalgia as follows:

> The word *nostalgia* comes from two Greek roots, *nostos,* 'return home' [sic], and *algia* [sic]*,* longing. I define it as a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship . . . Nostalgia appears to be a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams.[45]

Dreams draw on memories for their content and easily shift modes, blurring the boundaries between fantasy and 'reality'.[46] Similarly, 'return' can simultaneously be utopian

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[41] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 5.
[42] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 5.
[43] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 5; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 1-3.
[44] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming', 151; Oxford University Press, 'nostalgia, n.' in *Oxford English Dictionary: The definitive record of the English language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), accessed 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128472?redirectedFrom=nostalgia&print>.
[45] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming', 152.
[46] Qi Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming', *Cognitive Systems Research* 10 (2009): 91-101; Robert Stickgold, 'Sleep: offline memory processing', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2 (1998): 484-492.

and dystopian – utopic in the sense of their longed for realisation and dystopic through the fact that these rarely turn out as hoped for.[47] When left unfulfilled, the desire and longing for return retains a considerable amount of emotional, philosophical, and rhetorical power.[48] Benedict Anderson has shown how nations constitute an 'imagined community' of common consciousness.[49] Similarly, it could be said that among displaced peoples such as Mizrahim, nostalgia and the hope or desire for return could constitute an 'imagining' shared and held in common.[50] Boym agrees that nostalgia is not simply personal, but is also inherently collective in nature:

> Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory, individual home and collective homeland.[51]

This collective longing can be a great precipitator and mobiliser in the pursuit of justice and change for those who have suffered a loss.[52] But the longing for return also holds and binds – it shapes hopes and dreams of what the *preferred* present would be and how the ideal future would unfold rather than what necessarily may be occurring in the here-and-now.[53] Barkan, for example, completed an historical survey of the results of successful and attempted returns by refugee communities to their original homelands.[54] He found that if a refugee group was from a society where they were the 'majority' cultural group, then there was an 'occasional' likelihood of being successfully repatriated – but only when the political circumstances were right.[55] Comparatively, the outcome for refugee groups from a 'minority' background were that "once displaced [they] remain[ed] displaced" regardless of how strong their collective desire for return was.[56]

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[47] Elazar Barkan, 'Politics of Return: When Rights Become Rites' in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 230-231; Oxford University Press, 'return'.
[48] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Barkan, 'Politics of Return'.
[49] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism,* rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006).
[50] Oxford University Press, 'nostalgia'. One of the definitions of nostalgia is indeed a "sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past".
[51] Boym, 'Off-modern Homecoming', 151-152.
[52] Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound, 435;* Cathryn J Prince, 'Jewish refugees from Arab lands seek justice at United Nations'; Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC), *The Times of Israel,* 2 December 2015, accessed 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-refugees-from-arab-lands-seek-justice-at-united-nations/>; Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC), 'Justice for Jews from Arab Countries: As a Matter of Law and Equity', 1 January 2013, accessed 2017, <http://www.justiceforjews.com>.
[53] Barkan, 'Politics of Return'.
[54] Barkan, 'Politics of Return'.
[55] Barkan, 'Politics of Return', 230-231.
[56] Barkan, 'Politics of Return', 230-231.

If we look at the contemporary situation for Mizrahim, a large collective physical repatriation of the displaced and their descendants to their original homelands is highly unlikely any time in the near future. Unfortunately, given Barkan's analysis of outcomes, Mizrahim from Iraq, Iran, and Egypt were religious 'minorities' within societies where the majority were Muslim.[57] In addition to this, the current ongoing turmoil in Egypt, Iraq, and Iran, where political upheaval, war, and an openly anti-Semitic regime all respectively persist makes the reality of return extremely problematic.[58] So, although their nostalgic desires may be powerful, Mizrahi memoirists are in reality only 'dreaming' of return. Although physical journeys to revisit have been actualised for a small minority (as discussed in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters* and *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions*, memory and dream are the only modes through which return can be achieved and realised for the majority of memoirists.

It is important to note that individual experiences of displacement do vary, and there are generational differences apparent in the way that memoirists conceptualise return. Those of the generation who were directly displaced are more likely to be driven by nostalgia for an idealised past youth or a yearning to once again see beloved places.[59] Some, influenced by age, also overtly express a sense of duty to record their personal and collective histories before they are lost.[60] Those of the next generation (whose parents were displaced but who were born in new homelands) often seek return in the sense of a desire to rediscover heritage, a reaffirmation of their identity, and to establish a concrete reminder for themselves that their family's past in the Middle East was real.[61] Memoirists from both generations, however, seek return as a means of healing, hoping to find a sense of closure amidst all that has happened.[62] Before we explore this joint perspective, however, we first need to briefly look at the close ties between sleep, dream, and memory to help contextualise the importance of dream narratives in the memoirs.

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[57] Barkan, 'Politics of Return', 230-231; Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Peter Y. Medding, ed. *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), vii-x.

[58] Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Rachel Shabi, *Not The Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon;* Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008); Michele Penner Angrist, ed. *Politics and Society in the contemporary Middle East* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013).

[59] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden.*

[60] Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden,* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus;* Fathi, *Full Circle*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*;

[61] Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Shabi, *Not the Enemy.*

[62] Aciman, *Out of Egypt;* Aciman, *Letters of Exile;* Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus;* Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound;* Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday.*

Sleep, dream, and memory

Dream and memory have a close relationship, especially through the realm of sleep. Here I understand dream as a desire but also that "[d]reaming refers to the subjective conscious experiences we have during sleep".[63] When asleep, people experience a sleep cycle that includes different depths of consciousness including rapid eye movement (REM) and non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep stages.[64] Although dreams experienced during REM sleep are more easily recalled when the subject is awoken, dreams can and do occur during both sleep stages.[65]

Memory and dream have such close links because dream-sleep is absolutely vital for cognitive health and memory consolidation, integration, and learning.[66] While asleep the brain often "roughen[s] up our 'memory space'" for optimal processing but also engages in "reverse-learning" where so-called "useless and old memories" may be cleared to help prevent cognitive overload.[67] Memory consolidation and integration also occur as part of sleep memory-processing. Memory consolidation is the physiological process in the brain whereby episodic memories – that is, memories of past experiences – are transferred from 'recently experienced' short-term encoding to 'long term' neural recording, consolidation, and storage.[68] The next phase – that is, memory integration – involves the brain processing, storing, and strengthening both "declarative/episodic and procedural/implicit memories" into "associative networks" that enable better cognitive links and improved recall.[69]

Dreams also draw upon personal memories for their content, which is important when considering representations of dreams in memoir. Dreaming can involve the "replaying of segments and sequences of recent experiences" sometimes in "fragments or partial episodes but also occasionally as complete replays".[70] Regardless of whether dreams are subjectively positive or negative, the nature of dreams and memories is that they are often

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[63] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming', 91
[64] Stickgold, 'Sleep', 489; Raymond L. M. Lee, 'Forgotten Fantasies? Modernity, Reenchantment, and Dream Consciousness', *American Psychological Association* 20 (2010): 289. For a very detailed account of human sleep cycle stages please see Stickgold's article.
[65] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming, 97.
[66] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming'; Stickgold, 'Sleep'.
[67] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming, 92.
[68] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming', 91-92, 98-99; Stickgold, 'Sleep', 486-490. This process involves neural transfer and 'dialogue' from (and sometimes between) the hyppocampal complex to the neocortex within the brain.
[69] Stickgold, 'Sleep', 490-491.
[70] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming', 91-92, 98-99.

intense and deeply emotive.[71] Memories themselves are inseparable from emotions as "[b]oth cognitive-perceptual and affective features are . . . integrated into a single trace, which stays intact through the encoding process" and beyond to retrieval.[72] Furthermore, there has been established an agreed 'norm' of generalised dream characteristics that include a general "lack of self-reflection and self-control", "repeated themes and repeated dreams (including recurrent dreams) are common among dreamers" and that:

> [Firstly,] (1) dream imagery can change rapidly, and is often bizarre in nature; (2) relative to waking and, when present, dreams often involve weak, post-hoc, and logically flawed explanations of improbable or impossible plots; and (3) dreams lack orientational stability; persons, times, and places are fused, plastic, incongruous and discontinuous.[73]

This description of the modality of dreams has strong parallels with Svetlana Boym's literary concept of the 'off-modern' as resisting the modernist (and quite positivist) trend of linear 'progress' and predictability.[74] This is a conceptual relationship which I will draw upon throughout this chapter as we explore return and dream in four memoirs and their relationship to the dynamics of memory, identity, and history.

The inclusion of dreams in Mizrahi memoirs

Dreams are a deeply human experience and offer an abstract mode of awareness and recollection easily dominated by memory.[75] As a genre oriented towards personal expressions of experience, memoir easily encompasses reference to, and discussion of, emotion and dream in association with life narratives.[76] Of the Mizrahi memoirs under study, eleven mention dreams to varying extents, which makes dream a narrative subject engaged with by most memoirists.[77] Reflective of the often traumatic psychological impact of dispersal and displacement, the majority of dreams described in detail take the form of

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[71] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming', 97; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma', 343; Michelle D. Leichtman, Stephen J. Ceci, and Peter A. Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory: Mechanism and Development', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 193-194.
[72] Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory', 196.
[73] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming, 98. Zhang draws heavily on Hobson for this summary.
[74] Boym, 'Off-modern Homecoming'.
[75] Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming'; Stickgold, 'Sleep'.
[76] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 12-13, 74; Buss, 'Memoirs'.
[77] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 61; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-200; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 247; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*, 69; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 46; Aciman, *Letters of Transit,* 46; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 13, 340; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 299; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday,* 22.

nightmares.[78] (Only Sabar and Lagnado provide an exception to this: Sabar recalling a boyhood dream representing a state of security and enlightenment, while Lagnado reflects on a vivid and mysterious moment of choice during the height of her chronic illness.[79]) Each memoirist who includes a nightmare tends to describe only one dream and only once throughout the entirety of their narrative.[80] This approach represents a creative choice that not only heightens the importance of the dream as an event but also pairs the timing of a nightmare with a vital narrative turning point in the representation of their life trajectory.[81]

The inclusion of dream within these memoirs is significant, not only because it is a creative choice on the part of the memoirist, but also because it performs both identity and memory work within the text.[82] I argue that it does so primarily in three ways: firstly, to establish a rhetorical point through an intimate language of emotion and desires; secondly, to create an opportunity for empathy between the reader and the writer; and thirdly, it offers an opportunity to demonstrate the 'working through' of the complex psychological 'baggage' of displacement as part of the process of return and rearticulation.[83] This is not to say that each memoirist may always be aware of the work that their content is doing in the relationship between text and reader, but it is worth noting that this dynamic occurs nonetheless. Within the scope of this chapter I have chosen to focus on four memoirists' use of dream in turn, namely Farideh Goldin, Heskel Haddad, Roya Hakakian, and Joyce Zonana.[84] While each of these memoirists use dream within their narratives, each presents a unique perspective on the themes of displacement and return which illustrates the diversity present within the body of texts as a whole.

Unwilling return

[78] Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, 'Do No Harm'; Medicins Sans Frontiers Australia, '10 things you need to know about the Mediterranean Crisis'; Medicine Sans Frontiers Australia, *The Pulse: Global Displacement*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-200; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 247; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad,* 69; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 46; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 340; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday,* 22.
[79] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 61; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 299.
[80] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 61; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-200; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 247; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad,* 69; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 46; Aciman, *Letters of Transit,* 46; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*, 13, 340; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit,* 299; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday,* 22.
[81] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-200; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 247; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad,* 69; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 46; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 340; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday,* 22.
[82] Buss, 'Memoirs'.
[83] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons;* Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal'; Kent D. Harber and James W. Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 359-387.
[84] Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*

Originally from Shiraz, Iran, Farideh Goldin's perspective provides a counter-narrative to claims of a uniform nostalgia for past homelands.[85] Unlike many Iranian Jews (and other non-Jewish Iranians of diverse backgrounds) who left because of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Goldin did not see her departure either as traumatic "forced exile" or as "banishment".[86] Rather, Goldin represents her early emigration to the United States of America as "a deliberate escape from the familiar" purposely made in order to liberate herself from the restrictions of a highly traditional society and strongly patriarchal family.[87] She explains:

> When I finally left Iran in that summer of 1976, I wanted to distance myself from my culture, my society, and even my extended family. Putting continents between us, I vowed never to return, never to miss them, never to think about them, and never to indulge in nostalgia.[88]

And yet, despite her vow, because of the influence of memory while asleep, Goldin writes that she would return to Iran time and time again through her dreams.[89] In the absence of nostalgia that can feed off a bedrock of previous positive experiences, memories of her prior homeland proved an unwelcome intrusion.[90] As Boym so aptly states, "[n]ostalgic love can only survive in a long distance relationship" – and there is not much distance in the relationship if there remains an unbidden yet constant presence.[91] Goldin describes how, despite newfound safety and stability in the United States of America, she "began to suffer from nightmares" and would "wake up screaming, soaked in sweat, shivering and shaking uncontrollably."[92] This is symptomatic of memories affected by trauma – when recollection is neither desired nor particularly desirable, but occurs nonetheless in looped repetitions.[93]

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[85] Goldin, *Wedding Song.*
[86] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192; Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*
[87] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192. Goldin went against the will of her domineering family in Iran to marry the American man she fell in love with while initially just studying in the US.
[88] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192. Ironically due to the 1979 Islamic Revolution her immediate and extended family moved to join her in the United States.
[89] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189; Goldstick, 'Sleep'.
[90] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming', 151; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189, 192.
[91] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming', 151.
[92] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189, 192. As well as immediately following her permanent move to the US, these nightmares appeared with greater frequency and intensity during her later pregnancy – also a time of transition and personal stress.
[93] Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma', 343, 352, 355; George Mandler, *Memory, Arousal, and Mood: A Theoretical Integration,* in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 182, 194; Joseph E. LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory: Anatomical Systems Underlying Indelible Neural Traces', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 272-273.

For Goldin, 'return' – including the threat and fear of it – constitutes both a literal and metaphorical terror-filled nightmare.[94] She writes that, "Night after night I dream of Iran, of the fate I had escaped".[95] Goldin's representation of her dreams includes three repeating narratives that focus on interwoven anxieties and traumas over belonging and home, freedom and imprisonment, gender identity and sexuality, and familial power relationships and anti-Semitism.[96] While Goldin's written narrative follows a logical sequence, she freely includes the abstract imagery and fluidity reflective of her dreams.[97] For example:

> I backed up and stood in the middle of the crossroad again. From another corner, I saw Shahnaz and Firoozeh coming towards me, wrapped in black *chadors*. "My good friends, my good friends", I cried joyfully as I ran to them, "Save me, save me!" I stretched my arms towards them. "I am lost. Which way are the oceans [and the path to the United States of America]?" They spread their arms and their *chadors* flew in the air like the wings of angels in black. They opened their hands and threw stones at me, which changed into daggers as they hit me in the stomach, slowly disappearing into my flesh. The skin closed over the wounds before I could extract them. "We don't know you", they said. "Away, away, filth filth".[98]

The people and dream-landscape of the Iranian countryside that Goldin 'visits' are drawn from her memories, including the locations she spent time in as a child, such as the opium poppy fields, the streets of Shiraz, and her family home.[99] Effected, however, by the repression and trauma she experienced as an adult, her memories of these familiar childhood spaces are recalled and reconfigured in dream as overtly hostile, stifling, and harmful.[100] For example, while in reality as a child she used to run through the poppy fields "laughing, screaming in delight", affected by her mother's criticism and the context of a dream about feeling trapped, in her nightmare Goldin's legs become "numb" and immobile, preventing her escape and 'return' to her preferred adult home in the United States of America.[101] Goldin describes the nightmare of unwanted return to Iran:

> I was back in Shiraz. The mountains looked taller, closer, looming over me. I couldn't breathe. I stood in the crossroad in front of my parents' house and tried to remember which way led back to America. It was a long journey, I knew.[102]

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[94] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189; Le Doux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
[95] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189.
[96] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192.
[97] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory', 271; Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming,' 91, 97.
[98] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 190-191.
[99] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189, 191.
[100] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192. For example, in dream, the poppy fields numb her legs to the point of immobility despite, in reality, having danced happily through them as a child.
[101] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-190.
[102] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189.

This passage layers and merges multiple memories from different points in time altogether into the same dream episode. These include Goldin's memories of the local landscape, her family's home, acquaintances, friends, family, and her coming of age, as well as recollections of the emotional and physical journey it took to leave Iran.[103] Her overall narrative acts to situate and represent a perspective of memory as a burden – one that is impossible to escape, even with changes in geographic location.[104] Unlike Aciman, however, Goldin's narrative trajectory seeks to represent a point of closure and resolution at the end of her memoir, rather than ongoing dislocation and dissonance.[105]

In the context of her memoir, Goldin's nightmares represent the ongoing psychological and emotional burden of her struggle for liberation from a close-knit religious family, traditional Iranian Jewish culture, society, and repressive patriarchal structures.[106] Goldin's overall life narrative tells how she chose to break with tradition and marry an American 'foreigner' against the wishes of her family.[107] Consequently, her dream narrative acts to highlight her own emotional and psychological struggle to accept her decision to break with tradition as her nightmares are haunted by the fallout from her familial conflict.[108] Goldin's nightmares of 'return' to Iran dredge up memories of relatives, old friends, neighbours, teachers, and 'familiar strangers' from the streets of Shiraz; yet all either reject, taunt, or perversely leer at her.[109] Those once close in-person become hostile in-dream, bemoaning "Shame, shame! You've brought us shame."[110] To Goldin, these past figures fail to welcome her and render her an outcast by declaring, "We don't know you . . . Away, away, filth, filth."[111] Additional memories of prevalent anti-Semitism and personal attacks are also frequently triggered, as even anonymous figures she encountered on the streets do not welcome her but instead taunt, "Whore, Jewish whore".[112] Goldin's nightmares are also

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[103] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189.
[104] Goldin, *Wedding Song:* Gillian Polack, ed. *Baggage: Tales of Speculative Fiction* (Rockville: Borgo Press, 2014)*,* 9-11.
[105] Goldin, *Wedding Song:* Aciman, *Out of Egypt;* Aciman, *Letters of Transit.*
[106] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma', 343, 352, 356; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'.
[107] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192.
[108] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'.
[109] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192.
[110] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 191.
[111] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-191.
[112] Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-191. Instances of anti-Semitism include being belittled by her teachers for being Jewish, red swastikas being purposely displayed by neighbours to intimidate, being brought along to hear highly anti-Semitic prayers uttered by an influential *mola,* and physical abuse by young men who targeted those vulnerable on the streets.

highly repetitious and she constantly seeks resolution within them – both hallmark qualities of ongoing cognitive processing of traumatic experiences.[113]

Goldin includes multiple versions of her recurring nightmares, all of which deal with themes of rejection, acceptance, and identity.[114] In a different dream narrative from the first, Goldin replays memories of her familial dynamic and describes a scenario where her family is joyful to see her, but the cost is her own personal freedom and happiness.[115] In this scenario, she finds herself trapped in the middle of a traditional Iranian Jewish wedding feast held in her family's home.[116] Lacking any agency, Goldin's nightmare consists of being married off to a stranger approved by her family, despite her existing betrothal to her American fiancé. Goldin's narrative constructs a fantasy of familial acceptance, but only if she herself personifies an objectified pure bride.[117] The horror of her nightmare is herself being rendered utterly powerless, unable to move, speak, or protest while the marriage proceedings go on around her.[118] Return and reacceptance in this sense, rather than being restorative or liberating, are instead represented as toxic, disempowering, and literally silencing.[119]

In Goldin's case, although moving to the United States of America brought her greater personal safety and freedom, it certainly did not (at least initially) bring stability.[120] As an immigrant, anxieties and uncertainties about her identity only intensified. While Goldin describes her repeated nightmares of revisiting Iran, she also reveals that her dream-self yearns for a 'counter-return' back to her *chosen* homeland of America. In this she sometimes succeeds – although she represents this outcome as not exclusively positive.[121] She describes this narrative variant as so:

> [S]ometimes in my dreams I made it back to the States, losing all family and friends, breaking all bridges behind me, only to find out that the man I had made the

113 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'. Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
114 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-191.
115 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 191. This reflects reality in the sense that her family was extremely resistant at allowing Goldin to return to America to her fiancé. He did everything in his power to try to keep her within Iran and also 'make' her choose an a Iranian Jewish fiancé from among candidates he selected.
116 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 191.
117 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 191.
118 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 191. This reflects reality in the sense that her family was extremely resistant at allowing Goldin to return to America to her fiancé. They tried everything to try to keep her within Iran and also 'make' her choose an a Iranian Jewish fiancé from among candidates they selected.
119 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 191.
120 Goldin, *Wedding Song.*
121 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192.

> sacrifices for, my fiancé Norman, did not recognise me. Every time I was pregnant, these dreams intensified. Norman turned his back on me. I pleaded. *Where can I go, pregnant and unmarried? They'll call me a whore.* Every time, he turned his back and walked away with an American woman. *I don't care if you are pregnant. Go back home. I'm not marrying an alien.*[122]

In terms of Goldin's ability to act, this nightmare is an inversion of her wedding dream.[123] Rather than being voiceless and lacking agency, Goldin acts with determination. She is able to plead and protest. Yet this alternative scenario brings no fulfilment either – she returns to only be confronted by recurrent rejection and exclusion.[124] In this sense, Goldin's nightmare reflects the intense emotional and psychological stakes involved even in voluntarily deciding to 'uproot' and resettle as well as her ongoing desire for acceptance and belonging.[125] Doubts, fears, and uncertainties are no less prominent for Goldin, who voluntarily chose to leave her birth country, than for other Mizrahim who left their original homelands involuntarily.[126] Goldin's overall perspective, however, is very different from other memoirists who tend to possess nostalgia for their previous homeland.[127] Goldin writes:

> For me America had been a naive utopian dream, and at least for a while a refuge, a deliberate escape from the familiar. Many Iranians considered the move a hardship for the sake of a better future for their children, a forced exile into an alien culture, banishment to a country that didn't feel like home, unlike Iran that had been familiar even if hostile.[128]

Instead of a wistful blending of spaces and temporalities, Goldin's work constructs the vivid merger of memory, dream, and desire as a "horror" with a gripping half-life that continued upon waking which rendered even her husband "unfamiliar".[129] Familiarity and non-recognition are themes that occur throughout Goldin's work in conjunction with return and belonging, and she resolves these at the ending of her memoir. The closure that she constructs is also, interestingly, a form of return. As a result of the Iranian Revolution,

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122 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192. Original emphasis.
123 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192.
124 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192.
125 Goldin, *Wedding Song;* Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'.
126 For example Fathi, *Full Circle*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus;* Sabar, *My Father's Paradise.*
127 For example Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Jawary, *Bagdad, I Remember.*
128 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192.
129 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192. This momentary transformation of the 'known' into the 'unknowable' and unrecognised included her room, bed, and even her partner lying beside her.

her family and relatives she had sought to escape end up joining her in the United States of America.[130] Goldin writes:

> The 1979 Islamic Revolution changed all that for me. Now most family members who had never stepped foot out of our southern birthplace of Shiraz, those who had never dreamed of leaving, the very ones who laughed and pointed fingers at me as the 'odd one' when I decided to leave, have come to the United States [of America]. I see them at family gatherings. I hear what they whisper behind me, what they say to my face, and I am even sometimes amused by the irony of my situation.[131]

Her memoir ends with Goldin in an emotionally empowered position, voluntarily attending a family wedding (despite it being so prominent a motif in her nightmares).[132] Here, she experiences recognition and acceptance by her relatives as well as confidently facing those who still hold animosity.[133] This representation of 'reality' has a fairy-tale dream-like quality about it. As many 'characters' as possible gather together before the 'finale' and Goldin acclaims that, "The demons died. The sediment of the past leisurely settled in time – until the next storm" as her anxieties resolve and she openly shares and listens to stories of her extended family as an equal as they are all "cradled in the arms of America. Our last refuge. Our only safe place in the world".[134] The final line of the book – "And two days later came September 11" – not only act as a 'jolt awake' but can also be read as a 'return' in its own right: that is, the return of bigotry, fear, anxieties, and conflict once again to Goldin's life and the country she now lives in – themes that also act as constant threads throughout Goldin's memoir.[135] Here, however, this implication also acts as an inversion, an unsettling of presumed structures – the stability of the 'American dream' is undermined and what had been primarily relegated to dream and 'nightmare' has returned in the waking-world as 'real'.[136]

Suspended between worlds

The influence of collective national narratives such as the 'American dream' is not exclusive to Goldin's work, but also appears in other memoirs including as *Flight from Babylon: Iraq,*

130 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192-199.
131 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192.
132 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-193.
133 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192-194.
134 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 192-199.
135 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 199.
136 Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189-192, 199.

Iran, Israel, America by Haddad.[137] Haddad's life writing is shaped by this influence but also the collective constructs of both religious and political Zionism.[138] This perspective also shapes the nature of his dreams and nightmares and his perspectives on return.[139]

In Haddad's account of his departure as part of a mass evacuation from the half-way point of Tehran to the newly formed State of Israel, he briefly mentions his dreams which reflect his genuine fears and concerns while in transit.[140] As well as suffering "intense fatigue" and stress of being evacuated aboard what was his first flight on an aeroplane, Haddad writes that he struggled with his "phobic tendency" and is concerned that his fear of heights would be triggered.[141] He describes his relief of finding a spare seat before sharing:

> My thanks were smothered in the sudden roar of engines . . . the sound of eagles. The plane was moving . . . the miracle beginning.[142]

This passage reflects not only the intensity of Haddad's feelings, it also demonstrates how closely his belief in religious Zionism was interwoven into his perception and experience of departure to "*Eretz Israel*".[143] The "sound of eagles" is a Torahic reference to the divine protection granted from God to the people of Israel.[144] For example, during God's dialogue with Moses at the renewal of the Covenant on Mount Sinai after the original exodus from Egypt, God declares: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself".[145] The prophet Isaiah also uses this metaphor during his reminder to the Jews of the protection and comfort granted to those who remain faithful to God even in the hardest of times, as follows:

> But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.[146]

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137 Goldin, *Wedding Song;* Haddad, *Flight from Babylon;* Fathi, *Full Circle;* Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No;* Zonana, *Dream Homes,* Sabar, *My Father's Paradise.*
138 Haddad, *Flight From Babylon;* Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East*, 249-310; Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 40-41; Angrist, *Politics & Society in the Contemporary Middle East,* 15, 309, 323. I view political Zionism as distinct from religious Zionism due to its stress on the existence of a nation-state.
139 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
140 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 244-252; Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus,* 2nd ed. (London: Saqi, 2008), 132-169. Haddad was originally from Iraq but escaped via the mountains to sanctuary in Iraqi Jewish refugee camps in Iran before heading to the State of Israel via mass evacuation in Israeli aircraft. This first evacuation flight occurred on 30 August 1950.
141 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 245
142 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 245. Pauses in original.
143 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 244-245.
144 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 245; Exodus 19:4 (New King James translation); Isaiah 40:28 (New King James translation).
145 Exodus 19:4 (New King James translation) Original emphasis.
146 Isaiah 40:28 (New King James translation) Original emphasis.

Haddad's reference to the religious metaphor of eagle's wings not only signals to the reader the previously successful exodus from Egypt and comfort in times of extreme trial, but also the formation and return to the State of Israel as the in-gathering of exiles and the fulfilment of the prophecy of Zion.[147] This was a sentiment full-heartedly shared by the Kurdish Jews also aboard the flight, as Haddad writes, "For the following hour the singing and chanting never stopped, nor did the eating. Between hosannas . . . For them it was a feast day".[148]

Despite shared religious perspective with the Kurdish Jews, in combination with his already high levels of stress and anxiety, Haddad's narrative gives the impression he may also have been experiencing some culture shock.[149] Haddad was a medical doctor in the highly urbanised and cosmopolitan capital of Baghdad.[150] His description of the chaos of the evacuation flight is related from a perspective of privilege, situating his fellow passengers – mostly Kurdish Iraqi Jews form the remote mountains – as 'primitive', ignorant and quaint.[151] For example, Haddad's description of his encounters with Iraqi Kurdish women, men, and children at the Jewish refugee camp outside Tehran are discriminatory and highly paternalistic, as follows:

> From the first, even as a filthy horde, outlandish in appearance and alien in their culture, the Kurds exerted an intense appeal to my emotions. My interest and concern became obsessive, and I resented time away from what I soon began to call "my" camp.[152]

This simplistic representation of Iraqi Kurdish Jews continues in Haddad's account of their evacuation flight, but also serves as a foil to emphasising the construction of his identity as a highly driven and successful medical professional with a destiny:

> I envied them their equilibrium, but it wasn't merely that they had no fear of heights. Their whole approach to life was simple and accepting. Unlike me, they welcomed what the moment offered, enjoying all they could of it. I had never been able to relax like that, but, always looked ahead, always sacrificed the here and now

147 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 245; Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The most important things to know about the Jewish religion, its people, and its history,* (New York: William Morrow, 2001) 273-275.
148 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 245-246.
149 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,*
150 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
151 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 240-252.
152 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 240.

> for "when . . . ." Now, more than even, all my senses were directed towards the future.[153]

It is important to note Haddad's heightened emotions, psychological state and orientation because this cognitive context has implications not only for how intense or otherwise his memories and later recall may have been of this episode, but also that these feelings would have influenced his dreams once asleep.[154] Haddad briefly records his in-flight nightmare as follows:

> Dozing for an instant, I dreamed that [the State of] Israel was just a dream, that I was doomed to fly forever. I woke up in the frigid cabin, wet with sweat, and willed myself to stay awake.[155]

Haddad's usual narrative style is achievement-centred and focused on relating his trajectory as a successful medical professional despite the challenges met along the way.[156] To shift – even if briefly – into a mode that reveals a moment of doubt and vulnerability represents a break from the dominant pattern of his work and the usual construction of his identity as a stable, successful, and dominant masculine force.[157] Nevertheless, his use of willpower to prevent insurmountable fear is in keeping with his representational preference and identity claim of being a man of rational discipline and unshakeable inner strength.[158]

Haddad's nightmare is both literal and figurative. It can also be read as an overt statement about the personal crises and existential questioning that can occur during displacement.[159] That is, the very real chaos and tragedy of dispersal, being immersed in raw uncertainty during transit, losing basic control over one's surroundings (and sometimes even destination), and the horror of feeling trapped in a directionless limbo devoid of hope. Although here related as dream, this sentiment directly mirrors the reality of life for

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153 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 246.
154 Stickgold, 'Sleep'; Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma', 343, 356; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
155 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 247.
156 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
157 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon.*
158 See also Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* i. Although less intense than his nightmare, Haddad later experienced an echo of the same heightened awareness of his intermediary and indeterminate state while flying from Israel to resettle in the United States on 1 August 1953. The lengthy trip, devoid of distraction, prompted a time of reflection, albeit an unwilling one: "For the second time in my life, I was on a plane – literally suspended between two worlds. . . Sealed in a steel capsule, forced, for once, to relinquish control to others, I tried to relax, but it wasn't something I did well."
159 Haddad, *Flight from Bablyon;* Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Patricia J. Williams, 'Oh Give Me A Home', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) 216-223.

refugees and migrants worldwide.[160] Although less intense than his nightmare while flying from Iran to the State of Israel, Haddad also writes that later – while flying from the State of Israel to resettle in the United States of America – he experienced an echo of what he had felt on that first flight.[161] Haddad uses this moment as a literary device to establish the main narrative as a flash-back, but also describes that:

> For the second time in my life, I was on a plane – literally suspended between two worlds . . . Sealed in a steel capsule, forced, for once, to relinquish control to others, I tried to relax, but it wasn't something I did well.[162]

Both his first nightmare and this second experience relay Haddad's discomfort at relinquishing agency and potential control over his future to others.[163] More specific to Jewish experiences, Haddad's religious desires and initial dread, that the State of Israel is fictitious and might not exist, exacerbates the grip and potency of his initial feeling of horror and limbo in the first instance that transfer across to this second episode.[164] This is the flip-side to the hope and 'dream' fostered by religious and political Zionism – that is, that the creation and continuity of the State of Israel would provide and guarantee shelter for all Jews and prevent a reoccurrence of the Holocaust.[165] Within this discourse, rhetorically if the State of the Israel is gone – or if it never existed in the first place – one of the major checks against history repeating itself is also destroyed and the utopian hope of sanctuary is lost. The consequence of this thinking is the perception that there will never truly be a place of safety or protection for *any* Jews, anywhere in the world, without the existence of the State of Israel.[166] This aspect of Haddad's nightmare is specific to a certain point in time but also has ramifications for later thought. His personal fears reflect the historical reality that, at the time of his dream, the State of Israel was only newly founded and very vulnerable because of tensions with surrounding nations.[167] It is a collective fear and 'nightmare' also shared by many other Jews which, along with the enduring influence

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160 Aciman, *Letters of Transit;* Williams, 'Oh Give Me A Home', 216-223; Medicins Sans Frontiers, *The Pulse: Global Displacement,* 1-16; Medicins Sans Frontiers, 'Do No Harm'; Medicins Sans Frontiers, '10 things you need to know about the Mediterranean Crisis'.
161 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* i. This second flight was made on 1 August 1953.
162 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* i
163 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* i, 247.
164 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 247.
165 Angrist, *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East,* 67, 309, 323.
166 Angrist, *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East,* 309; 323; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 274-275, 278-280, 286-287, 358-360, 418-419.
167 Haddad, *Flight from Babylon,* 247; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 310-312, 316-318. The War of Independence (1948-1949) where the newly created State of Israel defended itself against the invading military forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia had only ended the year before Haddad's flight and open tensions still simmered.

of Holocaust memory, continues to this day to shape contemporary Israeli policies for better or worse.[168]

Rebellion and liberation

Originally from Tehran, Hakakian suffered from overwhelming feelings of dislocation *prior* to leaving Iran, unlike other memoirists who experienced states of dissonance either during expulsion or while trying to resettle in new contexts overseas.[169] Throughout her memoir, Hakakian represents herself as a patriot and her personal relationship with Iran as one between lovers.[170] Hakakian remained in Tehran throughout the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and witnessed not only the turbulent lead up to it, but also the repression that followed.[171] Hakakian was originally an optimistic pro-revolutionary, but after witnessing even greater repression rather than the post-revolutionary liberation she dreamed of, she felt a deep sense of loss and betrayal. Tehran was ultimately rendered unrecognisable to her because of the rapid transformations brought about by the revolution, but also the rise of intense anti-Semitism.[172]

In the midst of the Iraq-Iran War, because of the intensity of change combined with her emotions, throughout 1984 Hakakian relates that she suffered from nightmares every single night.[173] This period was deeply troubling for all Iranians who were not only experiencing the fourth year of war with Iraq but also the repression of a new authoritarian regime trying to consolidate power.[174] Overwhelmed, Hakakian hit a breaking point:

> My mind . . . had begun its own rebellion. It refused thinking. All thoughts, all memories gathered to forge a single feeling: Fury![175]

In this psychological state, rationality has no place – Hakakian's mind and memories were marshalled for any sense of hope, independence of thought, and the reclamation of her independent identity.[176] The internal world of imagination and dream became Hakakian's only outlet as she was prevented from action in the 'real world' owing to the dangers of

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168 Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 274-275, 278-280, 286-287, 358-360, 418-419.
169 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No;* Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit;* Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile;* Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember.*
170 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No.*
171 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No.*
172 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 90-234.
173 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 198-199.
174 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 199.
175 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 195.
176 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-230.

openly opposing Iran's regime. In daily life, attempting to counter the regime's repressive imagery, in no less violent terms she privately entertained a visual overlay of her own:

> His Holiness's gaze [Ayatollah Khomeini] was upon us everywhere. His rosy-cheeked portraits were painted larger than life on all signboards. And my imagination encountered each rendition like a guillotine, severing, then filling every unpleasant void with the imam's disembodied parts. I felt no guilt. In the boiling pots on our stove, his head stewed. From the empty hooks in butcher shops, his carcass dangled. *Ribs anyone?* . . . My murderous fantasy had become so overpowering that I began to ponder it: Did I have the heart to kill anyway. Oh, him I could kill! . . . Murdering him was the only solution, given the magnitude of my desperation, given the magnitude of the city's desperation.[177]

Here, reality has collapsed. Hakakin's use of imagery is filled with brutality, cannibalism, and bodily horror. The categories of life and death, human and animal, are blended and inseparable. This passage can be read an attempt by Hakakian (either subconsciously or consciously) to counter the regime's authoritarian imagery by privately entertaining a visual overlay of her own.[178] In the face of the regime's claim, through constant propaganda exposure, to power over all visual, mental, and physical space, Hakakian creates for herself a private means of personal resistance.[179]

Hakakian writes that her living nightmare was equally echoed in sleep during dream – "at least once a night" she dreamt of assassinating Ayatollah Khomeini, often repeatedly, only to do so again and again the next night.[180] The representation of the single dream she shares reads like the script to a spy-action film with Hakakian as the tragic yet empowered hero, for instance:

> I watched the liquid rising in the syringe: 100cc, 200cc, 300cc, 400cc. That had to be enough . . . With every drop of cyanide I injected into him, his complexion darkened like a bruise breaking outward onto the surface of his skin. *Tsss!* The sizzling sound of his flesh shrinking in venomous fire entwined with the sound of the heater hissing. He was looking me in the eye now, and I, certain these were his last moments, stared boldly back at him . . . Two guards, cocking their Kalashnikovs, screamed, "*Ist!*" And I head *Pop! Pop! Pop!* . . . I lifted my head, gave them a last triumphant look, and died.[181]

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[177] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 199. Original emphasis.
[178] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 199.
[179] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 199.
[180] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-199. Hakakian always kills the Ayatollah using a lethal injection – in this particular dream while reciting passages of the Koran for his pleasure.
[181] Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 198.

Hakakian's writing is dramatic and vivid, including elements of realism along with abstract melodrama. The additional details of her subsequent and repeating nightmares, however, are left to the reader's imagination.[182]

What is evident from Hakakian's work is not only the intensity of her emotion but also the presence of trauma.[183] Both perception and emotion are jointly encoded into memories at the point of experience.[184] As Horowitz and Reidbord explain, "the experience of trauma is often followed by a tendency to repeat the memory" as the individual seeks to reach closure but is unable to immediately integrate their experience into personal and collective understanding.[185] Intense emotion also acts to "empower the memory system" into high levels of activation and activity.[186] Hakakian's representation of her experience of repeated nightmares – like those of Goldin, discussed earlier in this chapter – is reflective of the mind seeking to process intensely emotive experiences while asleep, as well as trying to cope within the context in which her sleep is taking place.[187] Hakakian shares that the exact nature of her fate within her repeated nightmare would vary depending on if Tehran was being bombed by Iraqi fighter-jets that night or not.[188] She writes:

> On nights that the air raid sirens shrieked through the morning hours and the Iraqi missiles fell on the city, the imam did not die right away; his joints cracked and he writhed in agony to his last breath. On quiet nights, ecstatic crowds stormed the room, lifted me, a heroine, upon their shoulders, and carried me to the streets.[189]

Hakakian's narrative constructs a very close and personal relationship between herself and Tehran – one that sees her psychology and wellbeing tied to that of the city and her compatriots.[190] This is a symbolic dualism that is also present in the premise that Hakakian offers for her dreams:

> Murdering him was the only solution, given the magnitude of my desperation, given the magnitude of the city's desperation.[191]

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182 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-198.
183 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No.*
184 Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory', 194.
185 Horowitz & Reidbord, 'Emotion, Memory, and Response to Trauma', 343-345
186 Mandler 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood', 189.
187 Stickgold, 'Sleep'; Goldin, *Wedding Song,* 189; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 198. Goldin was asleep in the United States of America, but the guilt of leaving her family continued to haunt her.
188 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 198-199.
189 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 198-199.
190 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 199.
191 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 199.

Here too there is repetition – repetition that not only serves for linguistic emphasis but that also seeks to bind personal thoughts and feelings with those of the collective.

Hakakian's recurrent nightmares reflect different layers and levels of return. Her descent into violent fantasy and fury, enacted through both imagination and dream, can be read as a private and very personal attempt at rebellion and a desperate cry for freedom.[192] Played out in the subversive safety of her mind and in the landscape of nightmare, Hakakian's desire for Tehran to return to stability and peace transforms assassination and death into an imagined vehicle for life and liberation.[193] The reflection of violence back onto her chosen target of the Ayatollah Khomeini (positioned as the cause of social suffering) is in itself a return and reflection of personal and social suffering back onto the perceived perpetrator.[194] The recurrent return, night after night, of Hakakian's mind to the scenario of repeated assassination, not only speaks of her own emotional trauma, but also of a longing for revenge and resolution. It is reflective of the insanity and violence of war and revolution not only on the body and mind of the individual, but also on society.[195] Her dreams of assassination can be read as a vehicle for historical salvation and personal closure.[196] That is, the restoration of Iran as it once was at the point *prior* to revolution – the Iran she passionately loved – in the ultimate temporal shift of counterrevolutionary fantasy played out in the liberation of her private imagination.[197]

Recovery and restoration

Dream and desire are integral parts of the language and imagery that Zonana uses throughout her memoir to explore her identity and construct her representation of self.[198] At critical climatic points in her life narrative, Zonana explicitly uses reference to her dreams. These episodes include her father's nervous breakdown, a highpoint of conflict with her mother before moving out of home, and before and after her journey to Egypt to rediscover her heritage.[199] Zonana demonstrates strong self reflection along with her use of dreams. For example, she follows up a description of her "phantom memory" of her father lying catatonic following electric shock therapy as follows:

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192 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 199-200.
193 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-201.
194 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-203.
195 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-199.
196 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-201.
197 Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No,* 196-203.
198 Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
199 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 91, 123-124, 162, 178-179.

> For many years, I believed that this scene expressed a truth, but I imagined it to be a metaphor, a symbolic version of my father's distance from me, not an actual event. Still, the fragment has a strong sensory quality, and it persisted, cast up again and again in my awareness like a sealed bottle tossed by the sea.[200]

Again, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, such repetition is reflective of the mind trying to process a dissonant and traumatic experience which can easily result in "intrusive or omissive states of mind".[201] In Zonana's case it appears not only that repetitious recall occurred through dream, but also that she repressed (following the dynamic of screen memory) her father's mental illness and non-recognition until this was inadvertently mentioned and openly discussed with her aunt many years later as an adult.[202] The only access she had to this life experience prior to this was through her dreams.[203] It is significant that dream and self reflection are drawn upon by Zonana throughout her memoir because they form a language that easily conveys to the reader not only the emotional significance of specific events, but also the effect that they had on her and her concept of self.[204]

Within the scope of this chapter, I concentrate on Zonana's use of dream references relating to her 'return' journey to Egypt to rediscover her heritage.[205] In her memoir, Zonana purposely 'bookends' her journey narrative with mention of significant personal dreams experienced prior to, and after, her travel to Egypt.[206] Not only does this structural choice serve to heighten the importance of her trip for the reader, it is also consistent with Zonana's overall approach to her life writing throughout her work, which places equal emphasis on the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of her life.[207] Both dream episodes engage directly with themes of history, memory, and identity: I explore each dream here in turn.[208]

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[200] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 91.
[201] Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma', 343; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'; Stickgold, 'Sleep'; Zhang, 'A computational account of dreaming'.
[202] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 92-93; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-16.
[203] Zonana, *Dream Home,* 91.
[204] Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 12-13, 77-80; Buss, 'Memoirs'.
[205] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162, 178-179. I engage in further discussion of Zonana's physical journey of return in *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions.*
[206] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162, 178-179.
[207] Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
[208] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162, 178-179.

The first dream episode occurs in the chaotic lead up to Zonana's planned departure from the United States of America to visit Cairo, in Egypt.[209] Zonana represents herself as doubtful and anxious, but also excited and determined to see her journey through. She relates how, at the time, her thoughts were preoccupied with questions of identity and challenging familial relationships.[210] Zonana writes:

> At night, I have confused dreams about missed connections and serendipitous encounters. In one, my mother and I, after a bitter disagreement, take different roads to a place where a beautiful young woman serves us tea; in another I discover in a crowded antique shop a perfectly sculpted statue of a woman's head, and I know that it is mine.[211]

Throughout her memoir, Zonana wrestles with feeling rootless, lost, and confused about her own identity as a result of her family's displacement.[212] Her mother also features as a highly problematic person within her life – always a source of tension, but a person with whom Zonana yearns to find acceptance.[213] The bringing together of these two major themes within dream, right at the cusp of her return journey, highlights their emotional significance as well as the significance of her trip in search of closure.[214]

Zonana represents the themes of return and dream as vital in her pursuit of closure. She visits sites of personal, familial, and communal significance while in Cairo, including the Rambam Synagogue of Maimonides.[215] According to her description of this visit, she is in a state of heightened emotion due to the difficulty of locating the site in the maze-like historic Jewish quarter.[216] Zonana is deeply shocked by the sight of the synagogue lying in ruins. This prompts a state of cathartic mourning which enables her to emotionally acknowledge her feelings of loss caused by her family's displacement.[217] She reflects that:

> I am crying, no doubt, for the history of the Jews in modern Egypt, for our community's dislocation, for my family's losses, and for my own. I am crying for the Rambam, for the sadness inherent in the abandonment and decay of this once vital centre of worship.[218]

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[209] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162
[210] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162.
[211] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 162.
[212] Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
[213] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 34, 106
[214] Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
[215] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179-180. More details regarding Zonana's visit are discussed in *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions.*
[216] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.
[217] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.
[218] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.

The desolation of the ruined synagogue mirrors Zonana's own sense of dislocation. In this passage Zonana ties together both personal and communal memories of loss. The close entanglements of these layers are evident in the emotional outpouring she subjectively experiences.[219] The specificity of place and location is also emphasised through Zonana's representation of her own links to the site itself:

> And so I cry, hot steady tears rising from within, as if I have stumbled upon an ancient spring that flows upward from the stones, through my body, and back onto the stones again.[220]

Through her subjective experience, Zonana emphasises the importance of the site itself in sparking off this sense of resonance. The Rambam itself is a site deeply imbued with memory and significance through traditionally being a place pilgrimage for Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike.[221] Through representing her links to the site as the nexus of an "ancient spring", Zonana establishes a narrative of continuity between the historic legacy and spiritual significance of this location and herself.[222] Within Zonana's narrative, this is a transformative moment where as an individual she is reconnected with the collective experience of this Egyptian Jewish place. This sense of belonging becomes a defining moment where Zonana feels she has actually achieved a journey of 'true' return. She describes her moment of realisation:

> I sense that they [the freely flowing tears] embody gain as well as loss. For, once again, I have the sensation of homecoming: here, in this garbage-strewn alley, beside the broken windows and graffiti covered walls, everything seems to finally cohere. I was to sink onto the stones, to rest, at peace.[223]

Within Zonana's understanding of herself, visiting the Rambam reactivated a realisation of her own past, a localised collective memory, and a sense of belonging to Jewish Egyptian identity. In Zonana's narrative, the intense emotions that she experienced also appear to have triggered a dream that occurred the night after her experience of catharsis, near the end of her time in Egypt. She writes.

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219 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179.
220 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.
221 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178-179; Sonia Farid, 'Abu Hasira: Between Religious Intolerance and Political Squabbles', *Atlantic Council,* 14 January 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.atanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/abu-hasira-between-religious-intolerance-and-political-squabbles>; Nervana Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi Abus-Hasira', 5 January 2015, accessed 2016, <https://nervana1.org/2015/01/05/egypt-and-the-jewish-rabbi-abu-hasira>. In this the Rambam can be seen as a common site of collective unity and peace – it is unfortunate that this vision has been lost due to the divisive nature of contemporary politics.
222 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.
223 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.

> Much later that night, alone in my room at the Windsor [hotel], I dream of Jewish stars, thousands of Jewish stars gleaming above me on an inlaid dome, mother-of-pearl and ebony and gold; at its centre, I see a face, an ancient Jewish man's face, gazing calmly down.[224]

The atmosphere and imagery of this dreamscape appears secure, peaceful and steeped in Jewish symbolism. The domed roof recalls the structure of many Middle Eastern synagogues, and the ancient face overlooking from above is reminiscent of the iconography of Renaissance church art, with an omnipotent and omnipresent God, guardian saints, or wise prophets, overlooking humanity and providing a heavenly protective presence to those still on Earth.[225]

Zonana reflects that she finds this dream highly symbolic. Significantly, however, she is only able to interpret and construct its meaning in conversation with others.[226] In light of her dream, Zonana actively searches for an understanding of her experience. Zonana draws upon archival newsletters of the current Egyptian Jewish community, as well as the opinions and perspectives of her relatives back in the United States of America.[227] She learns, firstly, that pilgrims would normally stay overnight at the Rambam in the hopes of receiving a dream that would divinely reveal a cure for their ailment.[228] Secondly, she discovers that her mother had originally visited the Rambam as a young woman seeking healing in order to conceive a child – the child she ultimately conceived was Zonana.[229]

In light of the perspectives of others, with whom she seeks to reconnect, Zonana both interprets and represents her dream as a visitation by the "presence" of Maimonides himself.[230] This easily fits with the overall representation of her journey as one in search of acceptance and reconnection with her Egyptian Jewish past. Zonana's interpretation of her own subjective experience is informed in conversation with others and is an excellent example of the active process of sense and meaning making. This dialogic and relational process involves drawing upon representations of 'knowledge' and culturally coded

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[224] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178-179.
[225] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 705-710; Ruth Langer, 'Prayer and worship', in *Modern Judaism,* eds. Nicholas de Lange and Miri Freud-Kandel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 231-242.
[226] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178-179.
[227] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179-180.
[228] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179-180. This would normally occur as a dream within which Maimonides would appear, providing guidance on the nature of their problem and what to do to solve it.
[229] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 180. Zonana's mother, after suffering a series of tragic miscarriages, went with her sister to stay overnight at the Rambam, hoping to receive healing or at least a protective blessing, hoping it would aid her in successfully having a baby.
[230] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179.

templates (also sometimes called schemas or referents) of agreed meaning in order to negotiate and establish shared agreement.[231] Zonana's final explanation of her experience at the Rambam and her dream that night is as follows:

> His [Maimonides] healing powers must have been localised in his synagogue after his death. His spirit, hovering over the Rambam, answers the prayers of the devout. *That* must have been why I cried, I tell myself: I must have sensed Maimonides' energy. Satisfied, I slip into sleep, still covered by a dome of stars.[232]

The closure that Zonana feels derives from a joint understanding of her experience that aligns with her own spirituality as well as the beliefs of her family and the original Egyptian Jewish community.[233] The reacceptance Zonana privately feels is further reinforced through her acceptance by the current leaders of the Egyptian Jewish community in Cairo.[234] Her explanation of her dream, described in metaphysical terms as a form of mystic experience, is in harmony with the spiritual traditions of the Egyptian Jewish community.[235] It is therefore a communally acceptable interpretation, consistent with cultural memories surrounding the role of the Rambam. It also reunites and re-includes Zonana within an important familial story – that of her mother's healing and the beginning of her own existence.[236] Including this dream sequence lends Zonana's memoir a poetic power and situates her journey as the climax in her quest to rediscover her heritage and re-establish her acceptability within her Egyptian Jewish family.[237] She writes:

> I never located, on my first trip back to Cairo, my mother's apartment on rue Suleiman Pasha or the Heliopolis neighbourhood where I spent my first days. What I found, instead, was the ancient home of dreams – a resting place, a cure.[238]

Rearticulation

Through her claim that she found "a cure", Zonana touches upon a vital quality within the practice of life-writing itself – that is, its strong therapeutic potential as a medium through which re-emplacement and rearticulation can be achieved against the dissonant affects of

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[231] Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Lee, 'Forgotten Fantasies', 297, 302.
[232] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179.
[233] Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'.
[234] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179. It is not clear if they knew of her trip to the Rambam, or her dream that prior night. But after having held her in great suspicion and kept her at arms length, their acceptance of her as truly one of their community was perfect timing.
[235] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179.
[236] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178-179.
[237] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178-181.
[238] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 181.

displacement.[239] We have just investigated four examples of dream in Mizrahi memoirs and seen how although "performance of return" is common across all, it manifests itself in different ways depending on the circumstances, desires, and narrative constructs of the individual.[240] In this section, I expand beyond individual examples to demonstrate how the desire for return is also vital within the process of rearticulation that can be collectively seen across the body of memoirs as a whole. Here, I understand and use the term 'rearticulation' in two ways: broadly as a mode of emplacement and more specifically, as part of representation and the narrative construction of identities.[241] As well as the potential benefits for memoirists, these texts and desires for return also perform memory and identity work beyond that simply of the author. As Boym explains:

> [N]ostalgia is not always retrospective; it can be prospective as well. The fantasies of the past determined by the needs to be present have a direct impact on the realities of the future. It is this consideration of the future that forces us to take responsibility for our nostalgic tales.[242]

Firstly, why might a 'cure' be needed or, at the very least, important to consider? Dispersal, displacement, and being 'in diaspora' are traumatic experiences, even if there may be select advantages to relocation in the longer term – for example, greater stability and more employment opportunities for women.[243] "Diasporic discourse", however, has become overly dominated by a focus on "displacement, detachment, uprooting, and dispersion – on disarticulation", rather than the needs of those who were (and are) themselves displaced.[244] In part, this imbalance has occurred because the concept of diaspora and being 'diasporic' challenges singular notions of "territory, people, race, language, culture, religion, history, and sovereignty" and is therefore deeply "appealing" to scholars and activists alike to focus

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[239] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 181; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'. I also discuss the concept of re-emplacement within *Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees* and *Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food.*

[240] Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 8; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*.

[241] Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal'; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'; Buss, 'Memoirs'; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*.

[242] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming', 152.

[243] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No;* Goldin, *Wedding Song.*

[244] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339.

on the positives of diaspora as a challenge to these constructs.[245] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes that:

> Rearticulation – how the local is produced and what forms it takes in the space of dispersal – is trickier because of the risk of closure, essentialism, or premature pluralism.[246]

For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "closure" is risky because if an injustice is addressed it can potentially reduce the rhetorical power with which the displaced group (and scholars writing about them) can challenge dominant power structures and seek change.[247] This might be so, but one has to ask, at what cost to the individual wrestling with the traumatic legacy of displacement in the here-and-now? Certainly across the body of memoirs, there exists a yearning for revisitation, recording, and some form of resolution at both the individual and collective level.[248] As already discussed, the actual return and revival of original Mizrahi communities within their prior homelands is highly unlikely any time in the near future.[249] Attention, therefore, needs to shift to "rearticulation" – to the way in which a sense of place, locality, and belonging can be re-established within the current space where the displaced and their descendants now live.[250] The ongoing nostalgia and desire to return and revisit shows the dominance of memory but also future hope in the present discursive space in which Mizrahi memoirists are situated.[251]

Rearticulation is evident in the process of post-displacement reconfiguration and rebuilding, of which these memoirs are a part.[252] Writing memoirs is itself a form of return, both private and public – each of which I will discuss in turn. On the private level, the

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245 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339.
246 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339.
247 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339. Essentialism would be seen as a risk because of the hazard of further exclusion and
248 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Spaces of Dispersal'; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Buss, 'Memoirs'; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Rossant, *Apricots on the Nile*; Goldin, *Wedding Song*; Horesh, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Shamash, *Memories of Eden*; Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*; Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Haddad, *Flight from Babylon*; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound*; Jawary, *Baghdad, I Remember*; Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Aciman, *Letters of Transit*; Fathi, *Full Circle*; Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*.
249 Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*; Shabi, *Not The Enemy;* Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*.
250 Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'.
251 Horowitz and Reidborg, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'.
252 Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, 'Spaces of Dispersal', 339; Boym, 'Off-modern Homecoming'. I use the term 'post-displacement' here loosely to indicate 'after' the main displacement *event* itself. This is not to deny its ongoing effect and affect, that is, the continued sense of dissonance or perpetual exile that many displaced people experience.

memoirist must revisit their memories and own subjective understanding of the past in order to write about and share their subjective personal experiences.[253] Through their mind's eye, they return back to different times, places, and emotions recalled through memory. In the context of traumatic experiences, such as displacement and dispersal, expression and writing – including memoir writing – can have real therapeutic benefits as a mode through which to reframe experiences.[254] As Harber and Pennebaker explain:

> Traumas cause victims to question fundamental assumptions about their own merit, and about the orderliness of the world. This upheaval of emotional bedrock leaves victims yearning to regain a sense of stability and meaning about themselves and the world around them.[255]

The repetitive, often unbidden, returns of traumatic memory are "best understood within a general context of emotional assimilation" as the mind seeks again and again to process and resolve the exceptional experience back into an existing "network of beliefs" but repeatedly fails to reach the point of resolution.[256] The therapeutic intervention that writing can provide is to use language as a system to help impose an ordered structure of "organisation and assimilation" onto both "traumatic memories and emotions".[257] Language serves as a "bridge" and moderating "buffer" between traumatic and non-traumatic memories and emotions to help facilitate greater choice over recall, build a vocabulary of emotional expression, improve mitigation of unmanageable affects.[258] This approach can improve psychological wellbeing through a sense of increased control because through articulation the "trauma becomes more fully integrated within the person's network of memories and beliefs" and therefore becomes more comprehensible and less intense.[259] Essentially,

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253 Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*; Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'; Buss, 'Memoirs'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'.
254 Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories'; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
255 Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 359.
256 Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 360, 373; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Leichtman, Ceci, & Ornstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'.
257 Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 360; Buss, 'Memoirs'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
258 Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 364, 379; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion and Response to Trauma'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
259 Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 374, 379; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma, 343, 356; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal and Mood'.

through "the opportunity to construct stories" people are enabled "to thereby make narrative sense of their lives", emotions, and events, and reframe these accordingly.[260]

Expressing emotions through writing also changes the relationship between the person and their traumatic memory from passive to active and allows a structured form of emotional reengagement "to promote assimilation" and understanding.[261] This enables the writer to build confidence, deeper comprehension and become a "problem solver" who intentionally confronts and works through their trauma at their own pace.[262] Harber and Pennebaker explain the process from a first person perspective, as so:

> By spinning out my tale into a coherent narrative string, I begin to unravel the traumatic knot. And, the more detailed I get in describing any facet of my experience, the more completely I extract it as a conceptual entity separate from the trauma as a whole. As a result I will break the event into small conceptual bits, each of which should be subjectively less threatening, and at the same time much more easily parsed than the memory as a whole.[263]

They also argue that:

> By giving their traumas clear beginnings, middles, and ends, writers may circumscribe the boundaries of bad events and thereby get past them. As a result, the traumas no longer intrude upon consciousness, terminating the stress and attendance health deficits of inhibition.[264]

To successfully construct and rearticulate an understanding and representation of self also means to be recognised and heard by another person.[265] A vital component in the therapeutic benefits of writing is that there is an audience – either real or imagined – for whom the narrative is being constructed, because:

> By engaging in narrative thought, people translate their lives into coherent stories. Turning their lives into literature helps people frame events within the goals, social relationships, and other themes that organise experience.[266]

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[260] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 374; Buss, 'Memoirs'; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9. It is noted that this is the same approach to narrative often used in psychoanalysis.
[261] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 372, 378; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'; Leicthman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'; LeDoux, 'Emotion as Memory'.
[262] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 372-373, 379; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion and Response to Trauma', 356.
[263] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 378.
[264] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 376
[265] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*; Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood'.
[266] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 373-374.

Organising experience is essential for emotional and cognitive help because it involves a cohesive understanding and acceptance of selfhood in the world and a 'schema' through which to understand the world and others.[267] As well as providing recognition of meaningful frameworks, the presence of an audience forces the writer to engage in deeper "Referential Activity (RA)" in order to make their "private experiences" comprehensible to others.[268] There are clear links between "personal disclosure and recovery from traumatic events".[269] However, there also exists frequent tension between the need to share painful or traumatic experiences and the difficulty of finding a listener or audience who is willing to listen.[270]

The benefit for memoirists is that they have successfully reached an audience – either by design, or through promotion of their work, or both.[271] The benefit to memoirists as individuals and as a collective is that not only have they had the therapeutic benefit of creating a narrative about their experiences, but that their work has also been recognised through publication, and circulated through the globalised marketplace to a very broad readership.[272] As Harber and Pennebaker explain, "psychological health rests on three implicit beliefs about the world: that it is basically benevolent, meaningful, and that the self is worthy".[273] As Boym's concept of the "off-modern" shows, however, meanings and understandings of the self and experience can be achieved through looking at non-linearity, the 'what-ifs', and alternatives (which can be found in dreams and desires) which can serve to re-enchant the dissonance and displacements of modernity.[274] Writing and publishing a memoir can be affirming, a powerful type of witnessing, and a "performance of return" not only in terms of a statement of survival and ongoing existence, but also as a fundamental mode through which social recognition and broader acceptance can be achieved and felt through the empowerment of entering a statement of personal experience into the public record.[275] And most importantly, it is a representation that has been created and chosen by

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[267] Mandler, 'Memory, Arousal, and Mood', 94; Leichtman, Ceci, and Orenstein, 'The Influence of Affect on Memory'.
[268] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 381.
[269] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 368.
[270] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', 360-361, 365-367; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion and Response to Trauma'.
[271] Buss, 'Memoirs'; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*. The emergence of Mizrahi memoirs as a form of collective memory has already been discussed in *Chapter One: Introductory Overview* and *Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements*.
[272] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons;* Buss, 'Memoirs'; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9.
[273] Harber and Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories, 364.
[274] Boym, 'Off-modern Homecoming', 162-164.
[275] Buss, 'Memoirs'; Horowitz and Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma'; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*; Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return,* 9.

the memoirist themselves, rather than meanings, identities, and histories ascribed by others.[276]

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have analysed the theme of return both in terms of dream and desire with the purposes of establishing how this theme affects the dynamics between history, memory, and identity in these texts. Return in variant forms is found throughout all memoirs within this project and is closely bound to nostalgia, memory, and identity. In this chapter I looked closely at this relationship, including connections with trauma, diaspora, modernity and hypermobility. Although modernity may be distinguished by global displacement in multiple forms, the meaning of having experienced these events can still be found in the personal and intimate narratives of Mizrahi memoirs. Here it is their subjectivity and position as witness testimonies of injustice that lends them affective power and their nostalgic tone that connects individual representations to a collective whole as a body of works.

I have established that since the repatriation and reestablishment of original Mizrahi communities is not a viable option, return becomes restricted to the realm of emotions, desire, and dream. I investigated the links between sleep, dream, and memory to show that memories of past events have a potent affective quality that shape the content of dreams. Given the often traumatic experience of dispersal and displacement, the historical legacy of these events is mentally and physically encoded in the subject. Dream is an important mode where memory and desires meet, and provides an intimate and emotive language through which memoirists can express both their pains and joys and represent their experiences and subjective realities to readers.

Although dream references appear in most Mizrahi memoirs, I focused on four memoirists to demonstrate both the detail and the diversity of the concept of return in dream narratives in these texts. For Goldin, return was unbidden and unwanted and highlighted the struggles surrounding her identity as a woman and the places and spaces where she felt most and least at home. For Haddad, in a perspective that was shaped by both political and religious Zionism, the potential prevention of 'return' to the State of Israel represented a dangerous and terrifying limbo for himself as a Jew. Comparatively, for Hakakian, return

[276] Boym, 'Off-modern Homecoming, 162-164.

and repetition reflected an internal rebellion and refusal to psychologically accept post-revolutionary state repression in Iran. Lastly, for Zonana, return and dream enabled her to achieve a subjective and cathartic experience and closure and acceptance that renewed and re-established her understanding of her Egyptian Jewish heritage. Finally, I raised the act of memoir writing and the role of memoirs themselves as performances of return through the construction and sharing of narrative for an audience. In this sense, Mizrahi memoirs act as vital conduits for re-enchantment and rearticulation and serve as an opportunity not only to record but also to recover and rebuild. Ultimately, the theme of return as both desire and dream serves not only to highlight the deeply multidimensional and affective nature of both memories and histories in the context of displacement, but also provides a construct through which complex identities can be articulated and performed for present purposes and future needs. We turn now from the fluid world of dream to look at another type of flux – that of sacred sites in the context of change and urban renewal.

– CHAPTER SIX –

Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters

> We looked up at the vaulted ceiling. 'From these small windows', my father said, 'light came into the synagogue and shined on the Torah scrolls'. I thought of my great-grandfather, sitting there all night, with his books and his angels. The window frames, I saw, were still there. But the openings had long since been bricked over, suspending the room in shadowy half-light.[1]
>
> Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*

> First-hand, as on screen, much of Baghdad appears forsaken . . . Refuse and rubble litter the ground. Police checkpoints, flagged by double rows of painted oil drums, block off numerous roads, and street fighting is rife after dark. Anywhere, at any time, something might explode. Such images of a scarred city belie the fact that there exists another Baghdad where, even now, it remains possible to capture something of the fabled magic of the ancient city . . . It is a Baghdad I believed no longer existed, until I had seen it for myself. And it is the Baghdad that I want to remember beyond the firewall of current carnage, and of seemingly endless and irrevocable change.[2]
>
> Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*

As the memoir extracts above illustrate, change affects cityscapes and structures and shapes the histories and meanings that individuals find within them. The displacement of Mizrahim, in turn, has meant that the urban landscapes of their original hometowns are peppered with abandoned, reused, and repurposed buildings. Many of these are sacred sites, for example synagogues, while others are more mundane but still meaningful, such as family houses and apartments. These are now contested spaces that hold different meanings and memories for those Jewish and non-Jewish residents who live in the area, as opposed to Mizrahim who are now resettled overseas. As well as current residents, multiple stakeholders now hold an interest in these sites, such as the heritage industry, museums, and municipal and national governments.

This chapter, and *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions*, act together as a complementary pair. These two chapters focus on accounts by Mizrahi memoirists of their visits to local synagogues and sacred sites. Drawing upon their narratives, I investigate the complexity of

[1] Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* (Chapel Hill, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008), 281.
[2] Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), xii-xiii.

these sacred sites in the current post-displacement context in which multiple stakeholders now hold differing perspectives on the meanings and purposes of these spaces. I demonstrate how the dynamics of multidirectional memory and screen memory are apparent in the entangled negotiation of these heavily multilayered spaces, as represented in the memoirs. As we shall see, these synagogue sites hold multidimensional meanings in terms of the emotional and spiritual importance attributed to them, as well as personal, familial, community, and national perspectives on their current use. Until we understand the entangled complexity of these sites we risk making simplistic divisions and assumptions about their relationship to identities, memories, and histories.

In this chapter, I concentrate on the situation within Iraq; in *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions* I focus on Egypt.[3] Instead of a thematic approach, I have chosen to look at each nation in turn because of the distinct contextual differences between both countries: for example, the ease or difficulty of travel and differing government approaches to heritage management. In doing so, I focus on the work of four memoirists: Ariel Sabar, Marina Benjmain, Vivienne Schinasi-Silver, and Joyce Zonana.[4] Sabar and Benjamin visited sites within Iraq while Schinasi-Silver and Zonana travelled to Egypt. I have chosen to look at these four accounts because they all took an interest in, and recorded the status of, local community synagogues and not just their family residences. In this chapter specifically, I shall concentrate on the accounts of Ariel Sabar and Marina Benjamin.[5]

Within Mizrahi memoirs there is a tendency for the descendants of the displaced, rather that the displaced themselves, to embark on, and write about, physical journeys of return to ancestral homelands.[6] This subsequent generation expresses a sense of existential displacement and disconnection as a result of their parents' migration. That is, they do not share the same experiences as their parents; nor do they feel a sense of full belonging within their present surrounds. Return journeys are one way of trying to navigate and re-knit some of the complex interconnections between histories, memories, and identities between parents and (now adult) children, which this subsequent generation struggles

[3] Note that I do not include Iran in these two chapters because no memoirist under study here has returned to visit, possibly because of ongoing political tensions and anti-Semitism.
[4] Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon;* Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-deBellevue, Shoreline: 2007); Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008).
[5] Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon.*
[6] Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*

with.[7] These themes are present throughout these texts we will encounter them throughout this chapter.

Within both chapters I draw on the frameworks of multidirectional memory and screen memory. In *Chapter Two: Multidirectional Memory* I offered a detailed account of both of these concepts, for the purposes of clarity I will briefly summarise them here. The concept of multidirectional memory describes memory as a dynamic multiplicity that is part of a shared exchange which, even across apparent divisions, is implicated in the pasts of multiple groups.[8] Memory is understood as relational rather than absolute and separate; an understanding which is consistent with concepts of identity as constructed, negotiated, fluid, hybrid, and adaptable to different contexts.[9] I use screen memory as defined by Rothberg's rethinking of Freud's concept of *Deckerinnerungen* which describes intergroup dynamics between different collective remembrances and the remapping of memories in the same multicultural space.[10] Screen memory describes a scenario in which a collective memory, which initially appears to be dominant and all encompassing, does not actually erase other group's memories but instead acts as a shield, projection, initiator of dialogue, a prompt for reconfiguration, and enables other memories to be recalled when the timing and circumstances are right.[11]

By using both multidirectional memory and screen memory, I demonstrate the complex dynamics of memories, histories and identities embedded in the contested spaces represented within the memoirs. I do this firstly in relation to Sabar's observations of the local situation in the regional Kurdish Iraqi city of Zakho where Jewish synagogues have been occupied and reused by non-Jewish locals following the departure of the original Jewish community. Secondly, I examine Benjamin's narrative of the conversion of Jewish community buildings into residential properties in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

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[7] Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*.

[8] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (London: Verso, 2005), 25-27; Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions: Columbus, Palestine, and Arab-Jews', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 201-232; Ella Shohat, 'Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab-Jews' , in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 330-358; Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press*,* 2009), 1-29.

[9] Christine Prentice, Vijay Devadas, and Henry Johnson, eds. C*ultural Transformations: perspectives on translocation in a global age* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2010), xi, xii; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return', 352-354; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4-7, 11.

[10] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-14.

[11] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13.

Moments in time: context and postmemory

The first step is to put these memoirists into their context, that is, the time period to which their observations relate. Then I shall offer a brief orientation to the importance of synagogues within Jewish life. Because of rapid change within Iraq, the narratives of Sabar and Benjamin are quite specific to the time period in which they originally travelled. The Middle Eastern region itself and the cities of Zakho and Baghdad are in a state of flux due to contemporary conflicts as well as rapid urban expansion and modernisation.[12] The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime provided a rare opportunity to enter the country following the immediate chaos of the Iraq War.[13] Despite the dangers, Sabar and Benjamin each separately seized this chance to travel to Iraq. Benjamin visited Baghdad during a brief lull in hostilities in March 2004.[14] Sabar, however, travelled during a tumultuous period of renewed insurgent violence. Travelling first with his father in the summer of 2005, and subsequently alone in May 2006, Sabar visited his ancestral hometown of Zakho in the extreme north of Iraq, near the Iraqi-Turkish border in the heartland of Kurdish territory.[15] Thus, whereas one author visits the metropolitan capital of Baghdad, the other the remote periphery of Kurdish Iraq; and together they provide invaluable insight into the differing situations of synagogues in Iraq.

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[12] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 276-277; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 224-225;John Gulick, 'Baghdad: A Portrait of a City IIM Physical and Cultural Change', *Journal of American Institute of Planners* 33 (1967): 246-255; Bati Group, 'A New Gateway for Northern Iraq', 1992, accessed 2016, <http://www.batigroup.com.tr/NewsDetail.asp?NewsID=14>; Duhok, 'Zakho City Treatment Plant', accessed 2016, <http://www.gurbag.com/en/press/zakho-city-water-treatment-plant>; University of Zakho, 'About UoZ', accessed 2016, <http://www.uoz.ac/aboutuoz>; Ibrahim Khalil, 'Expanding campus project in Zakho begins', *Iraqi News*, 2009, accessed 2016, <http://www.iraqinews.com/business-iraqi-dinar/expanding-campus-project-in-zakho-begins/>; University of Zakho, 'UoZ International Conference', 2013, accessed 2016, <http://uoz.edu.krd/conference.php>; The Associated Press, 'Iraq Says Planned Baghdad Wall Not Change Demographics', *The New York Times Company*, 2016, accessed 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/02/07/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html?_r=0>; Nicolas Pelham, 'ISIS and the Shia Revial in Iraq', *The New York Review of Books,* 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/06/04/isis-shia-revival-iraq/?src=longreads>; Sabar (2008, 276-277) remarks on his arrival in Zakho: "We passed construction crews turning vacant stretches of land into rows of new office and apartment buildings . . . The growth in Kurdish autonomy since the Persian Gulf War had remade the city into a boom town, and its population had more than tripled, to 150,000. Just inside the relatively safe border with Turkey, Zakho was now *the* commercial gateway to northern Iraq. Every day thousands of trucks hauling petrol, consumer goods, and, lately, building supplies for Iraq's postwar reconstruction rumbled down its roads. . . a local military academy, a university campus, factories, and a new hospital were all in the works".

[13] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, xvi.

[14] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 225.

[15] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* vii, 268, 298. Although Sabar was born in the United States, his father is a Kurdish-Iraqi Jew originally from Zakho. Sabar tells how his first trip fell within one of the "insurgency's bloodiest stretches", with 400 people killed in just two weeks. His second journey took place despite the warnings of a local army translator who strongly insisted the dangers warranted not visiting the region at that time.

Sabar and Benjamin each show how their journeys were driven by a deep need to understand their Middle Eastern Jewish heritage and to experience something tangible to which they can connect. Both were born in the West, growing up in London and Los Angeles respectively.[16] Their birth places must be noted: prior to their journeys, neither memoirist had first-hand memories of the sites they visited. Sabar and Benjamin experienced these places for the first time, and their perspectives and interpretations were shaped by stories and memories of their parents and relatives.[17] In this sense they discovered sites directly instead of 're-discovering' them. That is, they see them for the first time in real life rather than through the mind's eye. Nevertheless, both memoirists' experiences and representations of these sites are shaped by the memories and familiar narratives of their parents.[18]

Because of the strong influence of their parents, the concept of postmemory provides a useful way of understanding the intergenerational relationship between memories, perceptions, and representations of sites by these four memoirists. Marianne Hirsch argues that "memory *can* be transmitted to those who were not actually there to live an event" – in this case the memories represent past experiences of each family's homeland.[19] With memories come deep attachments and emotions. Sabar, for example, expresses joy at visiting his ancestral homeland for the first time. He describes that "when I felt the pebbles of Zakho crunching underfoot, I was so foolishly giddy that I was afraid I'd never pry the smile from my face".[20] Benjamin too relates the deep emotional connection she feels with both Baghdad as a place and as a memory told and re-told by her family:

> First-hand, as on screen, much of Baghdad appears forsaken . . . Such images of a scarred city belie the fact that there exists another Baghdad where, even now, it remains possible to capture something of the fabled magic of the ancient city . . . you can lose yourself in a confusion of twisting streets and fill your lungs with the loamy, musty air of what feels like centuries past . . . I feel as if I've known this other Baghdad all my life. A Baghdad of history and cultural romance, consonant with my family's recollections of verdant palm and scented orange groves, of picnics by the Tigris, and sun-baked afternoons spent cooling one's heels indoors, sipping homemade lemonade. Its local characters are colourful, voluble and opinionated. Its politics are as labyrinthine as its streets. Its crumbling buildings creak under the weight of stories untold. It is a Baghdad I believed no longer existed, until I had seen it for myself. And it is that Baghdad that I want to

[16] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xvi-xvii, 4; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 31.
[17] See throughout: Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon;* Sabar, *My Father's Paradise.*
[18] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise;* Benjamin, *Last Days of Babylon,* xii-xiii.
[19] Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory' in *The Collective Memory Reader,* eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 346.
[20] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 276.

> remember beyond the firewall of current carnage, and of seemingly endless and irrevocable change.[21]

Here, Benjamin views and interprets the Baghdad she experiences for the first time through an interpretative lens built from the memories and recollections of her family. In her narration, she begins the process of weaving herself into a continuing story of both her relatives' and her own relationship with the city.[22]

Emotion plays an important role in postmemory because "resonant after-affects of trauma" form the conduit for its transmission between generations.[23] Intense memories of the previous generation so infuse the "stories, images, and behaviours" of subsequent life that as the next generation grows up these narratives "*seem* to constitute [the person's] memories in their own right".[24] Hirsch explains this phenomenon further:

> Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, project, and creation. To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of the previous generation.[25]

Although Hirsch describes postmemory in relation to families of Holocaust survivors, I observe this same dynamic in the writing of Mizrahi memoirists including Sabar and Benjamin, who are our focus here. Given the dominance of the memoirs of the previous generation, the 'return' journeys that these memoirists narrate can be interpreted as an act of emplacement, imaginative reknitting, and experiential and symbolic recalibration of the self into the stories and histories of their parents. Such acts and the representations that flow from them effectively calm the "uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture" that can occur due to this imbalance of memory between generations.[26] Benjamin, for example, speaks openly about the restorative aspect of her journey in terms of her own past and that of her family:

> I was under no illusions about my trip . . . But the need to see Baghdad with my own eyes had taken on a near-obsessive quality. What began as a simple desire to

[21] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xii-xiii.
[22] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xii-xiii.
[23] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 326-347.
[24] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 326-347.
[25] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 347.
[26] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 347.

> return to the homeland of my ancestors had become a mission to mend a small tear in the fabric of time.[27]

A similar sentiment infuses Sabar's account, as he explains "when I was a boy, Zakho was a nonsense word . . . In Zakho . . . I found find a man, that is, more like me. I'd find the father I never had".[28]

The journey narrative of Sabar and Benjamin allows them to resituate themselves in relation to the legacy of postmemory and the memory sites of their parents. They emotionally reinvest in the sites they visit and create their own meanings and personal memories in relation to them. Through these actions and their narratives, they are able to achieve a deeper understanding of themselves and give greater voice to their own stories within their familial histories.[29] This 'resituation' is becomes especially important in connection with sacred sites such as synagogues.

Synagogues and sacred sites

Some Mizrahi memoirists are profoundly secular while others are devoutly religious. Schinasi-Silver and Zonana speak of a deep interest in spirituality including Jewish mysticism and indigenous North American philosophies.[30] Sabar and Benjamin, however, are more inclined towards secular genealogical heritage than overtly religious expressions of Jewish identity.[31] So why have all four placed such an importance on visiting local synagogues?

Regardless of an emphasis on secular or sacred life, the synagogue itself is a location of great significance in modern Judaism.[32] A synagogue provides a clearly defined site and visible structure that serves as a focus for both community and religious practice.[33] As

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[27] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon*, 224.
[28] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 267-268.
[29] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise*; Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
[30] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus;* Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
[31] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus;* Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon;* Sabar, *My Father's Paradise.*
[32] Ruth Langer, 'Prayer and worship' in *Modern Judaism,* eds. Nicholas de Lange and Miri Freud-Kandel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 231.
[33] Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 705; Jonathon Blake, 'What is the Purpose of the Synagogue?', *ReformJudaism.org,* 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.reformjudaism.org/print/13366>. As Telushkin (2001, 705) explains, "temple, synagogue, and *shul* all mean the same thing: a house of worship. *Shul*, a Yiddish world that means school as well as synagogue, reflects the fact that Orthodox synagogues long tended to be centres of learning as well as prayer".

Rabbi Jonathan Blake writes, "the Hebrew word for synagogue is *beit k'neset'*. It means the '"house of assembly' and thus approximates the Greek word '*synagoge'* which also means 'assembly"'.[34] It is here that religious belief and community are actively and collectively performed and also reinforced through meeting together for a common purpose. A synagogue "is the centre of the Jewish religious community: a place of prayer, study and education, social and charitable work, as well as a social centre".[35] Judaism emphasises the importance of communal prayer, especially as religious law requires a minimum number to be present to say particular prayers.[36] Blake explains the behavioural, communal, and pedagogic aspects of the synagogue:

> [T]he synagogue is the primary Jewish engine for organising people into communities of caring. Study, prayer, ritual observance, community building, *tzedakah,* concern for the welfare of all Jews and all humanity – these constitute the pillars of a thriving, inspirational synagogue . . . Jewish mystical tradition claims that God is everywhere and in all things, if only our vision permits us to see . . . The synagogue functions as a spiritual magnifying glass. It helps us to see what has been there all along.[37]

A synagogue is both a symbol and active nexus of Jewish religious and community life where the sacred and mundane are fused together in the most visible of ways. So while Sabar, Benjamin, Schinasi-Silver, and Zonana all have different perspectives on spirituality, the synagogue remains a vital site for the purpose of identity- and memory-work. In this next section I shall examine Sabar's account of synagogue reuse within the Kurdish city of Zakho in northernmost Iraq.

Change and reuse in Zakho

Sabar's account of his visit to his family's ancestral hometown of Zakho demonstrates how the meanings and memories of synagogue sites can be multilayered, even in the absence of the original Jewish community. The sacred sites that Sabar describes, and which I analyse here, constitute the two Jewish synagogues within Zakho – the 'Big' Synagogue and the

[34] Blake, 'What is the Purpose of the Synagogue?', 1. Rabbi Jonathan Blake is the senior rabbi of Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, New York.
[35] American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), 'The Synagogue: Background and Overview', 2005, accessed 2016, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judasim/shul.html>, 1; American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), 'The Synagogue: Customs and Etiquette', accessed 2016, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judasim/ettiquette.html>, 3. As AICE (2005, 3) explains "synagogues are meeting places for the community and are used for a number of religious and non-religious functions. These include: study classes for adults, religious school for children, lectures, weddings, funerals, meetings, [and] youth group activities".
[36] Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 707; AICE, 'The Synagogue: Background and Overview', 1. This minimum, or *minyan,* is 10 adult Jewish males.
[37] Blake, 'What is the Purpose of the Synagogue?', 2-3.

'Small' Synagogue – as well as artefacts originating from these spaces.[38] Despite their ancient and previously continuous presence in the region, all Kurdish Jews left Zakho by the early 1950s to escape increasing anti-Semitism and to undertake religious *aliyah* to the State of Israel.[39] I argue that Sabar's representation of Zakho reveals a multilayered landscape of selective remembrance and selective erasure of the city's Kurdish Jewish past. This landscape has been affected by a combination of anti-Semitic repression by successive Iraqi military regimes, the departure of the local Kurdish Jewish community, and current rapid development.[40] Most recently, Saddam's regime was intent on purging and controlling meaning, memory, and identity in the region – both Jewish and Kurdish – in order to enforce conformity to a singular and monolithic concept of Iraqi national identity.[41] The regime's destructive actions, intended to force conformity and 'modernisation', has left psychological, spiritual, and physical scars.[42] Although Saddam's regime has now fallen, there is no longer a living Jewish presence within Zakho because so far no Kurdish Jewish women, men, or their descendants, have returned to resettle.[43]

I argue that this conversion of sacred space into the mundane creates a highly entangled relationship between memory and forgetting in relation to past and present use of these structures and spaces. Sabar's account shows how the legacy of Saddam's attempted purges of people, history, and memory from the national consciousness of Iraq is reflected in Zakho's urban landscape. For example, Zakho's "centuries old Jewish cemetery" was completely destroyed – purposely buried under layers of highway asphalt during the

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[38] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 280-283; Haya Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists: The Jewish Community of Zakho in Iraqi Kurdistan,* (Detroit, Wayne State University, 2009)*,* 331. Gavish (2009, 331) calls this synagogue, which is the "largest in the community", the Midrash Synagogue.

[39] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 316-336; Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer, eds. *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 364-366. Gavish confirms that the entire Kurdish Jewish population of Zakho left for the State of Israel in a series of waves. They were inspired primarily by traditional religious Zionism (which had always been present within the community) and the desire for the opportunity of social change. The Kurdish Jewish community of Zakho were a very close community and because they were relatively small in size and lived in a remote location, no-one remained behind.

[40] Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists*, 316-336; Simon, Laskeir, and Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* 351, 364-366; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 264-266, 275, 277; Marina Roy, 'Saddam's Arms: Nationalist and Orientalist tendencies in Iraqi Monuments', 2004, accessed 2016, <http://marinaroy.ca/saddam/html>; Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 233.

[41] Roy, 'Saddam's Arms'.; Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 232-233; Namo Abdulla, *et al.,* 'The Time of the Kurds', Council on Foreign Relations, 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/time-kurds/p36547#!/p36547>; Shabi Rachel, *Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)*,* 100, 223.

[42] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 264-266, 275, 277; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 316-317; Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 232-233; In 1988 Saddam Hussein used nerve gas against Iraqi Kurds as part of a program of extermination. From July 1948 onwards Zionism was declared a 'political crime' within Iraq and arrest, torture, imprisonment, or death could result for any man, woman, or child under suspicion of involvement or association with it.

[43] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 335-336.

regime's modernisation campaign.[44] Although Jewish graves must still exist underneath, the cemetery has been physically erased on the surface. Although Sabar's guide could point it out, with rapid expansion it is unlikely that many of Zakho's new residents are aware of this site.[45] Although no Jews presently live in Zakho, Sabar mentions that the historic Jewish quarter – "now the city's poorest neighbourhood" – is still called *mahala Juheeya.*[46] The Kurdish Jewish neighbourhood still physically exists, but others now live in the houses. Local synagogues also still stand, but in modified form, now converted into residential homes by local Kurdish and Muslim families.[47] Their original function might be lost but the synagogues' structural exteriors are preserved owing to their internal conversion into houses and homes. This creates a situation of overlap and hybridity: memory and forgetting coexist within the same space – both socially and structurally. Diana Taylor has identified this configuration as a "transitional space, part past, part future" – brimming with "multivalence" through simultaneously resonating with multiple meanings and functions.[48]

The longevity of knowledge within Zakho's current community about the sacred significance of these Kurdish Jewish sites, however, remains problematic. Sabar unfortunately does not offer insight into this aspect as his focus is on the life stories of his father and himself. Haya Gavish, however, interviewed many previous Kurdish Jewish residents as part of an oral history project.[49] Gavish shares offers insight into the fate of their local properties:

> After the news that emigration was permitted became public in March 1950 and registration began in the synagogue, members of the community did their best to sell their property to Muslims. Since the local residents exploited the situation and waited for prices to drop, most Jews were unable to sell their homes or did so at a fraction of their real value . . . Yona Sabar, who was in the second group [of four groups that left on *aliyah*], testified that his family's home was sold for seven or eight dinars, whereas its real value was estimated at 300 dinars. Olim [Kurdish Jews travelling to the State of Israel] in the third and fourth groups were unable to sell their property at all.[50]

[44] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 277; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 335-336.
[45] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 277; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 335-336.
[46] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279.
[47] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 280-282; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 320-330.
[48] Diana Taylor, 'Trauma as Durational Performance' in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 268-269.
[49] Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists.*
[50] Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 320.

After 10 March 1951 "all Jewish assets were frozen – all property, stocks, bonds, and bank accounts" and all property of Jews who had left Iraq were seized by the Iraqi government.[51] Consequently, among both Kurdish Jews and Iraqi Jews there is a collective memory of loss surrounding this seizure of property.[52]

I argue therefore that these highly complex sites now represent an entangled hybridity in both their physical form and their past and present meanings. Knowledge has either been entirely lost through ignorance because now as houses, these sites can regularly change hands as the current community expands. Alternatively, their actual meaning is still known but left unspoken as part of the post-exodus 'appropriation' of Jewish property by non-Jewish locals.[53] As structures they are witness to haphazard acts of local reclamation that at once erase but also preserve Jewish history. Through the reuse of these spaces there is an echo of the shared past of the once conjoined lives of local Jews and non-Jews within Zakho. Yet at the same time these sites present stark evidence of the separation and destruction of this shared community and highlight the now total absence of Kurdish Jewish women, men, and children from the city.[54]

Among the remaining residents of Zakho we can assume that some who were close to Kurdish Jews within their community would also have shared this sense of loss. Others, however, who exploited the situation and benefited financially from Kurdish Jews' desperation to sell properties are likely to have more triumphant memories of securing what they felt to be an excellent deal. Within the current Zakho community, however, memories of the history of specific properties are likely to diminish over time unless measures are taken to counter this, through heritage classification or local history education programs. Without strategies such as these, loss of memories and historical knowledge is inevitable, because of the absence of Kurdish Jews to whom this past is especially meaningful, the high rate of urban re-development, the influx of new residents, and the selling and reselling of properties during the current period of economic growth.[55]

Different perspectives are influenced by memory. The entangled multilayering of different times and spaces is evident in the memoir, when Sabar and his father Yona walk the streets

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[51] Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 321.
[52] Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists;* See also David Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press Inc., 1999).
[53] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279-280; Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 320-321.
[54] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279.
[55] Bati Group, 'A New Gateway for Northern Iraq'; Duhok, 'Zakho City Treatment Plant'; University of Zakho, 'About UoZ'; Ibrahim Khalil, 'Expanding campus project in Zakho begins'; University of Zakho.

of Zakho. Yona is caught up in a spell of personal reverie as his childhood memories of Zakho are triggered by familiar streets and barefoot children playing around him.[56] Sabar, however, is overcome by the unforgiving stench of alleyway wastewater, rotting food, and garbage within the present-day *mahala Juheeya*.[57] He is also struck by the interwoven nature of poverty, technology, and temporality, which he describes as a "collision of ancient and modern" where:

> On the flat rooftops, gleaming satellite dishes were propped against rusting bed frames. A stooped man thumbing prayer beads wore both traditional Kurdish robes and a foam-panel trucker cap inscribed JESUS LOVES ME . . . A grizzled codger sold apricots from a crate in front of a European-designer shoe store. Everywhere, the twenty-first century was bumping against the nineteenth, technology against tradition, the world against the village. The twentieth century – with its innovations of plumbing and clean water – seemed to have skipped over it entirely.[58]

Within the "rutted alleyways" of this chaotic melange of times, senses and sites, it is personal memory that guides Yona.[59] Sabar, however, experiences the local streets for himself for the first time, although his expectations are strongly influenced by how he imagines his father's past to have been.[60] This creates a situation of creative negotiation where memories are shared and re-narrated within the context of a joint present moment. Within his textual narrative, Sabar weaves together his own first impressions of Zakho with the observations and stories of his father as he recollects his memories to his son.[61] Sabar even includes mention of Yona's dreams, dreamt and shared while still in the United States.[62] As Sabar reflects, he interweaves perspectives and temporalities:

> Dreams, I recalled now, had long been a refuge from his life's inconsistencies . . . Dreams were a place where fragments could be made whole. The Zakho we saw that first day was light-years from the place of his birth. It was bustling, forward-looking, growing, prospering, blazing toward the future. But as my father lay his head on his pillow that night, I felt sure that his dreams would be of the boy who flew across rooftops, fearless and free.[63]

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[56] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279.
[57] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279.
[58] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279-280. This is also something that strikes Benjamin on her visit to Baghdad, see for instance pages xii-xiii.
[59] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279-280.
[60] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 16-106, 266-267, 276-277.
[61] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279-280.
[62] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 279-280.
[63] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 278-279.

Sabar not only critiques his father's past dream as it was told to him, but he also imaginatively projects what he thinks his father might dream that night. This representation is in keeping with Sabar's preferred image of his father – that of a carefree excited boy – that Sabar yearns to know more about and bond with.[64] It is also in keeping with the narrative structure of the memoir itself, which begins with a semi-fictional rendition of Yona's early life in Zakho.[65]

The narrative of Sabar and Yona's joint visit to Zakho is highly illustrative of memory dynamics between individuals and across generations. It is constructed through dialogue and knitted together using different personal stories, memories, and comments made by each along the way. Sabar's knowledge and experience of the city is informed through postmemory, his own research, his father's guidance, and that of their guide.[66] He forms new memories at the same time as Yona tells stories of his own, and each are shared within the written text. As they proceed, Sabar and Yona explore both the physical landscape and that of memory, oscillating between past and present and making sense of what they see through their own dialogue together.[67] Such a dynamic strongly reflects multidirectional memory, which recognises that both memories and the identities that flow from them are created relationally through interaction.[68] Sabar explains that while Yona was unsure if they truly *had* visited his family's home or not – as "the bearings of memory . . . did not always calibrate with those of the physical world" – Yona *is* certain about the location of Zakho's synagogues.[69] Sabar describes their visit to these synagogues, both of which are now converted into houses:

> The two synagogues, with their rugged stone walls, still stood, but they were houses now. A cheerful woman in a blue headscarf let us into the so-called Big Synagogue, where she lived with her construction-worker husband and their four children. The *mikveh*, the ritual bath . . . had been paved over with concrete and turned into a small bedroom with a TV set in the corner. Across the courtyard was the *hekhal*, the holy chamber that had housed the sacred Torah scrolls and the Elijah's chair where Jewish boys were circumcised. Now the *hekhal* was a storage room. A child's wooden rocker dangled from a hook in the wall. A mud-caked soccer ball lolled on a red lawn chair in a corner.[70]

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[64] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 267-325.
[65] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 16-106.
[66] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 261-311; Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 346-347.
[67] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 16-106.
[68] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4-7, 11; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209, Prentice, Devadas and Johnson, *Cultural transformations*, xii.
[69] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 280.
[70] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 280-281.

What Sabar describes is a site of meaning and a space of hybridity and entanglements where memory and forgetting coexist and flow one into the other.[71] The external structure preserves the overall shape of the synagogue but its internal spaces have been reworked. The sacred and the mundane jointly coexist – unlike the next non-Jewish generation now living in the space – in a way that all onus is on the present to dominate the past. Sabar and Yona, however, respectively view the space through the eyes of memory and historical knowledge and so can easily overlay and interweave what they see now over what once was. In turn, their negotiated joint viewing is recorded as a singular narrative through Sabar's memoir.[72] Although the "cheerful" woman is complicit in the physical transformation and reuse of the synagogue, she is hospitable, welcoming Sabar and Yona into what is now her home. Within this complex site she at once obscures Jewish memory through the structural changes of the space while at the same time enabling it through the eyes and remembrances of her guests. This follows the dynamic of multidirectional memory where actions that may initially appear to obscure do not actually eclipse memory but rather enable it to come forth in a different and newly negotiated way.[73]

Yona and Sabar's encounter with the Small Synagogue of Zakho is equally entangled and complex as their encounter with the Big Synagogue. Sabar recognises this site through a triangulation of his father's own childhood memories, the artefactual memory of a photograph, and his own memory of viewing this picture.[74] Sabar describes this experience:

> Around the corner we found the 'Small Synagogue'. A sullen young woman in a long pink dress answered our knock at the metal gate. I recognised the courtyard, with its leafy fringes and large fig tree, from photographs my father had taken in 1992. In the photos an ancient stone tablet inscribed in Hebrew, a relic from the old temple, was propped against the courtyard wall by a giant Y-shaped tree branch. My father had wanted to show me the tablet up close, with its Hebrew inscription. But as we tramped through wild flowers in the garden, all we could see was that Y-shaped branch, lying on its side and buried in a bramble. My father asked the young woman if she knew what had happened to the tablet. She turned away, mumbling that she did not. My father sighed and squinted into the sun streaming through the fig tree.[75]

Like the first example, Sabar's narrative describes a scene where memory and forgetting are intertwined both in the space itself and in his interactions with this second local woman.

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[71] Prentice, Devadas and Johnson, *Cultural transformations*, xi-xii; Shohat, 'Rupture & Return', 352-354, Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209, Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5, 11-12, 27-29.
[72] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 28-281.
[73] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5, 11-12, 27-29; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-29.
[74] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 281.
[75] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 281.

The site, as Yona remembers it, was already hybrid through the presence of the ancient Hebrew tablet – a borrowed artefact from an earlier synagogue. Unlike the woman at the converted Big Synagogue, however, this local woman is not as hospitable, in his view, as his previous encounter because of her reluctance to engage with them.[76] Sabar's mention of brambles paints a visual image of decay and neglect, a condition that is mirrored in the woman's apparent lack of interest in the earlier building.[77] Either she genuinely has no knowledge of its history, or she does, but she is suspicious and wary of Sabar and Yona's reaction to her and her family because they now live in what was once a sacred site. Despite the changes that have taken place, however, the site still strongly speaks of Jewish history. The tree branch remains, even if covered. Memory is retained through the presence of the thriving fig tree outside, heavily symbolic of Jewish life and history.[78]

Portable artefacts

The sacred tablets of the Small Synagogue were not completely lost, however, and Sabar managed to track down their location through the help of others.[79] The attempted preservation of these artefacts demonstrates a degree of remembrance by locals of their shared past with local Kurdish Jews. But their memories are recalled and retained in close relationship with a grey zone of utility. One local Muslim family had – "for safekeeping" – salvaged the sacred Jewish tablets from the walls of the Small Synagogue while converting the site into their new house.[80] The entanglement of this family's actions lies in the complexity of the motives involved but also in this act of salvaging itself, which is simultaneously destructive but also protective. This reflects the dynamic of multidirectional memory whereby overlaps in memories and interests are present in seemingly oppositional situations and meanings are shared, albeit in surprising ways.[81] The conversion of this space into a house effectively obliterates a sacred Jewish structure. However, Jewish memory is also preserved and transformed through the new focus on the tablets, which are moveable

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[76] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 281.
[77] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 281.
[78] Patricia Bagwell, 'The Symbolism of the Fig Tree', Hope of Israel Ministries, accessed 2015, <http://www.hope-of-israel.org/symbolfigtree.html>; Emil G. Hirsch and Henry Hyvernant, 'Fig and Fig-Tree', Jewish Encyclopedia, accessed 2015, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6111-fig-and-fig-tree>; Akiva Wolff, 'Trees in Jewish Thought', My Jewish Learning with permission of Canfei Nesharim, 2007, accessed 2015, <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/trees-in-jewish-thought/>; Alf Saunders & Julie Saunders, 'The Budding of the Fig Tree', accessed 2015, <http://www.pray4zion.org/TheBuddingoftheFigTree.html>; Clarence Larkin, 'The Trees to Which Israel is Compared in Scriptures', in *The Dispensational Truth,* enlarged 3rd rev. ed. Philadelphia, 1920, accessed 2015, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/larkin/dt/29.cfm>.
[79] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 281.
[80] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 281.
[81] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5, 7, 11, 18-19.

and meaningful artefacts. Despite their fear of punishment by Saddam's regime, the family kept the Jewish tablets well hidden for decades. Later, when they moved house, they also smuggled the tablets with them across town.[82] Again, these actions remove the sacred artefacts from their original context. Yet, at the same time, such movement demonstrates defiance of the regime's hegemonic discourse of a monocultural Iraqi identity and the erasure of all Jewish life and history.[83] Consequently, the "mere presence of the slabs in their home terrified them" yet the family continued to preserve them.[84]

The family's motives, however, were not altruistic but ultimately informed by their knowledge of the transnational heritage industry.[85] Selling rare archaeological and historical artefacts can be lucrative, especially if in demand by interested buyers such as nostalgic Mizrahim living overseas.[86] A dynamic of multidirectional memory exists here in the tension between local circumstances and transnational markets, but also the locations where Kurdish Jewish history is likely to be remembered and most valued.[87] While the synagogue in Zakho might be a physical site of memory, the places where Kurdish Jews are now resettled (such as the State of Israel but also elsewhere, for example the United States of America) are not the geographic locations where the physical acts of remembrance are most likely to take place.[88] The portable nature of the tablets means that there is a high probability that they will be sought after by Kurdish Jews and others, in new locations.[89] Lufti Mohammed, a member of the family, explains their perspective to Sabar:

> 'We knew these stones belonged to Jews and might be of interest to people one day' . . . the family felt sure of an eventual big-money sale to an overseas museum.[90]

Here, Sabar represents the family's perspective as one where personal gain and the tides and circuits of international commerce are more persuasive than the artefact's historical merit at a local or national level.[91] Recognising that the tablets might have financial value to

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[82] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283.
[83] Roy, 'Saddam's Arms'.; Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 232-233; Abdulla, *et al.,* 'The Time of the Kurds'.
[84] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283.
[85] G. J. Ashworth, Brian Graham, and J. E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies,* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 1-2, 28, 40; Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 7-8; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283.
[86] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts*, 40-45.
[87] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 40-45; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 8-9, 20.
[88] Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* vii-xi; Zion Zohar, ed. *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times,* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 15-19.
[89] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbrige, *Pluralising Pasts,* 40-45; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within Us,* 30-32.
[90] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283.
[91] Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 30-32; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 1-2, 28, 40; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 7-8, 20; Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283.

an overseas buyer for a private or public collection, the family retained the artefacts for self-interest rather than to preserve local and tangible historical records of the ancient Jewish presence within their town.[92] As historical artefacts, the tablets resonate not only with collective Jewish history but also with local and personal memories prompted and activated by Mizrahim in new locations overseas seeking different ways to revisit their roots.[93] Consequently, an initially exploitative action *might* have ultimately been transformed into a process that eventually would have enabled the tablets to be more respectfully and meaningfully treasured. Unfortunately, as Sabar both narrates and shows photographically, without knowledge of how to care for the artefacts appropriately, or even a full awareness of their sacred significance, the family's efforts at historical preservation (regardless of motivations) appear to have been futile.[94] Sabar observes:

> If the tablets ever stood a chance of interesting a museum, that time, I saw, had passed. The heavy stones were stacked like corpses on a wooden pallet on the rooftop, where sun and rain had worn the raised Hebrew letters into near illegibility.[95]

Sabar's use of metaphor here combines reference to physical genocide with historical erasure – a loss attributed first to the actions of people followed by the forces of the natural environment. The erosion and progression of time also contributes here to 'illegibility', echoing the process of forgetting or 'death' that can occur in the absence of those who know the true significance of sites and artefacts.[96] As screen memory illustrates, however, as politics and situations change, 'resurrection' of different memories and histories is always possible.[97] In this case, a resurrected remembrance is most likely to come from Mizrahim within the West and the State of Israel rather than from new generations of Zakho residents more intent on present problems.

In contrast to the situation in Zakho, a focus on present issues by non-Jewish locals in Baghdad has served to protect and preserve the remaining Jewish community. Unlike the situation in Zakho, the Baghdadi Jewish community itself was the biggest driver behind the

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[92] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pass,* 1-2, 28, 40-45.
[93] Simon, Laskier, Reguer, *Jews of the Middle East,* vii-xi; Zohar , *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry,* 15-19; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 223-239.
[94] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283. Sabar includes a photograph of one of the, now shattered, tablets on page 282.
[95] Sabar, *My Father's Paradise,* 282-283.
[96] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbrige, *Pluralising Pasts,* 109; Tony Kushner, 'Alienated Memories: Migrants and the silences of the archive', in *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*, ed. Joan Tumblety (London: Routledge, 2013), 177, 190.
[97] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-17; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 9-10, 12-13.

conversion and repurposing of community properties.[98] This raises the issue of how and why some sites are preserved while others are not. In the next section I explore the situation in Baghdad as portrayed by Benjamin, where the focus by non-Jewish locals on contemporary problems has served to protect and preserve the remaining Jewish community rather than harm them.

Jewish community sites and urban renewal in Baghdad

Benjamin's account of the remaining Jewish community of Baghdad further reveals the entangled nature of past and present in the remembrance and use of spaces.[99] Although far larger than the regional city of Zakho, Baghdad, like Zakho, has many repurposed Jewish community buildings left empty from the displacement of the majority of the original Jewish population.[100] The city itself is war-torn and apart from pockets of the Old City, generally "appears forsaken".[101]

Unlike Zakho, however, where non-Jewish locals repurposed Jewish community buildings, Benjamin tells us that the decision to repurpose many of these community sites in Baghdad was made by the remaining Jewish community itself in order to survive.[102] It should be noted that these are *community* buildings, not *private* properties. During the mass exodus of Baghdadi Jews, private assets including properties were seized by the Iraqi government as part of a thinly veiled 'nationalisation' campaign that targeted only Jews.[103]

Under Saddam's regime, however, community-owned assets, as opposed to those classified as private or commercial, remained untouched perhaps as they were perceived as unprofitable. Within Baghdad, the Jewish community's assets held by the Jewish Committee consisted mostly of physical property – schools, synagogues, and buildings that

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[98] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 272.
[99] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon;* Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5, 11-12, 27-29; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209.
[100] Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 320-321; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 109; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 88-105; Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews: A History of Mass Exodus,* 2nd ed. (London: Saqi, 2005), 115-120, 142-143, 162-165; Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound,* 312-314. Private Jewish-owned properties were seized by the government. Registering to leave Iraq meant relinquishing Iraqi citizenship and, as Kazzaz (1999, 312) explains, "it also required the Jews to abandon their homes and all the valuables they owned, which, by and large, were later looted by their non-Jewish neighbours . . . they were denied access to their offices and shops and could not withdraw funds from their own bank accounts, which made it impossible to get cash even to buy food. Moreover, when they tried to sell the contents of their houses – their carpets, furniture, silverware, and so on – they found no buyers. The neighbouring Arabs were urged not to purchase Jewish belongings because, they were told, those goods would soon be left behind for them to loot at will".
[101] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xii.
[102] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 272.
[103] Gavish, *Unwitting Zionists,* 320-321; Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews,* 104-131; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 88-90.

had been used as Jewish clubs and meeting places.[104] The remaining Baghdadi Jewish community slowly and subtly carried out a program of 'urban renewal' of their own community buildings in order to safeguard their survival and ensure that their remaining finances were not seized by the repressive regime. With the majority of the original Jewish community gone, over time most used buildings were "destroyed one by one, and shops and tenements erected in their place".[105] Although the destruction of these historical sites is a loss both from a heritage perspective and for the previous Iraqi Jewish occupants, this, ironically, ensured the very survival of Iraqi Jews still living in Baghdad. Mundane buildings became the way that the sanctity of life could be protected. In this sense, the primary site of memory is no longer a structure or set of buildings, but instead a person and the remaining community itself. Conversion of community properties owned by the Jewish Committee into "shops and tenements" accrued "thousands of tenants" who paid rent.[106] It also made the properties less visibly 'Jewish' and their original functions were soon forgotten. The rental income was shrewdly reinvested by the community into "bonds and unit trusts" and "endowment funds" which were, and are still, used to pay a small "monthly stipend" to all adult members of the remaining Baghdadi Jewish community.[107] The majority are now very elderly and, for those of working age, Benjamin was told it is now extremely difficult to find an Iraqi employer who is willing to employ a Jew.[108] This stipend is absolutely vital to ensure their physical survival but is kept at a level of relative poverty so as to not attract attention.[109] Benjamin writes that the community leadership is very reluctant to change this, even in differing circumstances following the fall of Saddam's regime, because "we don't like to show that we have money because everyone is always against the Jews".[110]

The issue of deciding to preserve, repurpose, or destroy buildings raises a couple of important questions. Firstly, who are these sites kept or destroyed for? And secondly, what is at stake with either their destruction, reuse, or preservation? In the case of Zakho, the reuse and conversion of synagogues served the local interests of the non-Jewish population. In Baghdad, the destruction and repurposing of Jewish community buildings instead served the needs of the remaining local Jewish community, even if the changes might be bemoaned by Mizrahim living overseas. In both cases we can see the dynamics of

[104] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 272.
[105] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 272.
[106] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 272.
[107] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 272.
[108] Benjamin, *Last Days in Bablyon,* 272.
[109] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 272.
[110] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 273.

multidirectional memory where an action that appeared to destroy memory instead acted to preserve and promote it, although in a different form. The concept of multidirectional memory is useful when approaching scenarios like these because it enables us to see the true complexity involved within memory dynamics between and within the memories of different groups, even in scenarios where it initially appears that one memory and present purpose is dominating over another.[111]

Barriers and connections of the Meir Tweg Synagogue in Baghdad

Once there were innumerable active synagogues throughout Baghdad – now there is just one.[112] Located in the Bataween neighbourhood, once a safe middle class suburb where many Jewish and Christian families dwelt, the Meir Tweg Synagogue still stands, a bastion for the remaining Baghdadi Jews although now its significance is now mostly symbolic.[113] The surrounding suburb, which Benjamin portrays as once peaceful, stable and very 'middle-class', is represented as very run down and increasingly sleazy. Benjamin mourns the change she observes in the Bataween saying:

> Now its narrow streets were prowled by pimps, prostitutes, and idle youths who roamed the neighbourhood in bands, cultivating an air of menace (the Arabs call them *hayateen* – 'youths who lean against walls').[114]

Benjamin's interpretation of the scene she is witnessing is influenced by the narratives told by her family and by her accompanying guide – a current member of the local Jewish community.[115] These roaming youths are perceived by the remaining Baghdadi Jewish community as a tangible threat. Disaffection with US 'occupiers' and the conceptual linking of Jews with a direct association and loyalty to the United States and the State of Israel have intensified already prevalent anti-Semitism. In this case, following the dynamics of screen memory, recent events have temporarily over-laid memories and historical knowledge of local Jews being critical to Baghdad's community and culture. Fear of vilification and violence at the hands of disaffected Iraqi youth prevent most current Baghdadi Jews from openly visiting their synagogue – a trip that is considered very

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111 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-7, 11-12, 27-29, Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209.
112 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 267.
113 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 250, 267-268. The Meir Tweg Synagogue was built in 1942. There has been no presiding rabbi at the synagogue since 1971.
114 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 267-268.
115 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* xi-xxiv, 267.

dangerous.[116] The building itself is physically protected within a compound of "towering walls", accessible only via "a thick metal door".[117] Although secure, this arrangement does not bring safety through subtlety or secrecy. In her memoir, Benjamin takes a counterpoint stance to that of the local Jewish community, musing that despite being highly practical during conflict, these "fortifications" may actually be counterproductive to peace owing to their inherent emphasis on separation, difference, and isolation from the surrounding non-Jewish community.[118]

Despite having very different motives, both the Iraqi government and the Jewish community view sacred artefacts as integral to community memory and identity. Although they retain the Meir Tweg synagogue, the remaining Baghdadi Jewish community does not possess a complete set of Torah scrolls. On her visit Benjamin counted just twenty-three scrolls because the other thirteen "had been stolen without a word of explanation by the Ministry of Information in 1980".[119] Such an act strikes at the heart of sacred Jewish practice. Nevertheless, the synagogue itself remains a potent symbol for the remaining Iraqi Jews taking a stand despite the odds.[120] For safety, other sites of Jewish religious significance, such as sacred shrines of Joshua the Priest, had to be abandoned and left to neglect during the time of Saddam's regime.[121] Consequently, Samir Shahrabani was delighted to be able to share the site of the synagogue with Benjamin, who writes:

> In truth he was bursting with pride that the tiny community had been able to maintain this last house of worship built by Jews, in spite of sanctions and the bombs and in the teeth of local hostility (it was not for nothing that the synagogue compound was encircled by twenty-foot walls).[122]

The near empty synagogue, however, is a reminder of what was once a thriving community that used to have productive and sustaining 'outside' links. It demonstrates how powerful and affective sites of memory can be for individuals and communities. Despite his poverty, the former synagogue caretaker – Tawfiq Sofaer – is determined to remain near 'his'

[116] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 267.
[117] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 268.
[118] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 267-268.
[119] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 270.
[120] Benjamin, *Last Days in Bablyon,* 267.
[121] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 248.
[122] Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 267.

synagogue and was ninety years-old and very frail when Benjamin visited.[123] Sofaer expresses to Benjamin his own overwhelming sense of isolation:

> 'I used to be a merchant', he told me. 'But now I am all alone. I am too tired to go on. What can I do?' . . . Sofaer boasted of his international connections. He had visited London long ago and he had family in Iran and Israel. 'Ask about me in Israel; they know me there'.[124]

Sofaer's words reflect a precarious state of being and highlight the geographic dispersal of people and memories that have occurred as a result of displacement and migration. Even though he physically remains in the one place, it is as if in the dispersal of his community, his very personhood has also been displaced. He is physically present before Benjamin, next to the site of his beloved synagogue, and yet it is not enough. He is portrayed as worn and faded, his glories past. Those who shared in, and can tell, the stories he feels reflect him best – those who truly *know* him – are gone. All the constructs of his identity – friendship, family, community, customers, and respect – are now no longer. Sofaer feels utterly and completely alone. And yet at the same time he is not. The remaining Baghdadi Jewish community supports him entirely through charity, and he is visited every few days by Levy.[125] Sofaer is also entirely reliant on Mohammed, his ever present "manservant" who is a "pleasant-looking and gentle mannered Shia youth".[126] Mohammed's caring presence, as he diligently looks after Sofaer, directly contrasts with the fear engendered by other youth such as the *hayateen* 'menacing' the Bataween.[127] (Yet both Sofaer and Mohammed are members of minorities – Sunni Muslims are currently the dominant group within Iraq.) This is a clear example of how at the individual level at least, the relationship between remaining Baghdadi Jews and surrounding Islamic society is not always clear cut.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the concept of postmemory can assist our understanding of the intergenerational dynamics of memory within the memoirists' families.[128] I examined the dynamics of memory, as represented by Sabar and Benjamin, in relation to their visits to synagogues in Zakho and Baghdadi respectively. In both of these cases, the concept of

123 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 270. According to Benjamin (2007, 270) Tawfiq Sofaer had spent the last 35 years living in relative poverty within a "cupboard sized room under the stairs of a shabby office building adjacent to the synagogue".
124 Benjamin, *Last Days in Bablyon,* 270.
125 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 270.
126 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 270.
127 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 267-268.
128 Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 346-347.

multidirectional memory enables us to see some of the subtler movements of memory and identity at work. In each instance, actions that initially appeared destructive and could have led to erasure and forgetting instead acted to preserve memories, albeit in a different form.[129] Through using the concept of multidirectional memory we are instead able to perceive that sites and memories of them are always in fluid negotiation – part of an active and constant evolution through the actions and exchanges of people, past and present, in their encounters of these sites and each other.[130] Through this process, the memories and meanings of these sites are constantly made and remade. They are transformed and infused with a dynamic hybridity and ongoing multivalence, just as the structures of these sites change as well.[131]

I have also demonstrated how multidirectional memory enables us to conceptualise the movements of memory between the original site of their attachment, as marked by structures and artefacts, and the new places – that is the State of Israel, the West, and other locations Mizrahim resettled in – where the majority of active memory work on the Jewish history of those sites now takes place. We are now able to appreciate the flows of meaning and memory that ebb back and forth between the original homelands of Mizrahim and their new places of resettlement, which echoes the movements and intermixing of people and stories within new places. Through using both multidirectional memory and screen memory together, we can appreciate the true complexity of the dynamics of memory and negotiations of meaning within a context of displacement and urbanisation where a high degree of flux is present.

In the next chapter I continue to use the concept of multidirectional memory to investigate the entanglements of stakeholders involved with Ben Ezra Synagogue and the Rambam Synagogue of Cairo. Zonana's narrative shows that - just as we saw in the case of Baghdad – although a state of local forgetfulness might initially appear to be prevail, this situation can also act to help preserve sites and artefacts. Schinasi-Silver's account of her experiences at the Rambam, however, reveal more about the impact that selectivity can have within the close relationship between memory and forgetting.

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[129] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-7, 11-12, 27-29, Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209.
[130] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory.*
[131] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory;* Taylor, 'Trauma as Durational Performance', 268-269.

– CHAPTER SEVEN –

(In)accessible Visions

> On this visit to Egypt, I was most determined to return to Alexandria, the place of my fondest memories . . . To my surprise the city that greeted us had been completely transformed.[1]
>
> Vivienne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*

> The pyramids and the pharaohs hold no charm for me; I have no interest in mummies or ancient tombs; what I seek is some tangible experience of the world in which my parents lived as well as an encounter with the world that has replaced it.[2]
>
> Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes*

> Imagination involves prospecting and remembering all-at-once. Some might argue however, that imagination is in fact limited by personal knowings. In other words, one cannot image that to which one has not already explicitly or tacitly known.[3]
>
> Barbara Condon, *Imagination: The 'What-if' in Thinking*

The movements of memory follow the movements of people and shape their expectations of the present and imaginative visions of the future. After all, our imaginations are informed – and sometimes limited – by what we already know.[4] As evident in the extracts above, there can easily be dissonance between what we hope to see, what we see, and what can lie before us especially amidst the flux of rapid urban change and competing priorities over the preservation or destruction of historical sites. These are themes continued on from *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters*, as is a focus on significant synagogue and pilgrimage sites discussed by Mizrahi memoirists. In this present chapter, however, I change focus from Iraq to the differing context of Egypt. In doing so, I draw upon the experiences of Vivianne Schinasi-Silver and Joyce Zonana, as represented within their memoirs. I also use the frameworks of postmemory, multidirectional memory, screen memory, and my own emphasis on entanglements as a combined means to understand the ebb and flow of memory relating to specific sites, debates, and the ways that complex stakeholder relationships can affect the histories, identities, and imaginations of

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[1] Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a Life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue: Shoreline, 2007), 127.
[2] Joyce Zonana, *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2008), 162.
[3] Barbara Backer Condon, 'Imagination: The *What-If* in Thinking', *Nursing Science Quarterly* 27 (2014): 206.
[4] Condon, 'Imagination', 204-210.

communities.[5] I also introduce the concept of imagination, which informs our understanding of the importance of retaining knowledge and memory of a diversity of different experiences, both personally and culturally.[6] Bringing these frameworks into conversation, first, I briefly set the context of the texts under study, before highlighting the role of postmemory within both Schinasi-Silver and Zonana's motivations for travelling to Egypt. I then sequentially analyse the dynamics of memory, history, and identity, as represented in memoir, in relation to the Ben Ezra Synagogue, the Eliahu Hanabi Synagogue, the Rambam Synagogue, the *moulid* of Abu Hasira, and tensions surrounding the ownership of the sacred Torah scrolls of the Char Hashamayim synagogue. I also look at the relationship between these sites and artefacts and the memoirs as texts by drawing upon Ann Rigney's concept of "portable monuments".[7]

Driven by postmemory

Because of rapid change, both social and political, the narratives of Schinasi-Silver and Zonana are specific to the time period in which the memoirists travelled. The Middle Eastern region itself and the cities of Cairo and Alexandria are all currently in a large state of flux due to the shifts in contemporary conflicts as well as rapid urban expansion and modernisation.[8] Egypt has generally been far easier to travel to, unlike Iraq, where travel

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[5] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory' in *The Collective Memory Reader,* Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)*,* 346-347; Condon, 'Imagination', 204-210.

[6] Condon, 'Imagination'.

[7] Ann Rigney, 'Portable Monuments: Literature, Cultural Memory, and the Case of Jeanie Deans', *Poetics Today* 25 (2004): 361-396.

[8] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 166; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 126-127; Dona J. Stewart, 'Changing Cairo: The Political Economy of Urban Form', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23 (1999): 128-146; Dona J. Stewart, Zhi-Yong Yin, Stevan M. Bullard, Jared T., 'Assessing the Spatial Structure of Urban and Population Growth in the Greater Cairo Area, Egypt: A GIS and Imagery Analysis Approach', *Urban Studies* 41 (2004): 95-116; Ibrahim Kareem, 'Post-Revolutionary Urban Egypt: A New Mode of Practice?', *Troisièmme sèrie* 11 (2014), accessed 2016, <https://ema.revues.org/3330> ; Alice Gray, 'Planting Change in Egypt from the Ground Up', *The Permaculture Research Institute*, 2016, accessed 2016, <http://permaculturenews.org/2016/02/08/planting-change-in-egypt-from-the-ground-up/>; Orla Guerin, 'Egypt unveils plans to build a new capital east of Cairo', *BBC News*, 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-31874886>; Arwa Ibrahim, 'Doubts raised over achievability of Egypt's 'new capital'', 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypts-new-capital-1280559810 >; Patrick Kingsley, 'A new New Cairo: Egypt plans £30bn purpose-built capital in desert', *Guardian News and Media Limited*, 2015, accessed 2016, <http://theguardian.com/cities/2015/mar/16/new-cairo-egypt-plans-capital-city-desert>; The journal articles, news briefs, and parts of each memoir all indicate a significant amount of urban change and development in Baghdad, Zakho, Cairo, and Alexandria caused by growth, investment, and increasing international focus but also changes in use due to damage caused by war. The following passages from the memoirists focused on in this chapter demonstrate how each are struck by the changes in the urban landscape compared to the stories and images they have seen of these places from their families. Zonana (2008: 166) observes when she arrives: "We pass Heliopolis, the elegant suburb where my parents once lived, now a crowded district of concrete high-rises". Schinasi-Silver (2007: 126) is struck by the changes, describing "where I remembered a tree-lined boulevard where the tram gently rolled by, is now

was highly restricted, as discussed in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters*. Consequently, Schinasi-Silver travelled to Egypt with her husband in 1998, while Zonana travelled alone but explored the sites with a colleague in 1999.[9]

The impact of postmemory is a significant factor that motivates Zonana and Schinasi-Silver to revisit their ancestral homelands.[10] Both memoirists were born in Egypt but were brought to live in North America by their families when Zonana was a child of only 18-months old and when Schinasi-Silver was a teenager of 15-years old.[11] Their ages mean that only Schinasi-Silver has clear first-hand memories of the sites she revisits. Although informed by the stories and memories of her family, Zonana is effectively experiencing Egypt for the first time as an adult.[12] Postmemory informs how Zonana approaches her visit as she tries to process the emotions of deep attachment to place inherited from her family: "I am at last on my way to Cairo – a pilgrimage . . . that I know to be essential . . . It was impossible to think rationally about what ought to have been a simple journey back to my birthplace".[13] Like Zonana, Schinasi-Silver represents her journey emotively as a form of pilgrimage. Proud to be finally in Egypt she writes, "I had returned as a married, educated, modern woman to pay tribute to the memory of my father whose courage and foresight had brought us to a new country".[14]

The dynamics of postmemory are evident in how Zonana and Schinasi-Silver represent the emotional dimensions of their visits. Through postmemory, Zonana, for example, has inherited the affective and embodied memories of her parents' fear of passport officials at border crossings – a legacy of displacement and mistreatment.[15] Zonana has no personal memories of this earlier experience because she was a baby at the time. Nevertheless, postmemory infuses the depiction of her perceptions when in Cairo as an adult:

> Swathed in layers of clothes and covered in jewellery, [as a baby] I was impervious to the details of this drama. But I imbibed its essence – my parent's paralysing fear – magnifying it as I matured. At every border crossing to this day, I stiffen, cling to

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an attempt at a highway . . . Amidst the five lanes of cars travelling with no speed limit on a three-lane road . . . No trams were in sight . . . Cairo, originally a city of six million people, now has sixteen million inhabitants . . . On this visit to Egypt, I was most determined to return to Alexandria, the place of my fondest memories. . . To my surprise, the city that greeted us had been completely transformed. I could hardly recognise it, except for the still-beautiful Mediterranean Sea and the cornice that bordered it".

[9] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125; Zonana*, Dream Homes.*

[10] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 346-347.

[11] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 9; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 7.

[12] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', 346.

[13] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 161.

[14] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 131.

[15] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 164.

> my passport, strive to make myself invisible. And now I have come to the ultimate border, the original scene. Rigid with fear, I am certain no one will ever hear from me again.[16]

Schinasi-Silver also places significance upon the affective components of her journey, including her desire for emotional healing. Schinasi-Silver frames her work with the words, "this is the story of my personal reconciliation with the past and with the people who have nurtured the person I am today".[17] Like Schinasi-Silver, Zonana writes of a need for closure and confirmation of her own sense of identity stemming from the dissonance caused by her family's displacement. When describing her visit to Egypt she describes a sensory 'recognition' of place and home, writing:

> [Previously I had n]othing more than my parents' fragmentary stories and still more fragmentary relics . . . to assure me of my birthplace; nothing but the shards of memory and loss. But how, then to account for this astonishing new sensation, the sensation, I have had ever since stepping off the plane, that I am, for the first time in my conscious life, in a place I can unambiguously call home? Everywhere I look, dark eyes reflect mine; soft voices echo; gestures, accents, smiles all speak to me of a world I have always known, a landscape that was always familiar. Even my skin seems to recognise and welcome the touch of the dry, light air.[18]

Zonana's sense of homecoming is heavily informed by the ongoing cultural practices of her parents and older relatives. It is also framed by her personal sense of dislocation within the region of the United States she has settled in, which is heavily dominated by white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant culture, of which she does not feel a part.[19] Zonana and Schinasi-Silver, as well as Benjamin and Sabar in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters,* are influenced by the legacy of postmemory to actively resituate their physical and narrated selves in relation to the memory sites of their parents. This is marked in relation to sacred sites such as synagogues. I argue that they emotionally reinvest in the familial sites they visit and as a result create their own meaning and personal memories of them. Through these actions and their narratives, they are able to achieve a deeper reflective understanding of themselves and give greater voice to their own stories within their familial histories, from which they previously felt disconnected.[20] The entanglements of multidimensional memory and screen memory have a role of play in this process.

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[16] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 164.
[17] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 8.
[18] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 173.
[19] Zonana, *Dream Homes.*
[20] Ariel Sabar, *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for his Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008); Marina Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*

Memory, ownership, and the Ben Ezra Synagogue of Cairo

Multidirectional memory is present within the entangled patterns of attention, neglect, and negotiation, paid to Jewish synagogues within Egypt. Present political upheavals, tensions with the State of Israel, and conflation of Jewish identity with Israeli or American nationality shape the Egyptian government's reactions to maintaining Egyptian Jewish sites.[21] As Zonana and Schinasi-Silver's narratives show, selective remembrance of Egyptian Jewish history occurs when interests overlap between the heritage tourist industry, the state, and international concern over protecting valuable assets.[22] This industry, of itself, is driven and shaped by the interests, commercial marketability, and remembrances of others such as overseas institutions, academics, and tourists.[23]

The famous Ben Ezra synagogue of Cairo is a good example of the entangled dynamic between Western academia, the heritage industry, and Egyptian government in relation to an Egyptian Jewish site that has been officially protected and maintained by the state, after having been prompted by outside interests.[24] The Ben Ezra Synagogue was previously the site of the famous Genizah archive, which was generally 'forgotten' about by Europe during Ottoman rule and only 'rediscovered' by Western academia in 1890 because of British occupation of Egypt.[25] This archive constitutes "hundreds of thousands of Jewish

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[21] Rachel Shabi, *Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009), 100; Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiographies in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5; Ella Shohat, 'Rupture & Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab-Jews' in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, ed. Ella Shohat, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 334-335, 351-353; Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East ,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 105-109; Nathan J. Brown, Emad El-Din Shahin, and Joshua Stacher, 'Egypt', in *Politics & Society in the contemporary Middle East,* ed. Michele Penner Angrist (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 235-238, 242-244; Ari Z. Zivotofsky & Ari Greenspan, 'Jewish Lift in Egypt', *Jewish Action – Orthodox Union,* 2010, accessed 2016, <https://www.ou.org/jewish_action/05/2010/jewish_life_in_eygpt/>. As Brown (2013: 235) explains, "peace with Israel became a way out of Egypt's economic morass. As a reward for signing a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, Egypt became and remains the second-largest recipient of aid from the United States". Despite this treaty, however, as Zivotofsky & Greenspan (2010) explain "relations between the two countries remain tense" with "the demonizing of Israel and of Jews is common in the Egyptian press" and "Israel does not exist on the Egyptian airline website".

[22] Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; G. J. Ashworth, Brian Graham, and J. E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity, and Place in Multicultural Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 2-4; Howard Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue & Cairo Geniza', 2016, accessed 2016, <http://thecompletepilgrim.com/ben-ezra-synagogue-cairo-geniza/>.

[23] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3-5; Zonana, *Dream Homes*; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 2-4; Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'.

[24] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'.

[25] Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions: Columbus, Palestine, and Arab-Jews' in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 201-202; Lonely Planet, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue & Cairo Geniza', 2016, accessed 2016, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/egypt/cairo/sights/religious/ben-ezra-synagogue>; Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Friedberg Genizah Project (FGP), 'The Cairo Genizah', *The Friedberg Genizah Project,* 2016, accessed 2016, <http://www.genizah.org/TheCairoGenizah.aspx >; Ella Shohat, 'Gender & the Culture of Empire: Towards a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions,* ed. Ella Shohat

documents" which span the years 1025 to 1875 and as a collection, is considered "one of the greatest literary discoveries of all time".[26] Shohat describes the linguistic uniqueness and communal importance of the Genizah collection:

> The thoroughly hybrid documents were largely inscribed in Arabic and Hebrew, with some documents featuring both languages, where it was not uncommon to find the Arabic registered in Hebrew script and vice versa. The surviving fragments formed part of Cairo's Jewish community life and history, a tissue of its threaded connections to all those other worlds with which it had interacted.[27]

In this sense, the archive represents a once shared collective memory of interconnection, exchange, and commonality, which is often over-spoken by the discourse of separateness and opposition between East and West so often perpetuated by nationalist interest and the modern media.[28] Within the layers of this archive are documents that witness to the interconnectedness of the Egyptian Jewish community with other Jewish and non-Jewish communities across the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe.[29] They outline "a 1000-year continuum of Middle-Eastern history and comprise[s] the largest and most diverse collection of medieval manuscripts in the world".[30] As well as containing important religious, economic, social and cultural texts, the archive also "describes the relations between the members of the three major religions of the time – Christianity, Islam and Judaism – and the vital role the Jews played in the economic and cultural life of the medieval Middle East" and its links with Europe.[31]

The dynamic of multidirectional memory is present in the 'recovery' and 'restoration' of the Genizah archive by the West, an act that can be seen to both enable and destroy this collective archival memory.[32] The terms 'recovery' and 'restoration' are themselves

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(Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 36. As FGP (2016) explains, a genizah is a "storage room where copies of respected texts with scribal errors or physical damaged, or unusable documents, are kept until they can be ritually buried". Both the desert climate and local superstitions helped preserve the collection. Shohat (2006, 202) provides a more nuanced description of the usage of genizah as "Jews in the region commonly deposited unusable sacred manuscripts or even everyday documents, or fragments of them, in a specially designated room in the synagogue. Papers bearing scriptural traces of God's name, no matter how decayed, could not simply be trashed. They had to be laid to rest, in a full burial ceremony. Storage was either a transitory place for the documents or their permanent home".

[26] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 202. Kramer (2016) explains that this archive is also constituted "one of the biggest repositories of Jewish knowledge during the Middle Ages".

[27] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 203

[28] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Disporic Voices', 206, 213-229; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5-11.

[29] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; FGP, 'The Cairo Genizah'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 202-203.

[30] FGP, 'The Cairo Genizah'.

[31] FGP, 'The Cairo Genizah'.

[32] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5, 11-12, 28-29; Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (London: Verso, 2005), 25-27.

debatable and part of a discourse that situates these documents in a power relationship that upholds Western academia, rather than local Egyptian Jews, as rightful custodians.[33] For example, after 'rediscovery' by the British, the Genizah archive was 'rescued' by being removed from its original location in Cairo. It was then 'redistributed' amongst several different collections of Western universities and private holders, where, "more than a century later, this huge worldwide archive is still being identified and catalogued".[34] This act of removal can be seen as destructive and part of a colonial-cultural discourse where indigenous artefacts, such as these documents, are considered to be 'invisible' and without meaning until Western 'experts' define and ascribe them with such.[35] The original Cairo Jewish community never received any payment or compensation for their precious documents nor did they have a collective say in the fate of their archive.[36] The British, from their perspective, imbued the removal with a sense of legitimacy via the academic disciplines of archaeology and Egyptology as well as involvement in the antiquities trade. These fields utilised this and other Egyptian 'discoveries' as evidence of Western 'superiority'.[37] Shohat concisely explains how the thinking of the time was framed:

> Within this ultimately Eurocentric framework, such acts were not conceived as theft or dispossession; on the contrary, they were perceived as applying the principles of universalism and humanism. The inhabitants, it was assumed, did not understand or appreciate the value of the treasures around them . . . European Jews' closeness to Western powers [by proxy] permitted the dispossession of Arab-Jews . . . For the Geniza[h] scholars, the documents represented a world devoid of life. They were not seen as part of a societal tissue, an organ in a breathing, living and creating community body. The documents were torn from their historical producers without this violation provoking any debate.[38]

Today, there is still little debate whether the Genizah archive was 'rescued' or 'violated', apart from among postcolonial scholars such as Shohat.[39] Zivotofsky and Greenspan, for instance, represent a general view among Ashkenazim that the archive's removal was

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[33] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 201-213; Shohat, 'Gender and the Culture of Empire', 33-37.
[34] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; FGP, 'The Cairo Genizah'; Shohat, 'Gender and the Culture of Empire', 36; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 203-204 Shohat (2006, 204) descriptions the irony of this situation well: "[w]hile the Geniza[h] documents testify to the rootedness of the Jews in a vast region stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, the textual "witnesses" themselves ironically were uprooted and displaced. At times actual pages from the same manuscript "wandered" to widely distant destinations: Cambridge, England, St. Petersburg, Russian, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania".
[35] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices', 202.
[36] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 202; FGP, 'The Cairo Genizah'. The account given by the FGP(2016) states that 'synagogue officials' gave permission for the documents to be removed. Shohat makes the very valid point that elites made the decisions rather than the community itself.
[37] Shohat, 'Gender and the Culture of Empire, 36; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices, 202-203;
[38] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 203-204.
[39] Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices'.*

necessary for its preservation, especially given the eventual displacement.[40] The Enlightenment framework of 'progress' and 'universal knowledge' also continues to dominate Western academia's stance towards the documents.[41] The Friedberg Genizah Project, for example, is hosted by the Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society of Canada and currently oversees the digitisation of the dispersed collection with the ultimate goal to provide free access to the entire collection to "everyone anywhere, anytime" via the world wide web.[42]

Consequently, the individual and collective memories represented by the Genizah archive remain in a state of cultural and geographic flux following a dynamic that reflects multidirectional memory. I argue that the archive was never totally forgotten at any one time. Although out of view to the West while Egypt was under Ottoman rule, the archive was alive and well under the custodianship of the local Cairo Jewish community.[43] When removed and scattered throughout the West by academia and the antiquities industry, it was subject to a new and different focus by these stakeholders. Yet the existence of the archive would certainly have still been held in the memory of Cairo's Jews, even if the physical documents were geographically separated from them. Subject to study by scholars, this phase (which is continuing) promoted a 'rediscovery' and 're-remembering' of shared Medieval histories and memories previously thought to have been lost. When Egyptian Jews were displaced, they too – like the archive before them – travelled and resettled within the West and the State of Israel.

Although geographically in closer proximity to their archive, however, the Egyptian Jewish community has arguably yet to be held in equal significance to the Genizah documents in the eyes of those who study these historic texts. The Friedberg Genizah Project (FGP) describes the original preservation of the documents as a miracle of Egypt's desert climate and quaint "local superstition" rather than viewing their survivability as inherently linked with the decisions, agency, and values of the Cairo Jewish community itself.[44] As Shohat has identified, scholars and the FGP have effectively shifted emphasis away from the living people whose documents these are to instead frame both as part of a disconnected esoteric

[40] Zorotofski & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
[41] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 203-204.
[42] Friedberg Genizah Project (FGP), 'Executive Summary', *The Friedberg Genizah Project,* 2016, accessed 2016, <http://www.genizah.org/About-ExecutiveSummary.aspx>; Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society (JMS), 'The Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society', *FJMS,* 2016, accessed 2016, <http://www.jewishmanuscripts.org >.
[43] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.
[44] FGP, 'The Cairo Geniza'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 203-204.

past.[45] This discourse resituates the importance of these archival memories and the histories they describe as 'universal' rather than 'specific'. Yet, at the same time, the digitisation of the archive means that for the first time since they were removed, these texts will again eventually be housed within the same space – even if a virtual one. Similarly, the potential amplification of these memories through open access on the web means that their presence may in turn prompt a renewed consideration of the actual people and community who originally created and maintained this collection. Throughout, therefore, we can see a multidirectional dynamic of memory flowing back and forth between different geographic locations – that is, Egypt, Europe, America, and the State of Israel – and between different people, such as the original community, scholars, traders, readers, and the general public. This varies over time as the distribution of power shifts and re-shifts at each respective point. Pasts thought to be forgotten resurface and peoples thought to have been separate – that is, distinctly Eastern or Western – are shown to have had links, exchanges, and commonalities. As Rothberg says, "pasts are shared and, where they appear different, they are still strongly implicated in each other".[46]

Outer structures

Although the archive's removal was in one way destructive, the knowledge gained by the West about its importance also fed back into ensuring that the Ben Ezra synagogue building itself was preserved. After the displacement of the majority of the Cairo Jewish community, the Egyptian state ignored the synagogue site and it was "left to deteriorate" throughout the "better part of the twentieth century".[47] During the Camp David Accords, pressure was placed on the Egyptian government to recognise the significance of this site in light of its renewed importance to the West and the State of Israel. From this point forward, the Egyptian government began slowly restoring the site – which is still taking place.[48] It is now maintained as one of many zoned historic places within the broader Historic Cairo World Heritage Site of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).[49] Effectively, what is a historic and sacred Jewish site has been appropriated and subsumed into the officially managed secular narratives of the United Nation's global heritage management agenda, the forays of Western academia, and

[45] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.
[46] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 28-29; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27.
[47] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'.
[48] Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
[49] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'.

the tourism discourse of the Egyptian government.[50] Memory of the Ben Ezra synagogue has therefore expanded beyond the local level and, following the dispersal of the Cairo Jewish community, has travelled with the people to whom this site is especially meaningful.[51] Consequently, memory of the site has flowed both transnationally and multidirectionally to become an active part of this larger and diverse international discourse.

Despite the synagogue's recognised international importance, however, the Egyptian government's actions with respect to the site follow its own national agenda. The forms of memory and identity that the government stresses are not plural but rather emphasise a singular and homogeneous historical experience of being 'Egyptian' – a perspective strongly influenced by Islam and the legacy of authoritarian politics generally pursued since the revolution of 1952.[52] Islam, with its "widely varied" and "multiple interpretations", has offered a strong basis for forming alternative and shared socio-political identities across the Middle East and within Egypt. This was clearly seen in the establishment of an independent post-colonial nation-state and the recovery of a sense of strength following the loss of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.[53] Egypt is not a secular state, and, as Brown, El-Din Shahin, and Statcher observe, Islam deeply informs Egypt's constitution and "there is no doubt that Islam takes primacy of place in Egyptian public life" socially, politically, religiously, and culturally.[54] This is clear throughout the Urban Regeneration Project for Historic Cairo (URPC), conducted in conjunction with UNESCO.[55]

Emphasis has been overwhelmingly placed on the Islamic history of Cairo over that of other cultural and religious groups, as reflected in the project's concluding report which exclusively emphasised the "Islamic Renaissance" and Cairo's place within, and influence

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[50] Lonely Planet, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.
[51] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'.
[52] Brown, Shanin and Statcher, 'Egypt', 229-232, 242.
[53] Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics,* 134-136, 143, 146, 151.
[54] Brown, Shanin, and Statcher, 'Egypt', 134-135, 238-239. Brown, Shanin, and Statcher, explain further (2013: 238-239), "the 1971 constitution proclaimed that 'the principles of the Islamic Sharia are the primary source of legislation.' When the country received an interim 'constitutional declaration' in 2011, the phrase 'Islam is the religion of the state' was retained. When it came time to write the 2012 constitution . . . the drafting committee actually seemed to strengthen the clause as part of the complex bargaining process in which Islamists argued for stronger language and their opponents sought to craft language that would prevent the clause from being used for a wholesale Islamisation of Egypt's laws".
[55] Urban Regeneration Project for Historic Cairo (URHC), *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo: Final Report on Activities, July 2012 – November 2014* (UNESCO & URHC), 2014; URHC & UNESCO (Urban Regeneration Project for Historic Cairo), Visitors Map of Historic Cairo, UNESCO. UNESCO & URHC, 'Assessment of the Heritage Values of the Urban Fabric – Field Survey Year 2011 (UNESCO & URHC, 2011).

beyond, the "Islamic World".[56] The words 'Jew', 'Jewish', and also 'Christian', are not included anywhere in the project proposal or in the pre-project field survey report leading up to the main project, although 'Copt' is mentioned a few times.[57] This official silence exists despite the ancient and continuous historical, cultural, and social contributions that Cairo's Jewish and Christian communities have made to the city.[58] The Ben Ezra Synagogue, despite its international importance, is also conspicuously absent from the short-list of major historic sites highlighted on the *Visitors' Map of Historic Cairo* jointly produced by UNESCO and the Urban Regeneration Project for Historic Cairo (URPHC).[59] This map visually marks places of significance and helps construct the city's identity in the eyes of international tourists. Consistently, pride of place is given to sites which emphasise Cairo's Islamic history.[60] In the final project report, the Ben Ezra synagogue is mentioned only once in the full 197 page document as "famous for its Geniza[h] store room of manuscripts" – no mention is made that this archive is now gone.[61] Furthermore, no mention is made of the Cairo Jewish community, their displacement, or the significance of this site in relation to them.[62]

Zonana's account of her visit seems to indicate that the Egyptian government's management of this significance place is entirely independent of any involvement from remaining local Egyptian Jews.[63] Active Jewish services are no longer held in the Ben Ezra Synagogue which is "among the most visited and treasured Jewish sites in Egypt".[64] The site appears to be mostly visited by Asian and European tourist groups rather than those to whom the site might have most immediate meaning, such as Jewish, American, or Israeli groups.[65] This is perhaps not surprising given that there are less than 50 Egyptian Jews still living in Egypt. With most being "elderly and poor" there are no private means for

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[56] URHC, *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo,* 63.
[57] URHC, *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo* ; URHC & UNESCO, 'Assessment of the Heritage Values of the Urban Fabric'; UNESCO & URHC, 'The Outstanding Universal Value of Historic Cairo (Draft Proposal) (UNESCO & URHC, 2013).
[58] Jean-Marc Ran Oppenheim, 'Egypt and the Sudan', in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times,* eds. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 409-430; Mark R. Cohen, 'Origins of Sephardic Jewry in the Medieval Arab World', in ed. Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 26-36; Zion Zohar, ed., *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2005)*,* 176, 228; Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages,* 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 58-60.
[59] UNESCO, Visitors' Map for Historic Cairo.
[60] UNESCO, Visitors' Map for Historic Cairo.
[61] URHC, *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo,* 163.
[62] URHC, *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo,* 163.
[63] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171.
[64] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171.
[65] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Lift in Egypt'.

Egyptian Jewish residents to fund site upkeep.[66] No matter how well meaning or otherwise the Egyptian government's current custodianship of the site is, the apparent absence of local Cairo Jews within the present management, the absence of knowledge about the site, and the lack of education programs related to this site are concerning, because it means that the community whose history is represented here has lost control and agency over core decisions relating to the site's physical preservation or otherwise.[67]

Zonana's account provides additional insight into the movements of memory relating to this site. When visiting the synagogue's "tiny Jewish library" Zonana describes receiving a very warm welcome from the site's overseer, "a young Muslim woman".[68] This encounter could have presented an opportunity for inter-religious dialogue and a cultural discussion about the synagogue and its historic archive.[69] The site itself strongly represents the plural and multicultural history of Cairo. Physically, the building is a hybrid of different cultural influences and time periods because "architecturally it is an unusual but harmonic mix of Byzantine, Egyptian and Islamic styles".[70] Dating from the 9th century AD and now "lavishly restored in gold and lapis and coral" the Ben Ezra Synagogue holds both Jewish and Christian religious significance because the external structure itself was once a church dating from the 4th century AD.[71] The *Lonely Planet Guide for Egypt*, which Zonana also used on her trip, gives a succinct overview of some of the many interlinked layers of cultural and religious tradition attributed to this place:

> Tradition marks this as the spot where the prophet Jeremiah gathered the Jews in the 6th century after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Jerusalem temple. The adjacent spring is supposed to mark the place where the pharaoh's daughter found Moses in the reeds, and also where Mary drew water to wash Jesus.[72]

In keeping with the Egyptian government's focus on Islamic history in preference to that of other religious and cultural groups, the local guide is not so well informed. Zonana writes that unfortunately the local Muslim woman overseeing the site could not "answer my questions about the current Jews of Egypt, nor even about the collection of antique

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[66] Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
[67] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 4-9. The control of place and space is important because it is through these are some of the most potent forms of identity can be articulated.
[68] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171.
[69] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171.
[70] Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'.
[71] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170; Lonely Planet, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Kramer, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'. The last restoration was done in the 1980s.
[72] Lonely Planet, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 165.

Hebrew books it is her responsibility to guard".[73] Even if not widely advertised, however, official memory of the site is represented through the distribution of government funds to ensure site upkeep so that the synagogue is retained, albeit within its broad sweeping vision of what "historic Cairo" should constitute.[74]

Ironically, it is possible that general ignorance about this site may serve to protect and preserve memory of it in the long term. During times of conflict – although an unintended consequence – the lack of full knowledge about this Egyptian Jewish site and its remaining documents might see them ignored rather than an easy target. The site itself is situated in a relatively risky area prone to attacks because it is "just outside the walls of the [Christian] Coptic enclave".[75] Increasingly, Coptic Christians across Egypt have been subject to highly violent sectarian attacks to which the government and law enforcement agencies appear to turn a blind-eye.[76]

It is highly likely that the Egyptian Coptic Christian community will continue to actively maintain memories about the history and significance of the Ben Ezra site. The Egyptian Coptic Christian community continues to preserve memory of the close links they once had with local Egyptian Jews, as both communities were once considered of 'dhimmi' and 'millet' status while under Islamic and Ottoman rule.[77] Zonana writes that she openly revealed her Egyptian Jewish identity to an old Coptic man at the Coptic Christian

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[73] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171. The overseer is, however, familiar with the patterns of Moroccan Jewish mass pilgrimages and is able to advise Zonana on which sites they visit.
[74] UHCR, *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo.*
[75] Lonely Planet, 'Ben Ezra Synagogue'.
[76] Michele Penner Angrist, ed. *Politics & Society in the Contemporary Middle East* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013)*,* 244; Amnesty International, 'Egypt: Government must protect Christians from sectarian violence', Amnesty International, 2013, accessed 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2013/08/egypt-government-must-protect-christians-sectarian-violence/>; Amnesty International Australia, 'Egypt: Security forces abandon Coptic Christians during deadly attack in Luxor', Amnesty International Australia, 2013, accessed 2016, <http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/32333/>; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research (ACCORD), 'Query response on Egypt: Situation of Coptic Orthodox Christians, who have been persecuted by localised non-state agents in Minya and Cairo, in other parts of the country [a-8572]', ACCORD, 2013, accessed 2016, <http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/280307/397191_en.html>; Rose Troup Buchanan, 'Coptic Christians: Who are they – and why have they been targeted by ISIS in beheading video?', Independent, 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/egypts-coptic-christians-who-are-isiss-latest-victims-and-why-are-they-persecuted-10048328.html>; Ariel Cohen, 'The continued threat for Coptic Christians in the Mideast', The Jerusalem Post, 2014, accessed 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Christian-News/The-continued-threat-for-Coptic-Christians-391537>; Lora Moftah, 'Egypt Anti-Christian Violence: Church Commemorating ISIS Coptic Victims Attacked', Independent Business Times, 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/egypt-anti-christian-violence-church-commemorating-isis-coptic-victims-attacked-1863686>; Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics,* 228.
[77] Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross,* 52-74; Cohen, 'Origins of Sephardic Jewry', 26-29.

cemetery, just near the Ben Ezra synagogue.[78] He expressed solidarity, acceptance, and familial affection towards her:

> The Copts and the Jews, he indicates, holding a finger of each hand side by side, are "*wahid, wahid,"* – one and one, together. His face beams as her calls me *habibti* – a word that takes me back to my family gatherings in my parents' Brooklyn home. "*Habibti,"* my uncles used to call me. *Habibti* – sweetheart.[79]

This is a poignant moment, reflective of common ties felt between Egyptian Coptic Christians and Egyptian Jews as both minorities have been subject to vilification and targeted attacks.[80]

Effectively, the entangled interests in the Ben Ezra synagogue and its archive have produced a multidirectional and transnational dynamic of remembrance and forgetting made up of partial and disparate valuing between multiple parties. The Genizah Archive itself is protected and studied yet its documents are dislocated and physically 'dispersed'.[81] The synagogue building is maintained and accessible yet guarded and overseen in ignorance.[82] The site is not strongly marked in visitor's maps, yet official funds ensure its continued existence.[83] The original significance of this Egyptian Jewish site was in its sacred place at the heart of a thriving Cairo Jewish community, yet following their displacement and dispersal, this is no longer the case. At present, both Western academia and the Egyptian state prefer to draw attention to the safer history of ancient documents, Cairo's Islamic past, and the upkeep of a building of novel design rather than to the more confronting history of inequity, mistreatment, and destruction of the Egyptian Jewish community whose documents and sacred site they seek to maintain.[84] Yet, through their upkeep and maintenance, the documents and the building itself bear witness to the historical presence of the larger Jewish community within Egypt and so in effect contribute, although not intentionally, to the remembrance of their original presence and subsequent dispersal.

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[78] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170.
[79] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170.
[80] Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics,* 228; Angrist, *Politics & Society,* 244.
[81] Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.
[82] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171.
[83] URHC, *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo* ; UNESCO & UHCR, 'Visitor's Map'.
[84] URHC, *Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo*'. UNESCO & UHCR, 'Visitor's Map'; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.

This next section explores Schinasi-Silver's narrative of her return visit to the Eliahu Hanabi Synagogue of Alexandria which she originally visited as a child. Here, as with the Ben Ezra Synagogue, the Egyptian government plays a complex role in preserving the site but also policing access.

The entanglements of the Eliahu Hanabi Synagogue of Alexandria

Previously an Egyptian citizen, Schinasi-Silver represents herself in her memoir as a tourist when she visits Egypt – a designation that offers some security during times of political tension.[85] Her account of her attempted visit to the Eliahu Hanabi Synagogue of Alexandria, in particular, illustrates some of the dynamics of multidirectional memory as well as the multilayered perspectives and identities of different stakeholders.[86] As "one of the largest synagogues in the Middle East", this 150 year-old site holds great religious and community significance for Egyptian Jews as a place of worship and community focus.[87] As a heritage site it is important to the collective histories of the Egyptian Jewish community and the Egyptian nation-state, but also the personal history of Schinasi-Silver herself.[88] The site of the synagogue therefore is a place of meaning and overlap, where shared and yet very different pasts and presents converge.[89]

For example, the Egyptian Jewish community and the Egyptian nation state share the same history, if conceptualised in terms of a single Egyptian society.[90] But the reality is more complex. As Hayden White argues, "most historical sequences can be emplotted in different ways".[91] Egyptian society is not monocultural but is made up of a dynamic mix of different cultures, beliefs, and perspectives, despite the fact that Egypt's military (and usually authoritarian) regimes have tried to stress homogeneity, national unity and

[85] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 125-126. Schinasi-Silver writes (2007, 125-126), "Just the day before President Mubarak of Egypt had condemned Israel for its cavalier attitude during the peace talks with the Palestinians. We were told that in Egypt everyone from cabdrivers to shopkeepers and doormen could be an informant. There was no prevention of possible terrorist attacks. It was impossible to disregard the risks. We, however, had our own private agenda. I had vowed to return to my place of birth with my husband so that he could get a taste of the magnificent place it once had been".
[86] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 128-130; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory;* Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 1-7.
[87] Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
[88] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 128-130; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 1-7; Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
[89] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 28-29; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27.
[90] Ann Curthoys & John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), 182-183, 192.
[91] Hayden White as quoted in Curthoys & Docker, *Is History Fiction,* 192.

conformity.[92] Despite the existence of a previously shared ancient history, the reality of anti-Semitic persecution as well as the modern expulsion of Jews from Egypt creates a distinct conceptual separation of perspectives, histories, and identities in relation to Egypt as a whole from the point of displacement onwards.[93] The legacy of this divergence and the imposition of difference can be seen in Schinasi-Silver's description of her attempt to visit her beloved synagogue:

> My fondest hope was to visit the Eliahu Hanabi Synagogue, but that proved to be impossible. Arrangements had to be made far in advance. Still, we managed to at least go near it. Standing in front of the Synagogue where I had spent so many sacred moments with my father, we were barred from going in. This was one of the greatest disappointments I experienced. Chased away by a menacing armed soldier, we walked to the nearby tourist office just to settle our fear. I could not go in, for at that moment, on a street corner, I broke down and sobbed for all the vanishing years of my precious past.[94]

This passage demonstrates that memories are highly emotive but are also shaped and publicly policed according to social power dynamics.[95] Schinasi-Silver's negative experience of the guard contrasts directly with a later positive and full-access visit to the same site conducted by Zivotofsky and Greenspan, who were accompanied at all times by four armed Egyptian police during their stay in Alexandria.[96] Although the physical building of the synagogue itself remains, and indeed it triggered Schinasi-Silver's emotional reaction of loss, the vast majority of the original Egyptian Jewish community which would have used the building is no longer there.[97] In practice, their absence has rendered the issue of access problematic. Schinasi-Silver feels the absence of her prior community within a discourse of communal loss shared by displaced Egyptian Jews now living overseas.[98] Yet unlike Zivotofsky and Greenspan, who visit out of purely historical interest, Schinasi-Silver's connection to this site is emotional and visceral, born of direct lived experience.[99] Consequently, her mourning is expressed, and may be understood, in very personal terms. Schinasi-Silver's remembrance is centred upon the sacred, familial, and personal resonances

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[92] Brown, Shanin, and Statcher, 'Egypt', 242-244; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 100.
[93] Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross,* 52-74; Oppenheim, 'Egypt and the Sudan', 409-430.
[94] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 128.
[95] Curthoys & Docker, *Is History Fiction,* 184-186.
[96] Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
[97] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Oppenheim, 'Egypt and the Sudan', 428-430.
[98] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus;* Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 2004); Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003). This melancholic stance within the literature is exemplified by memoirs such as that written by Aciman, and by histories writing by Stillman.
[99] Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*

of this site for her.[100] Zivotofsky and Greenspan's experience, however, is far more detached and shaped by the account of their personal guide "Abed Al Nabi, a Muslim from southern Egypt, who has worked for the [Egyptian] Jewish community for decades and speaks fluent Hebrew".[101] Although their experience of a Muslim guide contrasts directly with that of Zonana, Zivotofsky and Greenspan reflect that they found that "the guided tour through the once Jewish buildings led by a Hebrew-speaking Egyptian was somewhat surreal".[102] In all cases here, the memories and identities negotiated and experienced during visits to this site are highly entangled and multilayered.

The Egyptian state, however, remembers and values the same synagogue site in a more abstract sense within the framework of the Egyptian national past and commodification of the heritage industry.[103] The government's perspective is also shaped by the lens of present politics and ongoing tensions and negotiations with the State of Israel.[104] Given the 'second exodus', ongoing anti-Semitism, and present upheavals and political tensions, the Jewish aspect of Egyptian history remains sensitive.[105] There is tragic irony in the fact that armed soldiers fiercely protect the external building of the Eliahu Hanabi synagogue, yet a Jewish woman who once worshipped within this space is refused entry because of formal booking problems.[106] Nevertheless, the upkeep and maintenance of possible access to the synagogue through tourism constitutes a subtle form of acknowledgement of Jewish Egyptian history by the Egyptian government.[107]

Schinasi-Silver's journey to Egypt problematises categories of identity and belonging. As Shohat observes, "identities are not static but shift along with new political circumstances that redefine the categories of inclusion and exclusion".[108] That Schinasi-Silver made a return journey to Egypt at all, given the traumatic history of anti-Semitism and expulsion, is an overt statement of resilience.[109] Although her visit is evidence of her ability to acknowledge and overcome her traumatic past, she realises there is no permanent return to

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100 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*, 128-130.
101 Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
102 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-171; Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
103 Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Present Pasts,* 1-9; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 3-5.
104 Shohat, 'Gender and the Culture of Empire', 36-37; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-127; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 100; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5; Shohat, 'Rupture & Return'; Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 105-109; Brown, Shanin, and Statcher, 'Egypt', 235-238, 242-244.
105 Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*
106 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 127-130.
107 Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 127-130.
108 Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* 206.
109 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*

her original homeland.[110] Although she was formerly an 'insider', Schinasi-Silver's presence in Egypt is also conditional and temporary; she is perceived as an 'outsider' and liminal 'visitor' rather than as a citizen with intimate knowledge of her homeland.[111] Schinasi-Silver is not refused re-entry – that is, as long as her visit to Egypt is one of transience, impermanence, and commercial consumption in the guise of a 'Western tourist' with no overt declaration of her Egyptian Jewish identity.[112] This position is consistent with the perspective of a regime which has no interest in fully and officially acknowledging shared Jewish and Egyptian history, yet at the same time is keen to reap the monetary benefit of Jewish women and men who make return trips to Egypt precisely because of their shared Egyptian Jewish past.[113] Schinasi-Silver is aware of this unspoken hypocrisy yet nonetheless participates in the Egyptian tourist industry as a consumer of official heritage and the 'national past' in order to engage with her own history and personal memories.[114] In this sense, she passes through and interacts with sites multilayered with different memories and meanings.

The relationship between Schinasi-Silver and the Egyptian state is highly entangled and follows the dynamics of multidirectional memory. These entanglements and multidirectional memory flows enable a mutual acknowledgement of the past to occur, even if muted, highly selective, and performed only within the framework of international tourism.[115] Although Egyptian national memory may appear to obscure Egyptian Jewish memories, it nonetheless still enables its survival through the upkeep and security of, and access to, select Egyptian Jewish historical sites.[116]

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[110] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-163.
[111] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-137; Gassan Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', in *Sociology: Place, Time & Division,* eds. Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 342-345.
[112] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-137.
[113] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-137; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Present Pasts,* 1-9; URHC & UNESCO, 'Visitors Map of Historic Cairo'; UNESCO & URHC, 'The Outstanding Universal Value of Historic Cairo'; UNESCO & URHC, 'Assessment of the Heritage Values of the Urban Fabric'.
[114] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-137. Schinasi-Silver (2007, 127) writes that, "One of the last places we visited was the Museum of Cairo, where former civilisations are showcased. Numbered gold artefacts, mummified bodies and ancient pottery are displayed, while outside its gates there are beggars, cripples and orphans". Schinasi-Silver observes this social and political hypocrisy in highly selective use of funds for remembering present Egyptians and well as past ones, yet nevertheless still participates in the Egyptian tourist industry as a consumer of heritage and history.
[115] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3-5, 11-12, 27-29; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27; Ruby S. Watson, ed., *Memory, History and Opposition Under State Socialism* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press 1994), 2.
[116] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 5, 7, 11, 18-19; Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.

The issue of selective public remembrance and restricted identity performance also extends to Schinasi-Silver's interactions with ordinary Egyptians. During her visit Schinasi-Silver spoke with many "average people", as she portrays them, writing that:

> Egyptians are extremely warm and hospitable, to the point of being at times intrusive. But they were particularly effusive when they would find out I was a native of Cairo: *'Masreya? Ya Genan!!'* (Cairene? How wonderful!), yet we did not dare reveal our identity as Jews.[117]

Even though in these encounters there is commonality and shared joy in celebrating a mutual civic history, shared memories can only extend so far because of Jewish-specific experiences of anti-Semitism and mass displacement.[118] Schinasi-Silver and the Egyptian residents she speaks with once shared a homeland, yet the trauma of persecution and of being uprooted has cut deep. For Schinasi-Silver, it has created an unspoken division and difference which affects identities and relationships.[119] Schinasi-Silver is no longer an 'insider' in the sense of being a 'common Egyptian' – past prejudice has forced the issue. Yet, at the same time, the 'common Egyptian' is not an 'insider' at all to Egyptian-Jewish specific experience. In not speaking freely, Schinasi-Silver is understandably cautious – a chosen silence exacerbated by the volatility of contemporary politics and continuing personal risk.[120] With memories at once shared and yet very different, this situation is typical of the complex negotiations of multidirectional memory.[121] Aspects of a shared past can be mutually remembered and discussed, yet entanglements, silences, and selections do still occur, shaped by the fluidity of present circumstances and the audiences with whom potential dialogues are attempted.[122] Here we can clearly see that there are at times some chosen limits to the flow of multidirectional memory, even if potentially oppositional memories still share inherent connections and overlaps.[123] Although Schinasi-Silver felt unable to share the full extent of her identity and personal history while in Egypt, in Canada and the State of Israel she was able to voice, mourn, and celebrate her experiences at conferences and in written form as memoir and poetry.[124] This shows that the dialogues can be geographically, spatially, and temporally located, even if open to change.

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117 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 126-127.
118 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*
119 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 8-12.
120 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-126.
121 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 7, 11, 28-29; Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* 206.
122 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4-12, 16; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209; Christine Prentice, Vijay Devadas, and Henry Johnson, *Cultural Transformations: perspectives on translocation in a global age* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2010), xii.
123 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 7, 11.
124 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-163.

Although Schinasi-Silver mourns the loss of her Egyptian homeland, and the designation of 'outsider' in a way continues the trauma of exclusion, she is not entirely uncomfortable with the liminal status of 'tourist'.[125] Rather, Schinasi-Silver derives a sense of safety and refuge from the international discourse of tourism when, at the synagogue, the "menacing armed soldier" prompts echoes of a repetition of official expulsion.[126] In that moment, Schinasi-Silver demonstrates how memories and identities are hybrid, fluid and relational – she is simultaneously an 'insider' Egyptian Jew mourning her personal homeland, an 'outsider' tourist enabled to observe, and a self-chosen 'foreigner' through embracing her present relationship with her current home nation of Canada where she re-established her home.[127] Combining Middle Eastern and Western experiences in highly entangled ways, Schinasi-Silver's past and present concepts of home span both nations (Egypt and Canada), yet consistently throughout her memoir her core identity is firmly understood as Jewish.[128] Her poetry shares the discourse of loss and finality that also tends to infuse histories written about Egyptian Jews.[129] This sentiment is best reflected within the last two stanzas of Schinasi-Silver's poem – *The Light has Gone Out:*

> The hallowed steps of Eliahu Hanabi
> Are no longer for me to ascend.
> Its place of worship remains empty
> As it has in other synagogues.
>
> The building has been robbed of its very soul.
> Prayers and chants of a people
> Whose voice is now stilled.
> The Jewish light has gone out of Egypt.[130]

Yet has it? What then of life within the 'darkness'? What does this discourse mean for those 50 or so Jewish women and men who remained and still call Egypt their home?[131] The perspective and narrative of a complete end to the Egyptian Jewish community is found among the 'diaspora' of Mizrahim who left Egypt.[132] Yet a sense of doomed finality used not necessarily be an attitude shared by the current remaining Egyptian Jewish

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125 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-133.
126 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 128.
127 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Shohat, 'Rupture & Return'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209; Prentice, Devadas and Johnson, *Cultural Transformations*, xii; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 4-7, 11.
128 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*
129 Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times.*
130 Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times;* Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 120. 'The Light has Gone Out' is a personal poem by Schinasi-Silver which is included within the context of her memoir. The poem was written in June 1998.
131 Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.
132 Aciman, *Out of Egypt;* Stillman, 'Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times'; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus.*

community – at least within the capital of Cairo which will now be explored in relation to Zonana's narrative.[133]

Selective Histories and the Rambam Synagogue of Cairo

Joyce Zonana, like Schinasi-Silver, also made a visit to Egypt which she details in her memoir *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Egypt, an Exile's Journey*.[134] Zonana writes that Carmen Weinstein, who was the leader of the Cairo Jewish community at the time of her visit, firmly and resolutely declared:

> Our community is indeed shrinking – but dying?
> I don't believe it will ever die.[135]

The divergence in perspectives and experiences between Egyptian Jews in 'diaspora' (Mizrahim) as opposed to those Egyptian Jews who still remain within Egypt is sufficient to prompt significantly different priorities and perspectives regarding the present state, direction, and indeed, remembrance of the Egyptian Jewish community.[136] It is worth noting that this is the same situation that Benjamin encountered in relation to the remaining Iraqi Jews in Baghdad.[137] The dissonance between the sense that "the Jewish light has gone out of Egypt" compared to "I don't believe it will ever die" is powerful.[138] This adds an additional layer of tension and negotiation to the dynamics of multidirectional memory in the context of the past and present Egyptian Jewish communities.[139]

I will now explore the negotiations of this difference in relation to Zonana's visits to two significant synagogue sites, the Rambam Synagogue of Alexandria and the Char

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133 Zonana, *Dream Homes;* World Bulletin, 'Jews "have no future" in Egypt', says community leader', World Bulletin, 4 June 2014, accessed 2016, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/haber/138183/jews-have-no-future-in-egypt-says-community-leader>; Mohamed Atef, 'Jews of Egypt: The End of A Journey charged with emotions', Ahram Online, 8 September 2014, accessed 2016, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/0/110179/Arts--Culture/0/Jews-of-Egypt-The-End-of-A-Journey-charged-with-em.aspex>

134 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 125-133; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 151-181.

135 Carmen Weinstein as quoted in Zonana (2007, 174). Zonana's memoir was published in 2008 within which Carmen Weinstein is described as being the head of the Jewish Community of Cairo. Zonana met with Weinstein during a return trip to Cairo in January of 1999.

136 Aciman, *Out of Egypt;* Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 151-181; Here the 'disaporia' are considered those who have moved away from Egypt as a homeland. The problematisation of the concept of diasporia is discussed at length in *Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees.*

137 Benjamin, *Last Days in Babylon,* 224-284.

138 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 120; Weinstein in Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.

139 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory;* Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 3; Erna Paris, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001), 405; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5.

Hashayamin Synagogue of Cairo.[140] Similar to what we saw in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters,* the absence of the majority of the Egyptian Jewish community is reflected in the urban landscape itself. In Zonana's memoir, this situation is also especially noticeable in relation to synagogues, which often form the collective focus of formal Jewish religious and community life.[141] Both the Jews who left Egypt and those who stayed experienced the disintegration of their original community. Geographic distance, however, shapes the memories of places for those who re-established their homes overseas.[142] For Jewish women and men who still live in Egypt, the absence of former community members and the emptiness of sites of personal and collective significance is immediate and visible.[143] As previously mentioned, at the time of Zonana's visit in 1999, only one synagogue remained open and active within Cairo.[144] All other synagogues throughout the city lay abandoned, most firmly padlocked and falling into ruin.[145] Unfortunately, the current Egyptian Jewish community is too small to maintain these buildings either as functioning synagogues or purely heritage sites.[146] Interestingly, in 2010, the Egyptian government appears to have shifted their heritage management practices somewhat, moving towards greater efforts to restore some of these sites.[147]

Even though Jews were an integral part of Egyptian society and of local and national history, the municipal and national Egyptian governments appear to have less interest in the care and upkeep of Egyptian Jewish places (unless prompted by outside interests), in

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140 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 151-181.

141 Zivotofsy & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Ruth Langer, 'Prayer and worship', in *Modern Judaism,* eds. Nicholas de Lange and Miri Freud-Kandel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 231; Jonathon Blake, 'What is the purpose of a synagogue?', ReformJudasim.org, 2015, accessed 2016, http://www.reformjudasim.org/print/13366>, 1; American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), 'The Synagogue: Background and Overview', AICE, 2005, accessed 2016, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judasim/shul.html>, 1; American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), 'The Synagogue: Customs and Etiquette', AICE, 2005, accessed 2016, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judasim/ettiquette.html>, 3; Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 707.

142 Andre Aciman, ed. *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 21-22, 211-212; Svetlana Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* Marianne Hirsch and Nancy Miller., eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 151.

143 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 172-174.

144 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 172. This was the Adley Street Synagogue of Char Hashamayim: 'The Gates of Heaven'.

145 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 172.

146 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-178; Zivotofsky, & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'.

147 Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'. Zivotofsky and Greenspan (2010) record that "A yeshivah and shul known as 'Rav Moshe', one of Cairo's most historic synagogues, and the grand-looking Karaite synagogue of Cairo were recently restored by the Egyptian government and rededicated. The government pledged to restore six more synagogues in the next two years. There are several other shuls in Cairo, but most are dilapidated and closed to the public".

contrast to the investments made in sites of ancient and Islamic Egyptian history.[148] Although there appears to be slow improvements, this represents an ongoing selectivity of Egyptian Jewish experiences and a refusal to conceptualise a shared past within official understandings of the Egyptian nation and its history.[149] The ruined synagogues testify to the persecution, and absence of, the majority of the Egyptian Jewish community, as well as Egypt's ongoing failure to fully acknowledge and address its own past.[150]

The concept of screen memory is useful for understanding the selectivity shown in how present political interests shape which pasts and which sites are given preference for official upkeep.[151] As Rothberg explains:

> [S]creen memory is, in my terminology, multidirectional not only because it stands at the centre of a potentially complex set of temporal relations, but also – and perhaps more importantly – because it both hides and reveals that which is suppressed.[152]

When looking more closely at the complex history of the Rambam Synagogue, it is clear that key aspects of its history are currently ignored, or suppressed, by Egyptian government in favour of their discourse of Egyptian identity as homogeneous and primarily Islamic.[153] In strong contrast to the well-maintained Ben Ezra Synagogue, Zonana describes the Rambam Synagogue as lying in complete neglect:

> The plain, low building extends along a vacant, garbage-strewn alley, the Darb Mahmoud . . . A tablet with the ten commandments is carved above the main entrance; beside it, I see the name of Moses ibn Maimoun [Maimonides] engraved in Hebrew and Arabic. The door is locked, the roof fallen in, the walls decayed. On tiptoe, I peer through iron gates into the sanctuary, see broken steps and crumbling walls, a worn bimah where the Sefer Torah once rested. The Rambam is a ruin, locked against human entrance yet open to wind and rain.[154]

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148 UNESCO & URHC, 'Visitors Map of Cairo'; URHC, 'Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo', UNESCO & URHC, 'The Outstanding Universal Value of Historic Cairo', UNESCO & URHC, 'Assessment of the Heritage Values of the Urban Fabric'; Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 126-127.

149 Zivotofsky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; UNESCO & URHC, 'Visitors Map of Cairo'; URHC, 'Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo', UNESCO & URHC, 'The Outstanding Universal Value of Historic Cairo'; UNESCO & URHC, 'Assessment of the Heritage Values of the Urban Fabric'.

150 Zitovsky, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes.*

151 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-16; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 3; Paris, *Long Shadows,* 405; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 5; Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* 206.

152 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 13-14.

153 URHC & UNESCO, 'Visitors Map of Historic Cairo'; URHC, 'Urban Regeneration Report for Historic Cairo'; UNESCO & URHC, 'The Outstanding Universal Value of Historic Cairo'; Brown, Shanin, and Stacher, 'Egypt', 229-232, 242.

154 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-178.

Understanding this history of the site enables a deeper appreciation of why the Rambam's status is so confronting. This ancient sacred site was once a vibrant and important place of Jewish worship.[155] Furthermore, it served as the place where the famous twelfth-century Jewish philosopher, theologian, and physician, Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) operated a healing centre accessible to people of all faiths and social classes.[156] Maimonides has been revered for his wisdom by *both* Jews and Muslims alike and was the leader of the Egyptian Jewish community during a period when Cairo was internationally respected as "a centre of Jewish commerce and scholarship".[157] In Jewish and Western literature he is often referred to as "Moses ben Maimon, or Maimonides" while in Arabic literature he is known as "Abu 'Imran Musa ben Maimun ibn 'Abd Allah."[158] Joseph Telushkin provides a succinct overview of Maimonides' many achievements:

> Maimonides was the first person to write a systematic code of all Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah; he produced one of the great philosophical statements of Judaism, The Guide to the Perplexed; published a commentary on the entire Mishna; served as physician to the sultan of Egypt; wrote numerous books on medicine; and, in his "spare time," served as leader of Cairo's Jewish community.[159]

Throughout his life and work, Maimonides embodied interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, transnational, and holistic ways of thinking. As Vitali Naumkim has argued, "Maimonides is perhaps the only philosopher in the Middle Ages, perhaps even now, who symbolises a confluence of four cultures: GrecoRoman, Arab, Jewish, and Western".[160] Born in Spain, Maimonides and his family left as anti-Semitism wracked the country and instead lived and worked in Morocco and Israel before settling in Egypt.[161] He was taught by leading Arabic scholars who "initiated him in all branches of the learning of that time" but was also strongly influenced by the Western philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.[162] Even the style of Maimonides writing bridged both Muslim and Jewish communities. His manuscripts,

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155 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.
156 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-181; Jacobs, *et al.*, 'Moses Ben Maimon (RaMBaM; usually called MAIMONIDES), Jewish Encyclopedia, 2011, accessed 2016, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11124-moses-ben-maimon>.
157 Zitovosky & Greenspan, 'Jewish Life in Egypt'; Joseph Telushkin, 'Moses Maimonides (Rambam)', Jewish Virtual Library - Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2008, accessed 2016, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Maimonides.html>; Jacobs, *et al.*, 'Moses Ben Maimon'; Kenneth Seeskin, 'Maimonides', The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014, accessed 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/maimonides/>.
158 Jacobs, *et al.*, 'Moses Ben Maimon', 1-2.
159 Telushkin, 'Moses Maimonides (Rambam)'.
160 Vitali Naumkin in Telushkin, 'Moses Maimonides (Rambam)'.
161 Telushkin, 'Moses Maimonides (Rambam)'; Seeskin, 'Maimonides', 2; William Turner, 'Teaching of Moses Maimonides', Catholic Encyclopedia, 1910/2012, accessed 2016, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09540b.htm>.
162 Jacobs, *et al.,* 'Moses Ben Maimon', 2; Seeskin, 'Maimonides', 1; Turner, 'Teaching of Moses Maimonides', 2.

preserved within the Cairo Genizah archive, demonstrate strong bilingualism; for example, he often drafted in Arabic but using Hebrew characters.[163] Maimonides strongly believed that "man should believe only what can be supported either by rational proof, by the evidence of the senses, or by trustworthy authority" and consequently worked to resolve all disagreement between religious and secular knowledge.[164] He argued that both the body and the soul require healing and the Rambam, which combined both a synagogue and medical practice was specifically designed and established to do just that.[165] Inspired by this holistic approach, Arabic poet Al-Sa'id ibn Surat al-Mulk wrote:

> Galen's art heals only the body, But Abu Imram's [Maimonides'] the body and soul. With his wisdom he could heal the sickness of ignorance.[166]

Maimonides' prolific work, which continues to be read today, has impacted upon theology and philosophy and fundamentally influenced subsequent Scholastic thinkers as well as scholars "as diverse as Aquinas, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Newton".[167] Given this comprehensive and highly significant legacy, it is surprising that the physical centre of Maimonides' practice lies abandoned and in such a dilapidated state.[168]

Memories of Maimonides fit easily into narratives that recognise the cultural entanglements of Arabic and Jewish life within the Middle East, stress intercultural exchange, interfaith dialogue, holistic approaches, and mutual respect.[169] The current political climate, however, has tended to emphasise a discourse of difference, separateness, and division rather than moments of unity, mutual assistance, and cross-cultural understanding.[170] This contemporary focus on separateness and difference has – following the dynamics of screen memory – deemphasised and obscured collective memories about, and knowledge of, Maimonides and the Rambam synagogue.[171]

The site of the Rambam synagogue remains highly valued, however, by those who personally know the significance of this site. On her visit to Egypt, Zonana specifically and laboriously searched for the synagogue within the maze of the *harat al-yahud* (medieval

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163 Jacobs, *et al.,* 'Moses Ben Maimon', 5.
164 Jacobs, *et al.,* 'Moses Ben Maimon', 12; Seeskin, 'Maimonides', 1; Turner, 'Teaching of Moses Maimonides', 2.
165 Seeskin, *et al,* 'Maimonides', 12; Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-181.
166 English translation of Al-Sa'id ibn Surat al-Mulk in Jacobs, *et al.,* 'Moses Ben Maimon', 13.
167 Seeskin, 'Maimonides'; Turner, 'Teaching of Moses Maimonides', Jacobs, *et al,* 'Moses Ben Maimon', 13.
168 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-181.
169 Zonana, *Dream Homes;* Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.
170 Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'; Whitlock, *Soft Weapons.*
171 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memories,* 13-14.

Jewish quarter) of Cairo.[172] Her narrative relates how the fact that this significant site is not listed on any accessible maps or tourist itineraries exacerbated the highly emotional impact of discovering the Rambam as a crumbling ruin.[173] Zonana writes:

> For a moment, the desolation of this place assails me, and in a sudden spasm, I begin to cry. Watching me suspiciously, the soldiers grow alarmed . . . and they are unsettled by our presence. "Why is she crying?" one of them asks Mervat [Zonana's Muslim friend and colleague]. She explains that I am an Egyptian Jew, born in Cairo, returning after fifty years. "We must do what is right by her," he says, shaking his head. "Let her cry."[174]

Within this passage, the dynamic of screen memory can again be seen. Both the site itself and knowledge about it has been obscured. Yet, when the timing is right, the apparent hiding of one memory enables it and others to come forward and be revealed again. Within her memoir, that moment for Zonana is precipitated and triggered by her physical presence at the site in 1999.[175] In Zonana's representation of her Muslim friend and the Egyptian soldier, her personal struggle against this apparent forgetting has produced a significant moment of dialogue where memory of the Egyptian Jewish displacement has been openly spoken, shared, acknowledged, and respected by all present. Not only have other memories, less spoken, been articulated but Zonana goes on to create a new, and very personal, memory of this site. She explains:

> And so I cry, hot steady tears rising from within, as if I have stumbled upon an ancient spring that flows upward from the stones, through my body, and back onto the stones again . . . I have the sensation of homecoming: here, in this garbage-strewn alley, beside the broken windows and graffiti-covered walls, everything seems finally to cohere. I want to sink onto the stones, to rest, at peace . . . the Rambam was a place of healing as well as a place of worship . . . [Maimonides'] healing powers must have been localized in his synagogue after his death. His spirit, hovering over the Rambam, answers the prayers of the devout. *That* must have why I cried, I tell myself: I must have sensed Maimonides' energy.[176]

As Zonana narrates her moment of deep catharsis, we can see the dynamics of history, memory, and identity at play. Not only has this embodied experience created a vivid

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[172] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-178.
[173] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-178. Zonana describes visiting the site in 1999: "A tablet with the ten commandments is carved above the main entrance; beside it, I see the name of Moses ibn Maimoun engraved in Hebrew and Arabic. The door is locked, the fallen in, the walls decayed. On tiptoe, I peer through iron gates into the sanctuary, see broken steps and crumbling walls, a worn bimah where the Sefer Torah once rested. The Rambam is a ruin, locked against human entrance yet open to wind and rain. For a moment, the desolation of this place assails me, and in a sudden spasm, I begin to cry."
[174] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.
[175] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-179.
[176] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178-179.

personal memory, but through this passage Zonana creatively situates and interprets her experience directly in relation to the historical and cultural memories of the site as well the religious traditions and esoteric meanings that surround Maimonides' original work.[177] Zonana uses her narrative to weave together her own lived experiences and the collective memories and meanings of Egyptian Jewish life, past and present. It is a significant representational act that draws on memoires of her own lived experience as well as knitting these to the collective memory of the place itself – this act situates her in relation to the site and is a significant act of identity work. Through her narration of a mystical moment of recognition, acceptance, and healing by a highly authoritative Egyptian Jewish figure, Zonana establishes both her allegiance and belonging to past and present Egyptian Jewish identity.

Zonana's account does not reveal whether the Rambam's significance is forgotten or remembered by the current non-Jewish residents living nearby, but the presence of Egyptian soldiers guarding the alleyway suggests that some awareness remains within the Egyptian government's consciousness.[178] Strong collective memories of this site certainly remain, however, for Mizrahi pilgrims – for example Moroccan Jews who annually visit Egypt from the State of Israel. Zonana explains that the guard overseeing the site was stationed there to await and supervise the en masse visit by these pilgrims.[179] Ongoing official awareness then is maintained and prompted by overt Jewish memory-work through such annual pilgrimages.

For the most part, however, such unfortunate official neglect of a site that is at once Jewish, Arabic, Egyptian, and interfaith, is a familiar occurrence during a time that stresses distinct and separate identities amidst ongoing political tensions.[180] The neglect and crumbling state of the Rambam synagogue site highlights the dangers of obscurity that arise in the absence of those who know the meaning of particular historical sites and artefacts (and crucially also have the means to care for them).[181] New meanings and interpretations of sites can certainly occur, but the richness of a full knowledge of that past becomes buried, following the dynamic of screen memory.[182] As Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge

[177] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178-179.
[178] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-178.
[179] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 178.
[180] Brown, Shanin, and Stacher, 'Egypt', 242-244; Shabi, *Not the Enemy,* 100.
[181] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 177-178; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 6; Tony Kushner, 'Alienated Memories: Migrants and the silences of the archive', in *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject,* ed. Joan Tumblety, (London: Routlege, 2013),190.
[182] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-14.

observe, "heritage can be as much about forgetting as remembering the past".[183] In this present political climate, however, a renewed memory of histories of cultural overlap, exchange, and entanglement, such as those associated with this site, would certainly be of benefit to help counter the rhetoric of unbridgeable differences.[184] As the dynamics of screen memory has demonstrated, however, these memories and such a discourse may only emerge more strongly, however, when the social and political climate of the region becomes more settled.[185]

The tensions of selectivity and difference are not restricted to Jewish and non-Jewish memories of a shared site but also occur in joint inter- and intra- Jewish communities' memories of sacred places and artefacts. This becomes especially apparent in Zonana's narrative of the annual Jewish pilgrimage to the Char Hashamayin Synagogue in Cairo.

Pilgrims, possession, and the Abu Hasira *moulid*

An active and entangled exchange of memories, both shared and divergent, occurs within the portrayal of an encounter that Zonana witnessed between the current Cairo Jewish community and an annual influx of Moroccan Jewish pilgrims visiting from the State of Israel.[186] Every year hundreds of visiting pilgrims, mostly Moroccan Jews, used to arrive in Cairo to celebrate the festival of Abu Hasira and were usually hosted by the small remaining local Cairo Jewish community.[187] Abu Hasira, also known as Jacob Abu Hasira or Yakouv bin Massoud, was a nineteenth-century Moroccan rabbi and holy-man.[188] While travelling from Morocco on *aliyah* in the 1880s, he died and was entombed in the Egyptian village of Damitu, which is located "near the city of Damanhur, in the Nile Delta's region of Behir".[189] Every year since his burial, a three day *moulid* (religious festival) was held at

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[183] Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 6.
[184] Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices.*
[185] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 12-14.
[186] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 172-174.
[187] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171; Mustafa Suleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt for Jewish festival amid protests', trns. Sonia Farid, Al Arabiya News, 30 December 2010, accessed 2016, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/12/30/131509.html>; Sonia Farid, 'Abu Hasira: Between Religious Intolerance and Political Squabbles'; Atlantic Council, 14 January 2015, accessed 2016, <http://www.atanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/abu-hasira-between-religious-intolerance-and-political-squabbles>; Nervana Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi Abu-Hasira', 5 January 2015, accessed 2016, <https://nervana1.org/2015/01/05/egypt-and-the-jewish-rabbi-abu-hasira>.
[188] Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews from visiting Jewish mystic's grave', The Jerusalem Post, 29 December 2014, accessed 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=386059>; Faird, 'Abu Hasira'.
[189] Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish'; Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira debate that will never end', Ahram Online, 29 December 2014, accessed 2016, Egyptian Chronicles: Blogspot, 15 January 2012, accessed 2016, <http://egyptianchronicles.blogspot.com.au/2012/01/abu-hasira-debate-that-will-never-end.html>Zeinab El-Gundy, 'Alexandria court cancels controversial Jewish Abu Hasira moulid', Ahram Online, 29 December 2014, accessed 2016, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/119070/Egypt/Politics-

Abu Hasira's tomb to celebrate his life.[190] Once revered by both Jews and Muslims, the tomb became officially recognised as a shrine in 1945 by the "governorate of Behira".[191] This site was visited by Jewish and Muslim pilgrims from all over the world, but especially Morocco and later the State of Israel.[192] More recently, this practice has become controversial, as will be discussed shortly. While on pilgrimage, the Moroccan Jews would also take the opportunity to visit other sites of Jewish significance in Egypt *en masse*, including those in Cairo – which is where Zonana encountered them.[193] These seasonal pilgrimages used to enliven and reinvigorate the local Cairo Jewish community.[194]

In her memoir, Zonana observes that the struggling, yet still active, Char Hashamayin synagogue of Cairo was transformed by the pilgrims' *en masse* visit, filling it to capacity just as it had been during its 1940s heyday.[195] Different and yet shared meanings and memories are layered within this encounter which is at once transnational in scope but geographically and municipally fixed in location. They did this through providing contact and connection with other Jews living elsewhere and travelling internationally.[196] Additionally, these interactions also had strong potential to trigger personal and specifically local memories – such as recollections of the Char Hashamayin synagogue being full – even though the celebrations taking place were focused on other collective transnational remembrances, such as Abu Hasira.[197]

In the interactions between local Egyptian Jews of Cairo, Zonana, and the pilgrims, the tension between the categories of national and transnational, local and visitor, 'insider' and 'outsider' is palpable yet at the same time entangled and blurred.[198] In Zonana's memoir, Weinstein and Madam Hazi, the Cairo Jewish community leader and synagogue's voluntary caretaker respectively, are described as welcoming the pilgrims as fellow Jews – the

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/Alexandria-court-cancels-controversial-jewish-Abu-.aspx>; Ahram Online, 'Egypt informs Israel Abu Hasira moulid cancelled', Ahram Online, 11 January 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/0/31479/Egypt/0/Egypt-informs-Israel-Abu-Hasira-moulid-cancelled-%e2%80%8E.aspx>.

190 Ahram Online, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Sonia Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'.

191 Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish'.

192 Faird, 'Abu Hasira'.

193 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171.

194 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174, 179; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'.

195 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 179.

196 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171, 174, 179; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'; Ahram Online, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Suleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'.

197 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174, 179.

198 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 28-29; Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us,* 25-27; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions', 206-209; Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', 342-345.

transnational nature of religious belief transcends national and local borders.[199] Yet Zonana observes that the local Cairo Jewish community receives the pilgrims with some ambivalence.[200] Such visitors provide a much needed boost to Jewish life within the city, but they also bring critique of, and a threat to, the local balance. Zonana portrays Weinstein, the local community leader, as "frantic" at their arrival – the pilgrims "swarm" through, demanding access to everything and with arrogance accuse the synagogue's female guardians of "desecrating the sanctuary" with their gender.[201] This touches on broader debates within Judaism regarding both orthodox and more liberal perspectives on gender roles.[202] Yet the survival and ongoing practicalities of Cairo's small remaining Jewish community mean that it is through necessity that women (that is, Weinstein and Hazi) have taken up leadership, pastoral care, and synagogue caretaker roles that in more stable circumstances would traditionally be filled by men.[203] It is through the dedication of these Jewish women that there is still an active synagogue to attend while on pilgrimage.

Through their action, as represented by Zonana, the visiting Jewish pilgrims demonstrate their lack of an active memory of the dispersal of the original Cairo Jewish community and, on a smaller scale, the vital role these local Egyptian Jewish women play in ensuring a hospitable site for worship and celebration of their own pilgrimage and memories.[204] The pilgrims' focus is concentrated on celebrating the memory of Abu Hasira.[205] The pilgrims' presence is annual but ephemeral. Yet from their perspective they are the authoritative 'insiders' wielding patriarchal authority, visiting the 'diaspora' from the core of the State of Israel, and claiming ownership over the burial place of Abu Hasira via their own association with his Moroccan origins.[206] Weinstein and Hazi are easily perceived by these

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[199] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171, 174, 179; Jonathon Magonet, *The Explorer's Guide to Judaism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1998), 258-259, 276-27; Nicholas deLange and Miri Freud-Kandel, eds. *Modern Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20-22; Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 358-359.

[200] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174, 179.

[201] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.

[202] De Lange and Freud-Kandel, *Modern Judaism,* 234-236; Magonet, *Guide to Judaism,* 7, 67-68, 73-95; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 532-533, 593-594.

[203] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174, 179; De Lange and Freud-Kandel, *Modern Judaism,* 234-236; Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy,* 467-468. This is a completely normal practice within small sized Jewish communities and occurs often in such circumstances.

[204] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174, 179.

[205] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171, 174, 179.

[206] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174, 179; Magonet, *Guide to Judaism,* 225-226, 268-273. Suleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Mahmoud, 'Jews of Egypt'; Hage, 'Insiders and Outsiders', 342-346. To clarify, from the perspective of remaining Egyptian Jews, those who left Egypt are considered the 'diaspora'. As Magnonet explains, (1998: 225) "With its creation the State [of Israel] has become potentially the new unifying factor for the Jewish people. It signals the reversal of two thousand years of Jewish diaspora existence."

pilgrims as 'outsiders' through their gender and their location within Egypt.[207] Zonana writes that she is also perceived as such:

> With Mme Hazi, I try to keep the men away from the treasures of Char Hashamayim. At one point, the accuse me of desecrating the sanctuary: I am a woman in a space reserved for men. Surely they are the ones violating the sanctuary of the synagogue, I try to tell them.[208]

Within Zonana's portrayal, from Weinstein's perspective these positions of 'insider' and 'outsider' are reversed in relation to the visiting pilgrims. She and her local Egyptian Jewish community are, in her perspective, firmly the true 'insiders'.[209] Zonana, who is trying to attain recognition and acceptance by Weinstein, writes from this perspective also. Throughout, Zonana describes Weinstein as a very firm gatekeeper who is passionate about her local community, but suspicious of any outsiders who may potentially exploit 'her people'.[210] Weinstein tolerates the pilgrims, but at their core they remain 'outsiders'. This perception is reinforced by Zonana through depicting their actions as solely focused on their own pursuit of religious consumption.[211] According to Zonana's account, the pilgrims showed no attempt to learn about or understand the situation of the local Cairo Jewish community. Nor did they contribute back directly in the longer term.[212]

Despite such differences, unity can still be seen within Zonana's description of the Jewish celebration of the Abu Hasira *moulid.* Despite different perspectives, both the local Egyptian Jewish community and the international Jewish pilgrims *do* come together to celebrate the memory of Abu Hasira.[213] Through joint celebration of a shared sacred memory, all parties are unified as conceptual 'insiders' compared to the surrounding non-Jewish Egyptian society.[214] This unity is achieved through shared knowledge of the history and religious significance of specific pilgrimage sites and through communal celebration of a shared understanding of the sacred.[215]

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[207] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
[208] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
[209] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 172-174; Hage, 'Insider and Outsider', 342-345.
[210] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171-174, 179; Hage, 'Insider and Outsider', 342-345.
[211] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174, 179.
[212] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171, 174, 179.
[213] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171, 174, 179.
[214] Hage, 'Insider and Outsider', 342-345.
[215] De Lange & Fred-Kandel, eds. *Modern Judaism,* 205-209; Magonet, *Guide to Judaism,* 258-282.

Although Weinstein's interactions, as described in the memoir, deal only with Jewish pilgrims, Zonana herself views the *moulid* of Abu Hasira as an example of cultural commonality and unity between Jews and Muslims.[216] She consequently writes:

> It is the annual festival of Abu Hasira, a Moroccan Jewish holy man buried in Egypt . . . I have read about the Muslim custom of celebrating saint days with elaborate festivities; I did not know that Middle Eastern Jews venerated saints as well. *Wahid, wahid* [one and one, together].[217]

Representing the memories and reverence for Abu Hasira as a point of inter-religious commonality is interesting in a contemporary context where the majority of Egyptians instead emphasise difference from, and even direct opposition to, Judaism.[218] Zonana's interpretation and emphasis on shared meaning and cross religious unity stands as a counterpoint to most contemporary online coverage of the annual *moulid* which instead emphasises conflict.[219] Amid many news articles and emotive blog posts on the subject, Nervana Mahmoud is one of the very few writers to accurately mention that historically "[b]oth Jews and Muslims revered the man".[220]

The disconnect between the historical reality of Abu Hasira and current non-Jewish Egyptian attitudes towards memories of him is worth looking at more in depth because it demonstrates the dynamics of both screen memory and multidirectional memory.[221] In order to do this, we will look firstly at the current cancellation of the *moulid* before outlining different stakeholders' perspectives on the issue and the impact this has on memory dynamics, including why Zonana and Mahmoud's position is currently the exception rather than the rule. These stakeholders include the Egyptian government and judiciary, locals, the State of Israel, internet bloggers, and Egyptian political parties. The *moulid* itself, as mentioned by Zonana, can be seen as a nexus between different memories and meanings and a screen upon which other issues are projected.

Egyptian Court & Government

The previous situation, as represented in Zonana's memoir, has now changed quite dramatically. At present, the Abu Hasira *moulid* is officially banned and the Egyptian

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216 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171.
217 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 171. Translation by Zonana (2008, 170).
218 Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shabi, *Not the enemy.*
219 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira debate'; World Bulletin, 'Egyptian Court bans'; Reuters, 'Egyptian Court bans'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'; Ahram Online, 'Egypt Informs Israel'; Suleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
220 Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'.
221 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory.*

government is unwilling to officially accept that Egyptian Jews are part of Egyptian national history and heritage.[222] This stance exacerbates the conflation of being Jewish with being Zionist within the understanding of the general population. It also perpetuates the misconception that the *moulid* is a recent foreign imposition rather than part of a local Egyptian and Moroccan continuity.[223] Although Abu Hasira's tomb site had formal recognition as a shrine and an official Egyptian monument, in direct conflict with the federal Minister for Culture, the Alexandrian judiciary actively sought to overturn and remove this status by implementing a recurring ban.[224] In 2014, this ban was combined with moves to remove the site from the Egyptian government's recognised list of antiquities and monuments.[225] Under the Mubarak regime, the cancelation was intended to be temporary due to heightened political instability, but even after the fall of the regime, the ban continued and was made permanent.[226]

The court's actions are part of an attempt by the Egyptian judiciary to assert and dominate public discourse with an understanding of Egyptian national history that excludes Jews (and often other minorities) from their preferred, and highly selective, narrative of an Egyptian identity that strongly privileges Islamic history.[227] In contradiction to the rich contributions of Egyptian Jews to Egyptian history, society, culture, politics, intellectual life and more, the court emphasised that "the Jews have not had any particular impact on Egyptian civilisation".[228] The court declared that the shrine's official recognition by the Minister for Culture was "invalid, historically inaccurate and negatively affects the Egyptian heritage" and that the *moulid* itself "violates public order and morals".[229] The government was ordered to publish the court's findings "in the state's official journal and to inform

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222 Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
223 Shabi, *Not the Enemy;* Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira debate'.
224 Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'. Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira debate'; WorldBulletin, 'Egyptian court bans'; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'; The Minister for Culture at the time was Farouk Hosni. The site was officially recognised and recorded as by the governorate of Behira in 1945, which was reasserted by the Minister for Culture in 2001.
225 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira debate'; World Bulletin, 'Egyptian court bans'; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'.
226 World Bulletin, 'Egyptian court bans'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
227 UNESCO & URHC, Assessment of the Heritage Values'; URHC & UNESCO, 'Visitor's Map of Historic Cairo'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'; Durie, 'Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood'.
228 Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi'.
229 El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi'; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'. a statement made possibly due to Muslim perspectives on the consumption of alcohol.

UNESCO of the decision".[230] It is worth noting that "in defiance of basic universal court proceedings" no representatives of the local Egyptian Jewish community were allowed by the court to offer explanation of the history, tradition, or current rituals involved in the *moulid* in order to assist decision making.[231] As Mahmoud has correctly identified in her analysis of events:

> The verdict is an inevitable outcome of a long journey of ignorance, misconceptions, and politicization of religious matters that has its roots in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This trend was skilfully maintained during Mubarak's Egypt and continued to unfold, despite his departure from power . . . years of hostility between Arab and Jews have erased any Jewish traditions from Egyptian memory [and the Ministry of Culture did nothing to combat this].[232]

In line with current ideas of Egyptian nationalism, counter to historical reality "antiquities official says it was never a monument in the first place".[233] They no longer consider it as counting as history, nor that it ever was "officially registered as an official Jewish monument in Egypt in the first place".[234] Dr Zahi Hawass, head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities: "agrees with the court order and stresses that the Abu Hasira shrine is not a site of national heritage. [He declares that,] 'This is just a celebration in a small alley in an Egyptian village. This has nothing to do with historic sites.'"[235]

The State of Israel and Politicisation of Memory

The politicisation of memories surrounding Abu Hasira can also be seen in the cautious actions of the State of Israel towards Egypt on this issue in order to avoid escalating conflict. Part of the 1979 Peace Treaty involved allowing Israeli and Jewish travel to Egypt, including pilgrimages.[236] As soon as the treaty was signed, annual Jewish trips to Egypt to celebrate the Abu Hasira *moulid* restarted, both in an official capacity by formal Israeli representatives and also 'unofficially' involving "Jews from all over the world".[237] The State of Israel initially supported the cancellation of the *moulid* by Egyptian authorities due to shared safety concerns.[238] Yet as the ban by Egypt continued, the reasons given became increasingly targeted as overt political reactions against Israeli policies, including those involving Palestinians. For example, in 2009 Jewish pilgrims were denied entry to Egypt

[230] El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'
[231] Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi'.
[232] Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'
[233] El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'.
[234] El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'.
[235] Quoted in Souleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt'.
[236] Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'.
[237] Farid, 'Abu Hasira'
[238] Ahram Online, 'Egypt informs Israel'

because the State of "Israel was in the midst of Operation Cast Lead, a three week offensive against Gaza".[239] After the Alexandrian judiciary revoked heritage recognition of the shrine and adjoining Jewish cemetery the State of Israel tried to negotiate with Egypt via UNESCO to have Abu Hasira's remains transferred to an alternative tomb-site located in Jerusalem.[240] This option was rejected by the Egyptian government on both religious and political grounds because "it violates Islamic teachings prohibiting the exhumation of graves" and was also perceived as "another attempt to 'Hebrewise' the city" of Jerusalem.[241] Ironically they say there are no important remains to be recognised; but by banning exhumation it is a side-ways acknowledgement that remains are there.

Residents of Damtu Village

The local situation in Damtu village, the residential area near the shrine, is also a volatile one. Local residents have repeatedly protested against the *moulid* for a number of reasons.[242] Initially, locals complained that both Jewish pilgrims and accompanying Egyptian security forces were highly disruptive to their way of life.[243] At the popular level, there is often the feeling that "Egyptian authorities generally treat locals with contempt and hold tourists to be superior".[244] In a situation not dissimilar to the sudden influx portrayed by Zonana, the village would be annually inundated with crowds of pilgrims who often showed little interest or consideration of the local situation.[245] Ironically, this local tension was unfortunately compounded by Egyptian security forces who were also perceived as "invasive".[246] As part of the 1979 Peace Treaty with the State of Israel, Mubarak's regime "approved the [pilgrims'] visits, but insisted on a media blackout of the festival" to reduce local political aggravation.[247] This situation, however, seems to have been even more intense as, for the period of each *moulid* since the 1979 treaty, Egyptian soldiers would take control of the village for security purposes and place locals under heavy restrictions, including limitations on movement, home searches and house arrest as well as implementing media blackouts on covering the event.[248] As Mahmoud has observed:

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239 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'
240 WorldBulletin, 'Egyptian court bans'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'
241 WorldBulletin, 'Egyptian court bans'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
242 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'.
243 Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'.
244 Anonymous on Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'.
245 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
246 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi.'
247 Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi'.
248 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.

> The security forces' mishandling of the Jewish visits to the area and their aggressive tactics to quell local resentment were clearly counterproductive. It aggravated local tension and popularized calls to cancel the Jewish celebrations.[249]

As a result of feeling disrespected by both visitors and security, local villagers actively protested against each *moulid,* with the reasons for doing so increasingly broadening to include "refus[al] to normalise relations with [the State of] Israel" after several Egyptian political groups took up the issue as part of their own campaigns.[250]

It is important to be aware of the different stakeholders and layers involved in the debate surrounding the *moulid* because here we can see the dynamics of present politics impacting upon the knowledge, perception, and memory of the past. Although the visiting pilgrims and Jews overseas – including Zonana – retain the memory of Abu Hasira, the current local non-Jewish community does not share this understanding.[251] From their perspective, Abu Hasira was not interred at the nearby tomb but was instead buried in Morocco – an understanding that was popularised and only gained traction in Egypt after political groups got involved in the debate.[252]

It would be easy here to draw the conclusion that this is an example of competitive memory. Yet the reality is more complex. The memory dynamic present within the controversy over pilgrims and the *moulid* is a combination of screen memory and multidirectional memory – frameworks which also encompass episodes of conflict and the appearance of 'forgetting'.[253] Here the Abu Hasira *moulid* acts as a screen for the projections of concerns relating to local needs, and Egyptian and Israeli international relations, driven by the energies of present conflicts, growing anti-Semitim, and political debates and Egyptian nationalism. This has caused, for the moment, the previously shared reverence and memory of Abu Hasira's Egyptian resting place to be layered beneath the current local narrative of his burial in Morocco.[254] Elsewhere, such as in the State of Israel and locations where Egyptian Jewish Mizrahim now reside, the original memory is still very much in the forefront. This demonstrates that along with the ebbs and flows of memory comes a crucial element of geographical locatedness.

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[249] Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish rabbi'.
[250] El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court bans'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'.
[251] Souleiman, Israelis flock to Egypt'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court bans'.
[252] El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court bans'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'.
[253] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory.*
[254] Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira debate'; WorldBulletin, 'Egyptian court bans'; Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandrian court cancels'; Ahram, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'.

The rhetoric of contemporary political groups has served to keep the Egyptian Jewish memories of the Abu Hasira *moulid* out of the limelight and has instead put focus on present national tensions between Egypt and the State of Israel. Around 31 political groups used the debate as a way of demonstrating their 'loyalty' and dedication to Egypt and to position themselves against "cultural normalization with [the State of] Israel".[255] Local residents conducted multiple petitions and the "Muslim Brotherhood, the Bloggers against Abu Hasira group, the You Will Not Cross My Land campaign and the opposition parties of al-Ghad and al-Karama" actively protested against the *moulid* outside the court in Alexandria during hearings.[256] Social media exposure, especially through the Bloggers against Abu Hasira group, also spread the perspective that the *moulid* should be shut down.[257] Since 2007 onwards, the group campaigned widely using absolutist rhetoric calling for a history to be written of the area that definitively states that "no Jews lived there and that the shine is false" and that DNA tests should be conducted to "prove there are no bodies in the shrine at all and it was a hoax".[258] Egyptian media promoted this perspective and identity conflations, for example, Misr 25 (the Muslim Brotherhood channel) reported in heroic terms that '"human chains' [were] preventing 'the nightmare of Zionist crowds' from reaching the shrine".[259] As nationalist rhetoric became fused with the issue, the general Egyptian news media included triumphant reports such as "No Zionist [has] visited the shrine since the [Egyptian] revolution took place . . . the truth is that the revolution uprooted the Zionist presence in Egypt".[260] Former Egyptian ambassador to Tel Aviv, Mohamed Bassyouni: "In addition to the killings in Palestine, a new Israeli spy network was uncovered. This confirms that Israel is trying to infiltrate Egypt in many ways and this festival could be one of them".[261] General Farouk al-Maqrahy – former Member of Parliament for Beheira (the governate that the *moulid* is held in) – epitomised the fusion of rhetoric around this perspective declaring:

> This is neither a shrine nor a monument. It is just an excuse to desecrate Egypt. There is even the possibility that Abu Hasira was not Jewish at all.[262]

255 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
256 Souleiman, 'Israelis flock to Israel'.
257 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'.
258 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'.
259 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
260 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
261 Mohamed Bassyouni in Souleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt'.
262 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.

He also alleged that pilgrims were "usually involved in activities that violate our values and traditions".[263] The use of 'our' here is an attempt to harness Egyptian nationalist patriotism and appeal to non-Jewish Egyptians concerned with upholding Islamic codes that forbid consumption of alcohol, for example, that was apparently consumed at the *moulid*.[264] Observers watching the shifts in rhetoric surrounding the *moulid* connected this latter aspect to a rise in Salafism within Egyptian politics which was leading to a growing tendency to call for crackdowns against all *moulids,* including Christian and Islamic ones.[265] This trend also prompted concerns of "a general crackdown" against "Egyptian Christians and liberal Egyptians" by Egyptian Islamic conservatives.[266]

Egyptian Jewish community

The Egyptian Jewish community has affirmed that the court verdict is unconstitutional and raised concern that the changed status of the shrine might lead to the site's destruction.[267] The current head of the Egyptian Jewish community in Egypt, Magda Haroun says:

> The Egyptian constitution gives every religious group the right to practice its rituals . . . Abu Hasira has a special place in the head of Jews and they have a right to visit his grave.[268]

Interestingly, however, she does not join calls to have Abu Hasira's remains removed to the State of Israel.[269] She announced:

> Abu Hasira had nothing to do with [the State of] Israel or the Zionist project, so Israel does not have the right to claim his remains.[270]

Screen memory – the resurfacing

One of the striking things about this debate is that even when calls against the moulid are so loud, the conversation itself prompts opportunity for counter-narratives and memories to resurface – a dynamics that is reflective of screen memory.[271] Actions to stifle the festival resulted in lots of Jews visiting, debate on the internet, and raised awareness about the

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263 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
264 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
265 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'.
266 Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'.
267 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
268 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
269 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
270 Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
271 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-22 .

dangers of crackdowns among other minorities. In 2010 in response to the court order to cancel the festival, "hundreds of Jews from Israel, Europe, and the United States" flocked to celebrate the event.[272]

The resurfacing and exchange of memories can also be seen in small scale on the comments left on a popular blog article about the issue. These also reference Mizrahi memoirs, with an anonymous poster writing:

> Have you ever been to Damanhour? Well, a few of the very old houses and buildings have the Star of David on them. This is because there was an *Egyptian* Jewish community there, just as there were communities of Egyptian Jews in other towns & cities in Egypt. Most of them were good, loyal citizens. They all either left voluntarily or were driven out of Egypt because of the anger towards them that spread after the establishment of [the State of] Israel. A few Egyptian Jews have published books about their memories in Egypt which mostly reflect a sense of love and loss. Let me know if you want some book recommendations. :) [273]

Joyce Zonana also left comments on the forum of another article, and including being "intrigued to learn about this Jewish custom that in fact intersects with Muslim and Christian customs."[274]

As Farid has rightly observed, the debate has raised "apprehensions about its implications for religious freedom and cultural diversity" and "reactions to the verdict have also been highly politicised, revealing the widespread overlap in Egyptian perceptions of Jews and Zionists"'.[275] Haroun has agreed with this perspective as "cultural and intellectual problems".[276] Said Okasha, Israeli studies expert at al-Ahram Centre for Strategic Studies has said:

> [T]he shrine and the festival belong neither to Jews not Israelis, but to Egyptian heritage. "Jews, like Muslims, Christians, and Pharaohs are part of Egyptian history. There was too much fuss about the festival and the issue has grown out of proportion."[277]

Amitrav Gosh calls this "the partition of the past" and warned that "this tragic partition of the past is neither healthy nor productive for a nation that considers history its favourite

[272] Suleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt'.
[273] Anonymous after Zeinobia, 'Abu Hasira Debate'.
[274] Mahmoud, "Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'.
[275] Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.
[276] Faird, 'Abu Hasira'.
[277] Farid, 'Abu Hasira'.

asset."[278] But not all of it is over. The flows of memory go back and forth, knowledge that is supposedly lost can be regained and reformed. Multidirectional entanglements can be seen within the complex diversity of perspectives and actions taken in relation to issues of remembrance, recognition, ownership of significant sites and sacred artefacts. The concept of multidirectional memory is useful here because instead of obscuring different perspectives, as would occur if using an exclusively competitive memory model, we can instead acknowledge that there are different and fluid meanings surrounding the memory and tomb site of Abus Hasira.[279] The debate surrounding Abu Hasira also enables discussions about identity to emerge. Collective memories surrounding Abu Hasira can be seen as a node within a broader network of beliefs and ideas that prompt different conversations and debates about what it means to be Jewish, Egyptian, or a combination of both.

Preserving history and the Torah scrolls of the Char Hashamayin Synagogue in Cairo

The concept of multidirectional entanglements enables us to appreciate the complexity of viewpoints and alliances that emerge out of situations centred upon contested histories and spaces. For example, it might be easy to assume that Weinstein would ally herself with the visiting pilgrims and the State of Israel because they are Jewish. Such a viewpoint, however, is reductionist. Zonana instead demonstrates within her memoir that Weinstein's valuing of memory, identity and heritage means that she strongly values the local over the transnational. She perceives far closer ties between herself and the Egyptian government than with other Jews visiting from the State of Israel and elsewhere, and Zonana positions herself in a similar manner.[280] This extends to what Weinstein is willing to do to protect historical and religious artefacts of significance to her and the local Cairo Egyptian Jewish community.[281] For example, Zonana tells us that because Weinstein feels the pilgrims are disrespectful of the local Egyptian Jewish situation, in the interests of her own community, she locks up and restricts their access to the sacred Torah scrolls of Char Hashamayim:

> For in the past few years, Egyptian Jews from the United States and Israel have tried to remove these Torahs from Char Hashamayim, claiming them as their 'patrimony'. But Mme Weinstein has had the Torahs classified as Egyptian

[278] Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish Rabbi'.
[279] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1-22.
[280] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 172-179.
[281] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.

> antiquities. They belong in Cairo, she insists, where they will one day become the focal point for a revitalised Jewish community.[282]

Whether such unerring faith and optimism in her local Jewish community is misplaced or well founded, only time will tell. This entanglement of interests, however, highlights the importance of retaining meaningful sites and symbols of memory to help retain the ongoing cohesion of a community.[283] As portrayed by Zonana, the current Jewish community within Egypt and the diaspora of Egyptian Mizrahim within the US and the State of Israel all share remembrance and recognition of Char Hashamayim's sacred Torah scrolls – and all, of course, wish to protect them.[284] It is important to note, however, that the overseas diaspora of Mizrahim constitutes a powerful majority compared to remaining Egyptian Jewish residents. Preserving the scrolls through safekeeping overseas in the United States or the State of Israel is consistent with dominant Mizrahi narratives of irreversible displacement.[285] Mizrahim living overseas wish to reconnect with and retain their history as well as protect the sacred Torahs.[286] But, from the perspective of current Egyptian Jewish residents, the removal of these sacred scrolls effectively divorces that history, embodied in artefact, from the original geographic location of their significance.

In the struggle over control of the Torah scrolls, as reflected by Zonana, tensions and exchange between the transnational and national levels of memory exist.[287] Weinstein, as head of the local Cairo Jewish community, represents a local minority.[288] As Zonana portrays her, Weinstein also views her own roots as firmly planted within Egypt and is dedicated to preserving the legacy and memory of Egyptian Jews in Egypt itself.[289] (This is also consistent with the direction taken by her sister who succeeded her as community leader.[290]) Consequently, Weinstein oversaw the Torah's classification by the Egyptian government as an artefact of official national antiquity.[291] This strategic move effectively shifts these sacred artefacts out of a transnational understanding of Jewish history and firmly fixes them within a nation-based narrative of the Egyptian past. In achieving this, it is arguable that Weinstein has enabled greater inclusion of Jewish experiences, as

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282 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
283 Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts,* 1-9.
284 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
285 World Bulletin, 'Jews "have no future" in Egypt, says community leader'; Atef, 'Jews of Egypt'; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands.* This narrative appears in histories of the community as well as within Mizrahi memoirs by the first-generation who were displaced.
286 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
287 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
288 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-174; World Bulletin, 'Jews "have no future" in Egypt'.
289 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-174.
290 World Bulletin, 'Jews "have no future" in Egypt'; Atef, 'Jews of Egypt'.
291 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 173-174.

represented by the Torahs, in the discourse of antiquities that Egypt so prides itself on. In framing them in ancient terms, rather than as actively part of a living tradition, the Torahs are easily understood by the Egyptian state as part of a 'safe' past of antiquity rather than the more recent history of contemporary anti-Semitic persecution and exclusion.[292] Ironically, by gaining official state recognition for the Torahs, Weinstein also effectively co-opts the Egyptian government and nation into protecting and keeping the future hope and memory of her local Jewish community alive.[293] It should be said that this is the same state and nation that was behind the persecution, exclusion, and expulsion of the majority of the Egyptian Jewish community who now live overseas and whom Weinstein now perceives as a greater threat to the local community's continuance than the Egyptian government.[294] As this configuration reveals, where the discourses of both modern and ancient history mingle and assumed commonalities and differences are turned on their head, the multidirectional dynamics of memory are never as straightforward as they may first seem. This is not an instance of the limits of multidirectional memory, but rather a prime example of what occurs when the selectivity of screen memory, the dynamics of multidirectional memory work, and entanglements of complex perspectives work together in combination.[295]

The debate over the memories and meanings of significant sites and artefacts which could provide much-needed common ground reveals one of the unfortunate legacies of displacement and the divergent experiences that have resulted from it. As is apparent throughout all memoirs examined in this project, geographic dispersal now means alternative understandings of home, loyalties to different locations, and the advocacy of sometimes conflicting solutions. It is true that Mizrahim within the United States and the State of Israel as well as the current Egyptian Jewish community all wish to protect the Torahs of Char Hashamayim.[296] But if Weinstein, as portrayed by Zonana, is right in her assessment, this situation highlights the dangers of prioritising the trauma of past events over the potential for healing and local restoration in the present.[297] There is the potential for great damage to be caused through a self-fulfilling prophecy if adherence to an inalterable narrative of *everyone* having lost Egypt as a homeland irreparably results in destroying the foundational hopes of recovery for those Jews who do remain in Egypt and

[292] URHC, 'Urban Regeneration Report; UNESCO & URHC, 'The Outstanding Universal Value of Historic Cairo'; UNESCO & URHC, 'Assessment of the Heritage Values of the Urban Fabric'.
[293] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
[294] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-174.
[295] Not the limits of multidirectional memory but an example of screen memory, they are prepared to process only up to a certain point at this time. The continued existence of these artefacts means that at a later point they may be willing to confront this aspect of their past.
[296] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174.
[297] Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-174.

hold similar perspectives to Weinstein.[298] Yet, as Egypt continues to experience instability and political and social turmoil, and religious based violence spikes again, the concerns of Mizrahim overseas for the safety of sacred Jewish artefacts is not without basis.[299] Magda Haroun, the current leader of the Egyptian Jewish community shares her predecessor's dedication to preserving Egyptian Jewish heritage but differs from Weinstein in her belief that Jews "have no future" in Egypt.[300] Haroun's duties extend "not only to assuring a decent life for the remaining few Jewish-Egyptians, but also to safeguarding what still survives as Jewish heritage".[301] Haroun has "called for preserving Jewish heritage in Egypt and setting up a museum to exhibit the community's history".[302] Although the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities has yet to recognise them, Haroun's ultimate hope is that Egypt's main Jewish synagogues might be officially recognised and fully restored and "open their doors to the public and be transformed into centres that promote feelings of belonging and tolerance".[303] Yet given the Egyptian government's continuing reluctance to openly acknowledge Egyptian Jewish history and heritage, it is likely that this will be a very long time in coming.[304] Nevertheless, at an unofficial level it is likely that memories will continue.[305]

Portable monuments

Throughout this chapter we have looked at the complex relationship between histories, memories, and identities in relation to Egyptian Jewish sites and artefacts as reflected in the memoirs by Schinasi-Silver and Zonana.[306] Memoirs, however, can also be monuments and frameworks for memory in their own right, which are active in "shaping and in the transfer of memories between individuals and groups".[307] As Rigney explains:

> Like statues or gravestones, textual artefacts have a fixed character which allows them to play a role in recalling some person or event of yore and in bearing witness to them.[308]

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298 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 170-174.
299 Zonana, *Dream Homes,* 174; World Bulletin, 'Egypt court bans'; World Bulletin, 'Jews "have no future" in Egypt'; Ahram Online, 'Egypt informs Israel'; Atef, 'Jews of Egypt'; Suleiman, 'Israelis flock to Egypt'; Farid, 'Abu Hasira'; Mahmoud, 'Egypt and the Jewish'.
300 World Bulletin, 'Jews "have no future" in Egypt'.
301 Atef, 'Jews of Egypt'.
302 World Bulletin, 'Jews "have no future" in Egypt'.
303 Atef, 'Jews of Egypt'.
304 Reuters, 'Egyptian court bans Jews'; El-Gundy, 'Alexandria court cancels'.
305 Watson, *Memory, History, and Opposition*, 2.
306 Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*; Zonana, *Dream Homes*.
307 Rigney, 'Portable Monuments', 366.
308 Rigney, 'Portable Monuments', 383.

Mizrahi memoirs can be seen in this way as well. For example, as Schinasi-Silver and Zonana visit significant sites, record their experiences in their texts, and circulate their narratives via published memoir, their work becomes an act of witnessing, a memorial artefact, and a site of mediation for new memories among readers.[309] This function is crucial as the volatility of the Middle East means that new generations of Mizrahim may be unable to make physical acts or return or easily access original sites or artefacts, especially if these degrade due to neglect. Rigney argues that:

> The same literary work may serve both to confirm and consolidate the sense of common heritage and, depending on who is doing the reading, to arouse interest in the heritage and experiences of other groups.[310]

As time passes, it is likely that Mizrahi memoirs will become increasingly important as a means for ensuring the continuation of familial and community knowledge, but also a prompt for new generations of descendants curious to explore their past and imagine and re-imagine their own understanding of heritage in new and diverse contexts.[311]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted the importance of multidirectional entanglements as an approach that helps us realise the complexity of Mizrahi memories and identities through bringing together the tools provided by the frameworks of postmemory, multidirectional memory, and screen memory. I raised the significance of imagination as a necessary, but often overlooked, element within individual and collective capacities to both realise and articulate present identities and potential future directions based off knowledge of, or direct interaction with, memories and histories. The journeys of Schinasi-Silver and Zonana to Egypt, motivated by postmemory and the dissonance of displacement, enabled them to create their own experiential memories through which they could rearticulate their identities. These process allowed them to interweave their new understandings of self, as articulated in their memoirs, back into their understanding of their own familial histories. Crucially, this opportunity to visit sacred sites also provided critical points of closure that freed them to re-imagine their current and future selves as having incorporated both the histories of their ancestral homeland and their futures within their present home nations.

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309 Rigney, 'Portable Monuments'.
310 Rigney, 'Portable Monuments', 390.
311 Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts*.

Schinasi-Silver and Zonana's journeys involved visiting a selection of Egyptian Jewish sacred sites enmeshed in contemporary stakeholder struggles, including the Ben Ezra Synagogue and Genizah archive, the Eliahu Hanabi Synagogue, the Rambam Synagogue, the Char Hashamayim Synagogue and the tomb of Abu Hasira. All have in common the current tensions between the interests of present residents (both Jewish and non-Jewish) and Mizrahim now overseas. The differing perspectives and motives of various Egyptian political groups, the Egyptian government, Egyptian judiciary, and international heritage bodies such as UNESCO, also came into play. Zonana and Schinasi-Silver's accounts show that although a state of local forgetfulness might initially appear to prevail, this situation can also act to help preserve sites and artefacts.

Across all, we can see the impact that selectivity and accessibility can have, not only in terms of site preservation or destruction, but also in terms of the binary perception of Middle Eastern and Jewish identity has become within contemporary power-structures. The implications of this are a narrowing and rejection of cross-cultural and inter-religious ways of understanding and relating to each other. Such a situation means that the narratives of Mizrahi memoirists, such as Zonana and Schinasi-Silver, are all the more important – not only reminding readers of shared histories, but also equipping minds with the capacity to imagine and articulate rich and alternative configurations of identity not constrained by simplistic 'defaults'.[312]

Given the volatility of the Middle East, it may be that significant sites and artefacts become inaccessible. Memoirs then, become powerful points of access and mediation that enable new generations of descendents to learn from, and to consider for themselves, their own past, their present heritage and future configurations of identity. Mizrahi memoirs, therefore, have the potential to transform the inaccessible into the accessible and serve as imaginative prompts for diverse visions of past, present, and future. We turn now to the final concluding chapter which brings together the core themes explored throughout this dissertation, the limitations of the project, and suggestions for future research.

[312] Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*.

– CHAPTER EIGHT –

Conclusion

> The appreciation that there were Jewish refugees, as well as Arab refugees, and indeed that the Jewish refugees were a result of state-sanctioned discrimination against Jews in Arab lands is important . . . for justice, for peace and for reconciliation.[313]
>
> Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus*

> In terrible times, autobiographers are called on to transform the book, the page, and the word and to make radical use of the visual and verbal forms and spaces of life narrative. These lives have the power to pull readers into an aporia of reading and looking: that gap between allegro and lento, when reading and seeing are halted – in a productive pause.[314]
>
> Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*

> Rather, we are 'Arab Jews' because of what is at stake in defining ourselves as such today.[315]
>
> Lital Levy, *Arab Jews in the Mashriq*

Throughout this dissertation I have analysed the dynamics of history, memory, and identity as represented in the published English-language memoirs of Mizrahim who were displaced during the mid- to later-twentieth century from Iraq, Iran, and Egypt. My aims were to establish whether there is a collective Mizrahi identity or not, to seek a more accurate understanding of the diversity of Jewish experiences, and to learn what happens to memory dynamics in the context of displacement and resettlement as represented in these texts. I shall summarise the findings of each in turn before explaining my contribution, the limitations of the project, and potential future directions.

In *Chapter One: Introductory Overview* I discussed the designation of Mizrahim, which is a relatively recent designation, but one that brings with it powerful political symbolism and an acknowledgement of a different history from that of European Ashkenazim. As Lital

[313] Vivianne Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada* (Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue: Shoreline, 2007), 8. Suspension point in original.
[314] Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 200. Whitlock quotes Judith Butler (2004) in this passage.
[315] Lital Levy, 'Historicising the Concept of Arab Jews in the "Mashriq"', *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* 98 (2008): 457.

Levy has observed regarding the development, adoption of, and historical specificity of Mizrahim as 'Arab Jews':

> Each of these movements was unique in its constellation of circumstances, and thus the relevance or instrumentality of the idea of the Arab Jew was also new and different in each. But there is an element of continuity insofar as each successive generation invoked the memory of the previous one as part of its own negotiation of identity.[316]

Within these ever fluid constructions and reconstructions of identity, the term Mizrahi provides powerful political insight and a useful analytical category, which is why this terminology has been used throughout this dissertation. It also provides a less overtly confrontational stance compared to the term 'Arab Jew'. Nonetheless, although the term Mizrahi acknowledges a commonality, stemming from geographic origins and a shared past through the experience of displacement, it is not one often used by memoirists themselves in the articulation of their own identities. Instead, I found that identity was represented as strongly situated in localised and nation-based understandings of self in the narration of both pre- and post-displacement existence. These understandings were based on a closely intertwined and yet also fluid and creative connection between personal memories and those of multiple collectives, including at the group, national, and transnational levels, in the pursuit of negotiating a shared vision of the past. This is, as Daniel James observed, the complex discursive realm of consensus seeking which staves "off epistemological crisis" through the construction of narrative at personal and collective levels even though tensions and alternative perspectives nonetheless persist.[317] However, unlike Levy's claim that Mizrahi perspectives are primarily past-oriented, the reality is that the memoirists passionately draw upon the past in their hope that this will inform current and future generations and help shape the path of humanity ahead.[318] Indeed, they encompass past, present, and future orientations in one – a diverse multiplicity of perspectives. As Emily Gottreich has argued, "Jewish identity in the Arab world is far from monolithic".[319]

This plurality of identity and relationships with history was seen in the understanding of origins discussed in *Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees* and *Chapter Five: Dreaming of Return*; the specific sense-scapes described in *Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food*, and sites and artefacts of nostalgic and religious significance explored in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and*

316 Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 469.
317 James, 'Dona Maria's Story', 206, 209.
318 Levy, 'Arab Jews in the Mashriq', 464.
319 Gottreich, Emily Benichou. 'Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Maghrib'. *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, (2008): 444.

Mundane Matters and *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions*. The identity designation of Mizrahi, then, can be understood in a multifaceted and multilayered sense. That is, one that incorporates the academic and political utility of providing a conceptual category of unification – a move that is crucial in the pursuit of recognition and compensation for the suffering and losses incurred in forced displacement and dispersal as well as a critique of current structures. In this construct of unity, however, there is also diversity and difference – a multiplicity that can be seen as a source of strength through flexibility and the capacity to adapt in the face of apparently insurmountable challenges. As James argues, "[m]emory can be a powerful mobilising tool capable of energising political identities, but it cannot guarantee political and ideological outcomes".[320] These are firmly in the hands of those alive today, their degree of agency within present structures, and their capacity to imagine and achieve future possibilities. What we can learn from the experiences of these memoirists, both personal and collective, that that the past and histories of the displaced can easily be overlooked and are often fragile and malleable. However, they are precious and vital resources and reference points in the construction and reconstruction of self and society. This fragility and fluidity, as observed in the realm of memory and memoir, imbues history with a vital emotive and creative potency that enables the past to live on through the stories, identities, and interactions between and among people in the present – it is this that makes the future imaginable, and indeed, possible.

The experiences of Mizrahi memoirists demonstrate the vital importance of retaining the records of a diversity of perspectives and past experiences. As James notes of Myerhoff's contention, "such re-membered lives are moral documents and their function is salvific, inevitably implying, 'All this has not been for nothing'".[321] Just as there is diversity among Mizrahim, so too there is diversity within understandings of Jewish history and identity more broadly. In *Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements* I looked at the relationship between Holocaust memory and the emergence of Mizrahi memoirs as a source of expression for alternative perspectives on being Jewish, which are based instead upon the common experience of displacement and yet also cultural differences. I showed how Holocaust memory has not silenced the voices of Mizrahim, but has, in combination with socio-political circumstances, served to enable these voices to be heard. In turn, Mizrahi histories and identities do not present a 'threat' to understandings of being Jewish but rather broaden and deepen our sense of the richness of diverse cultures and experiences within Judaism as a whole. I expanded upon this further in *Chapter Four: Senses-scapes and*

[320] James, 'Dona Maria's Story', 293.
[321] James, 'Dona Maria's Story', 155.

Soul Food in terms of differences and similarities in cuisine. Mizrahi experiences also challenge the conventional understanding of 'Diaspora' that is currently informed by Zionist thought in a Jewish context. This was a tension examined in *Chapter Three: Roots, Routes, and Trees*, where I showed how Mizrahi understandings of displacement and dispersal can offer alternative perspectives on 'diaspora' and 'homeland', while still being firmly located in a Jewish context. Finally, in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters* and *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions* I looked at how the experience of displacement has resulted in different priorities and perspectives between local remaining communities (both Jewish and non-Jewish) and Mizrahim now living overseas in new locations. A diversity of perspectives also extends to intergenerational understandings of heritage and identity among Mizrahim themselves, such as the efforts that the next generation will go to in order to understand their parents' experiences, and incorporate those experiences into their own personal histories, memories and narratives. Across all chapters I showed that equal weight needs to be placed on the personal, local, national, and transnational levels – we can not discount these entangled layers, even in the era of globalisation. As Jan Assman captures so well:

> If "We Are What We Remember", the truth of memory lies in the identity that it shapes. This truth is subject to time so that it changes with every new identity and every new present. It lies in the story, not as it happened, but as it lives on and unfolds in collective memory. If "We Are What We Remember", we are the stories that we are able to tell about ourselves. 'We have, each of us, a life-story, an inner narrative – whose continuity, whose sense, is one's life. It might be said that each of us constructs and lives a 'narrative', and that this narrative is us, our identities' [Oliver Sacks]. The same concept of a narrative organisation or memory and self-construction applies to the collective level . . . these are the stories which a group, a society or a culture lives by.[322]

These stories are those we call history. Mizrahi memoirs not only constitute the personal histories and stories of their writers but also encompass the narratives of the groups to which they belong, including at the national and transnational levels. A core focus throughout this dissertation was the examination of the memory dynamics present in the context of displacement and resettlement, as represented in Mizrahi memoirs, and the relationship of these to history and identity. I found that the dynamics follow the pattern of 'multidirectional entanglements' – a composite that is made up of several frameworks. These include multidirectional memory and screen memory, as described by Michael Rothberg, which together are enhanced by Ella Shohat's insight for relational identities,

[322] Jan Assman, 'Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism' in *The Collective Memory Reader,* eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzsky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 210-211.

Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory, and Svetlana Boym's theory of the off-modern.[323] I found that the dynamics present between histories, memories, and identities in the memoirs I have studied were multidirectional, multidimensional, multilayered, and entangled.

In Mizrahi memoirs, multidirectional memory is present through the flows of memories and meanings between and across different places and spaces and the articulation and re-articulation of these visions of the past in new and different ways. Driven by the needs of the present, these are constructed, interpreted, and re-interpreted, through dialogue in the narratives as well as through the audiences of these texts. Configurations that initially appeared contradictory or conflicting were shown to help other narratives to come forth, as I demonstrated for Mizrahi accounts in relation to both Holocaust memory and Muslim memoirs in *Chapter One: Introductory Overview* and *Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements,* and in the actions of different stakeholders in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters* and *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions.* I showed in *Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food* and *Chapter Five: Dreaming of Return* how screen memory can assist our understanding of the interplay of different memories and concepts of identity as they emerge at different crucial points in time.

I also demonstrated how the dynamics of memory, identities, and histories were highly multidimensional. This was encompassed in the different dimensions of the senses, dream, emotions, and spirituality. A common thread in almost every chapter was the emotional and psychological impact of displacement and the legacy of this past, including the affective yearning of nostalgia and return. The senses became a focus in *Chapter Four: Sense-scapes and Soul Food* where I showed how crucial *kashrut* is to Jewish identities and how vital sensory memories, smellscapes, and cuisine are to retaining a sense of meaningful history and present self in the context of displacement, dispersal, and resettlement. Sacred sites as a focus for memories and spirituality were also analysed in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters* and *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions.* Furthermore, dream narratives as a

[323] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Ella Shohat, 'Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab-Jews', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 330-358; Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions: Columbus, Palestine, and Arab-Jews', in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices,* ed. Ella Shohat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 201-232; Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Post Memory' in *The Collective Memory Reader,* eds. Jeffery K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 346-347; Svetlana Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory', in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory,* eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 151-165.

mode of representing past experience and expressing present emotions were revealed in-depth in *Chapter Five: Dreaming of Return.*

I found that memory dynamics were highly multilayered. This multilayering can be understood literally in terms of the different layers of, and changes to, the urban fabric over time as explored in *Chapter Six: Sacred Sites and Mundane Matters* and *Chapter Seven: (In)accessible Visions*. It can also be understood figuratively as different layers of memory, discourse, and belief that can be conceptualised as radiating out from, and lying in, temporal and spatial layers around texts and sites. These are not static or fixed but are fluid and come in, and out of, awareness and collective focus according to the needs of the present and the dynamics of screen memory, as analysed in-depth in *Chapter Two: Multidirectional Entanglements.*

Finally, the dynamics of memories, histories, and identities are deeply entangled. As I have demonstrated throughout all chapters, Mizrahi memoirs represent a diversity of perspectives and experiences which are often implicated in each other and caught up in complex discursive configurations. They are blurred, multiple, and cross easy divides and false dichotomies promoted in the media about Middle Eastern and Jewish identities and histories. They are hybrid, creative, and messy. They may be driven by the apparently conflicting priorities of different people in different spaces and times, but they nonetheless exist together as part of a broader conversation. These dynamics challenge the linearity of modernist thought and are far more akin to the disrupted patterns of the off-modern which enable a more nuanced understanding of post-displacement realities.[324] They exist and move in the spaces between, across, and beside those of others as well as in the foreground and background. They speak of disruption and breakages, but also of repairs and re-knitting. They are Mizrahi experiences.

My findings yield several significant contributions to knowledge. Firstly, this dissertation adds to calls by Ella Shohat to challenge widely held assumptions about identities and histories and, instead, move towards a more relational understanding of Jewish identity in the Middle East.[325] Mizrahi histories and experiences tend to be absent from general knowledge and are often overlooked by scholars. My work calls for a renewed appreciation of Mizrahim and the diversity present within Jewish memories, identities, and histories. In

[324] Boym, 'Off-Modern Homecoming in Art and Theory'; Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.
[325] Shohat, 'Rupture and Return'; Shohat, 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions'.

doing so, it adds to and helps to open up further conversations towards taking a more equitable approach in Jewish studies and Middle Eastern studies. I reveal the need for a greater appreciation of complexity and diversity and a more holistic approach to understanding and representing the histories and lived realities of displaced and dispersed peoples.

Secondly, I have contributed to an advance in theoretical knowledge in memory studies by expanding upon current models and taking these into more challenging contexts. My overall intervention feeds into a debate over the model of memory dynamics that is most accurate and useful. Through my case-study of Mizrahi memories, I demonstrate that the model of competitive memory is inadequate in cases such as these. I instead propose an alternative – the composite framework of multidirectional entanglements – which, I argue, better reflects the memory dynamics present in the representations I have studied. My contribution extends and enhances our understanding of the dynamics between histories, memories, and identities and prompts a more nuanced and sophisticated language for talking about, and thinking through, a far greater diversity of human experiences and scenarios in memory studies. I advance our frameworks into a more challenging space than simply that of the nation-state. I move our conversation more into the space of transition, exchange, hybridity, multiculturalism, postmodernism, and the off-modern.

Thirdly, one of the significant insights in this project is to build upon Gillian Whitlock's argument for memoir as 'soft weapons' that can help to change perspectives and build moments of empathy, even in contexts of political entanglement.[326] Strongly interlinked with this is the insight that memoir's ability to work in the realm of affect and emotion is psychologically beneficial for memoirists recovering from trauma.[327] Given that Mizrahim are not well recognised in the West, there is great potential for their memoirs to do just that. Their accounts challenge the simplistic binaries and over-generalisations of our view of the world. This is especially pertinent at the moment, given the world's focus on the Middle East and concerns in the West across the political spectrum about displacement and migration. Mizrahi memoirs function as ready prompts for a "productive pause" in the midst of these highly politicised struggles and debates.[328]

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326 Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*.
327 Mardi J. Horowitz and Steen P. Reidbord, 'Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 343-357; Kent D. Harber and James W. Pennebaker, 'Overcoming Traumatic Memories', in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory: Research and Theory,* ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 1992), 359-387.
328 Whitlock, *Soft Weapons,* 200.

All projects have limitations; this one is no exception. This study examined published Mizrahi memoirs that were written, and designed for, an English-language audience. My findings, therefore, are restricted to this body of texts written by Mizrahim who originated, or have heritage from, Iraq, Iran, and Egypt. There is also a body of work in French from Mizrahim originating specifically from North Africa, who have closer ties to French histories and identities. This was outside the scope of this project, but it would be interesting to see if the dynamics present in these texts are similar to, or different from, those that have been studied here. This project also focused on published memoirs rather than oral histories, which may offer additional, and perhaps even alternative, perspectives. Regrettably, in-person interviews were considered to be outside the scope of this project owing to limitations of time and funding. It would be productive, however, to learn more about the dynamics of memories, histories, and identities present in this oral mode of narrative representation. Furthermore, it would be fruitful to see if 'multidirectional entanglements' are present in the representations of other displaced groups or if a different configuration of dynamics instead exists. My findings have shown the importance of life writing, cooking, and recipe-sharing as productive therapeutic activities for migrants and refugees recovering from trauma, and as constructive ways to begin dialogue and initially to build bridges between and among communities and their histories. Further research into these and other methods of developing resilience, fostering personal wellbeing, and the rebuilding of familial and community networks during and after displacement and other disasters and crises would certainly be timely and is much needed.

The social and political circumstances of the world today highlight the need for this type of research. A crucial 'what now' is to continue to expand, use, record, and develop more accurate models of memory dynamics in as great a diversity of human societies, cultures, experiences, and representations as possible, in order to see what works, what does not, and to enhance the connection between the theoretical and lived realities. It is here that understanding is needed, and it is here that understanding can make a difference. I advocate for a renewed appreciation in history and memory studies for a more humanistic understanding of historical experience and writing that takes into account the senses, emotions, subjectivity, personal storytelling, narrative, and memoir, in our pursuit to learn more about memories, identities, and histories. In order to be properly equipped to continue to analyse and write relevant and representative histories and analyses, we need to pay far greater attention to these 'spaces between' and to frameworks of memory dynamics such as that which I have proposed. We need to expand our capabilities to include a deeper

appreciation for those more 'challenging' and subjective sources such as memoir: for memoir stands at several interesting intersections; we must engage with memoir if we are to create more inclusive histories.

The stakes are high. Mizrahi experiences were those of discrimination, exclusion, expulsion, dispersal, and mass displacement. These were the experiences of refugees. Right now, across the world, we are again seeing political shifts, cultural reconfigurations, racism, war, unprecedented upheavals and mass movements of women, men, and children. As the United Nations Development Program has observed:

> More and more people are on the move today compared to any other point in human history . . . Conflict and violence have forcibly displaced 60 million people worldwide, over 38 million of whom are internally displaced, and 19 million refugees. This is the highest number of displaced persons the world has seen since World War II.[329]

My 'what now' is a challenge and a call to action to scholars not to shy away but to instead embrace those challenging topics. Complex stories are needed to help reflect and understand the past, present, and future experiences of the complexity of humanity. We need to be critically aware, and to enhance our knowledge, frameworks, approaches, and systems to *be* more inclusive and to encompass greater diversity and complexity, so that we – as scholars – are ready to properly combat ignorance, discrimination, exclusion, and inequity where we see it and to encourage others to do the same. Just as Schinasi-Silver was driven to write – let us do the same – "for justice, for peace, and for reconciliation".[330]

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[329] United Nations Development Program, 'Migration, refugees and displacement', *United Nations Development Program,* 2017, accessed 2017, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/development-planning-and-inclusive-sustainable-growth/migration-refugees-and-displacement.html>.

[330] Schinasi-Silver, *42 Keys to the Second Exodus,* 8.

Appendix One: Overview of Memoirs

This appendix provides an overview of all memoirs studied and cited within this thesis in alphabetical order. Full reference to these texts is also provided in the *List of Citations* following this section. The total number of memoirs studied for this project is 19.

Author:	**Aciman, Andre.**
Title:	***Out of Egypt: A Memoir***
Publisher:	Picador, New York.
Year published:	1999
Place of origin:	Alexandria, Egypt.
Place of resettlement:	United States of America (USA) after also living in Italy and France.
Time span covered:	Early 1900s to 1965.
Date of departure:	Autumn 1965.
Physical trip back:	Not mentioned in this memoir.
Focus:	Aciman details the different characters in his family and depicts the interpersonal, cultural, and social dramas that unfolded during their time living in Egypt up to the last Seder shared before departure.

Author:	**Aciman, Andre.**
Title:	***False Papers: essays on Exile and Memory***
Publisher:	Picador, New York.
Year published:	2000
Place of origin:	Alexandria, Egypt.
Place of resettlement:	USA after also living in Italy and France.
Time span covered:	1950s up to late-1990s.
Date of departure:	1965

Physical trip back:	Details one return trip without a specific date.
Focus:	Aciman shares his reflections on memory and identity from the perspective of being an exile, with each chapter detailing an episode of introspection at different times and places post-displacement.

Author:	**Benjamin, Marina.**
Title:	***Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad***
Publisher:	Bloomsbury, London.
Year published:	2007
Place of origin:	London, England. Family originated from Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Benjamin was of the first generation to be born in England.
Time span covered:	Early 1900s up to 2006.
Date of departure:	September 1950
Physical trip back:	Benjamin visited Baghdad in March 2004
Focus:	Benjamin's family memoir focuses on the life of her grandmother, Regina, and her extended family as well as the history of the Baghdadi Jewish community and her own identity.

Author:	**Collette, Rossant.**
Title:	***Apricots on the Nile: A Memoir with Recipes***
Publisher:	Bloomsbury, London.
Year published:	2001
Place of origin:	Born in Paris, France. Raised in Cairo, Egypt, from 1937.
Place of resettlement:	In 1847 left to live in Paris, France. Resettled in New York, USA, in 1955.
Time span covered:	Main focus is 1937 to 1979.
Date of departure:	1947
Physical trip back:	Visited briefly in 1979.

Focus:	Rossant provides a detailed reminiscence of her time growing up in Egypt told through reference to her favourite recipes.

Author:	**Fathi, Saul Silas.**
Title:	***Full Circle: Escape from Baghdad and the Return***
Publisher:	Saul Silas Fathi, New York.
Year published:	2005.
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	New York (USA), after also spending time living in the State of Israel and Brazil.
Time span covered:	1938 to 2003
Date of departure:	1948
Physical trip back:	Never returned to revisit Iraq
Focus:	Fathi provides a detailed account of his life including his escape from Iraq, life in the State of Israel, Brazil, the USA, and his deployment to South Korea with the US armed forces.

Author:	**Goldin, Farideh.**
Title:	***Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman***
Publisher:	Brandeis University Press, Hanover.
Year published:	2003.
Place of origin:	Shiraz, Iran.
Place of resettlement:	The United States of America (USA).
Time span covered:	The main body of the memoir spans from the 1950s through to the late-1970s when Goldin resettled in the United States of America. An Epilogue details a family wedding in September 2001 a few days before the Twin Towers attacks on 11 September, 2001.
Date of departure:	Left Iran for the USA in July 1975. Arrived in New York on 4 July 1975.
Physical trip back:	Goldin made one brief return trip to Shiraz in the summer of 1976. Her family also relocated to the USA in 1979.
Focus:	Goldin's memoir details her experiences of growing up in Shiraz as

	an Iranian Jewish woman and her decision to resettle in the USA.

Author:	**Haddad, Haskel M.**
Title:	***Flight from Babylon: Iraq, Iran, Israel, America***
Publisher:	McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York.
Year published:	1986
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Boston, USA.
Time span covered:	1930s to 1953.
Date of departure:	Left Iraq in May 1950 for Jewish refugee camp outside Tehran, Iran. On 30 August 1950 left Iran for State of Israel. On 1 August 1953 left the State of Israel to resettle in Boston, USA.
Physical trip back:	No return trip to Iraq mentioned.
Focus:	Haddad focuses on his upbringing, professional trajectory, romantic relationships, and the discrimination he faced as an Iraqi Jew.

Author:	**Hakakian, Roya.**
Title:	***Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran***
Publisher:	Three Rivers Press, New York.
Year published:	2004
Place of origin:	Tehran, Iran.
Place of resettlement:	New York, USA.
Time span covered:	1970s to July 1999.
Date of departure:	1984
Physical trip back:	No return trip mentioned
Focus:	Hakakian's memoir details the awakening of her own complex identity as a woman and Iranian Jew in the lead up to, during, and after, the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Author:	**Horesh, Joshua.**
Title:	***An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad: Memoir of an Israeli Intelligence Officer***
Publisher:	McFarland & Company Inc., Jefferson.
Year published:	1997
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Florida (USA), after also living and working in the State of Israel, Turkey, and Austria.
Time span covered:	1920s to late 1970s.
Date of departure:	1938
Physical trip back:	No return trip to Iraq is mentioned
Focus:	Horesh takes an approach that focuses on political history and his professional trajectory within British Intelligence and the Mossad.

Author:	**Jawary, Sabiha Abi David.**
Title:	***Baghdad, I Remember***
Publisher:	Makor Jewish Community Library, Caulfield South.
Year published:	2001
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Melbourne, Australia.
Time span covered:	Early 1900s to 1999 with a focus on the 1940s and 1950s.
Date of departure:	1949
Physical trip back:	No return trip to Iraq mentioned
Focus:	Jawary shares the story of herself, her family, and her resettlement in Australia as well as a very detailed look at the way of life for the Baghdadi Jewish community prior to displacement.

Author:	**Kattan, Naim.**
Title:	***Farewell, Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad***
Publisher:	Souvenir Press, London.
Year published:	2009
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Montreal, Canada, after living for a period in France during his studies.
Time span covered:	1941 to late 1940s.
Date of departure:	Late 1940s.
Physical trip back:	No return trip is mentioned.
Focus:	Kattan focuses on his friends, interactions local literati, and his coming of age in Baghdad up to his departure on a scholarship to study in France as the situation in Iraq increasingly deteriorates.

Author:	**Kazzaz, David.**
Title:	***Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews.***
Publisher:	Sepher-Hermon Press Inc., New York.
Year published:	1999
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Denver, USA, after also living in Beirut, Lebanon, and Jerusalem in the State of Israel.
Time span covered:	1920s to late 1960s.
Date of departure:	Kazzaz left in 1941 while his fiance left in 1950.
Physical trip back:	No return trip to Iraq is mentioned.
Focus:	Kazzaz mixes the life stories of both himself and his wife with observations on social, cultural, and political history as well as religious reflection and psychological insights.

Author:	**Lagnado, Lucette.**
Title:	***The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World.***
Publisher:	HarperCollins Publishers, New York.
Year published:	2007
Place of origin:	Cairo, Egypt.
Place of resettlement:	New York, USA, after also living in Paris, France.
Time span covered:	The memoir covers from 1942 to 1982 while an Epilogue includes Lagnado's trip to Egypt in Spring 2005.
Date of departure:	1963
Physical trip back:	One brief return journey in Spring 2005.
Focus:	Lagnado shares her own life-story and that of her father, Leon, including family life in Egypt and the struggles faced during displacement to Paris and resettlement in the USA.

Author:	**Sabar, Ariel.**
Title:	***My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq***
Publisher:	Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill.
Year published:	2008
Place of origin:	Sabar was born in Los Angeles, USA, while his father was born in the remote city of Zakho in Kurdish Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Sabar's father resettled in the USA after also living in the State of Israel. Sabar grew up in the USA.
Time span covered:	Early 1930s to 2006.
Date of departure:	April 1951.
Physical trip back:	Sabar travelled to Zakho firstly with his father in the summer of 2005 and then alone in May 2006.
Focus:	Sabar explores his identity and heritage through retelling his father's life story and detailing his own trips to revisit Zakho.

Author:	**Schinasi-Silver, Vivianne.**
Title:	***42 Keys to the Second Exodus: Memoir of a life, the seeds of which were planted in Egypt and flourished in Canada***
Publisher:	Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Shoreline.
Year published:	2007
Place of origin:	Cairo, Egypt.
Place of resettlement:	Montreal, Canada.
Time span covered:	Early 1900s to 2006.
Date of departure:	March 1957.
Physical trip back:	Schinasi-Silver revisited Egypt in 1998.
Focus:	Schinasi-Silver weaves together poems, photographs, and prose to tell the story of herself and her family both in Egypt and afterwards.

Author:	**Shabi, Rachel.**
Title:	***Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands***
Publisher:	Yale University Press, New Haven.
Year published:	2009
Place of origin:	Shabi was born in the State of Israel but grew up in England. Her parents are Iraqi Jews; her father born in Basra and her mother in Baghdad.
Place of resettlement:	Shabi's parents moved first to the State of Israel before resettling in England.
Time span covered:	Late 1930s to late 2000s.
Date of departure:	Between 1948 and early 1950s.
Physical trip back:	No return trip is mentioned.
Focus:	Shabi investigates the complexities of Jewish identity by weaving together her story and that of her family with political history and cultural discrimination faced both in Iraq and the State of Israel.

Author:	**Shamash, Violette.**
Title:	***Memoirs of Eden: A Journey through Jewish Baghdad***
Publisher:	Forum Books Ltd., Virginia Water.
Year published:	2008
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	London, England, after also living in Bombay (India), Palestine, and the State of Israel.
Time span covered:	Late 1800s to 2003.
Date of departure:	1941 or 1942.
Physical trip back:	No return trip is mentioned.
Focus:	Shamash provides a detailed account of Iraqi Jewish life and customs in Baghdad from the late 19th century up to the 1941 Farhood, including the story of her family's departure and resettlement.

Author:	**Somekh, Sasson.**
Title:	***Baghdad, Yesterday: The Making of an Arab Jew***
Publisher:	Ibis Editions, Jerusalem.
Year published:	2007
Place of origin:	Baghdad, Iraq.
Place of resettlement:	Tel Aviv, the State of Israel.
Time span covered:	1930s to 1950s.
Date of departure:	1951
Physical trip back:	No return trip mentioned.
Focus:	Somekh reminisces about family life and his upbringing in Baghdad as well as the development of his identity as a Jew and a writer.

Author:	**Zonana, Joyce.**
Title:	***Dream Homes: From Cairo to Alexandria, an Exile's Journey***
Publisher:	The Feminist Press, New York.
Year published:	2008.
Place of origin:	Cairo, Egypt.
Place of resettlement:	Alexandria, USA.
Time span covered:	1940s to September 2007
Date of departure:	1951
Physical trip back:	Return visit to Cairo made in 1999.
Focus:	Zonana shares her own story and that of her family with a focus on the development of her identity and relationship with her heritage.

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