

Homelands and Diasporas

Homelands and Diasporas:

*Perspectives on Jewish
Culture in the Mediterranean
and Beyond*

A Festschrift for
Emanuela Trevisan Semi

Edited by

Dario Miccoli,
Marcella Simoni
and Giorgia Foscarini

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contributors.....	vii
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Introduction	x
Dario Miccoli, Marcella Simoni and Giorgia Foscari	

Part I – Essays

Chapter One.....	2
No Witness to Bear? The Settlement of Jews along the West Coast of Africa	
Tudor Parfitt	

Chapter Two	14
Ermias Essayas: A ‘Forgotten’ Ethiopian Jew in Jerusalem	
Shalva Weil	

Chapter Three	26
From Synagogue to Mosque: My Grandfather’s House in the Old Mellah of Meknès	
Yolande Cohen and Nouredine Harrami	

Chapter Four	40
Jewish Memories and Space in South Eastern Poland: The Case of Brama Grodzka-NN Theatre and Heritage Centre	
Giorgia Foscari	

Chapter Five	54
“Because our path has no end”: Diaspora and Land of Israel in the Novels of Haim Sabato	
Dario Miccoli	

Chapter Six	70
Frontlines between Religion and Laicity in the Jewish State	
Ilan Greilsammer	

Chapter Seven.....	86
Playing with History: Toys in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s	
Marcella Simoni	
Chapter Eight.....	112
Why is it Difficult for the Israelis to Make Peace with the Palestinians?	
Uncivil Society and New War in Contemporary Israel	
Uri Ben-Eliezer	
Chapter Nine.....	144
Recognising (In)justice: Policies and Identities in Beer Sheva	
Oren Yiftachel with the collaboration of Ravit Goldhaber and Roy Nuriel	

Part II – Testimonies

Giampiero Bellingeri	172
Elisa Bianchi.....	174
Rosa Caroli and Antonio Trampus	176
Elena Chiti.....	179
Paola Gandolfi	181
Fabrizio Lelli	186
Davide Mano	187
Maria Grazia Masetti-Rouault	188
Monica Miniati	191
Piera Rossetto	194
Alvise Vianello.....	197
Ida Zilio-Grandi.....	201

Part III – The Crop

Publications of Emanuela Trevisan Semi, 1970-2018	204
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INTRODUCTION: ACROSS AND BEYOND THE GREAT SEA

DARIO MICCOLI, MARCELLA SIMONI
AND GIORGIA FOSCARINI

In the course of centuries, Jews had numerous homelands and were divided in dozens of different diasporic communities. Some of these were and are located in places far away from the biblical Land of Israel, such as the US, Latin America, Africa, India and China. Other diasporas, many of which nowadays are largely vanished, were instead very close to the ancestral Jewish homeland: think of the Jews of Syria or Iraq. For all, the Land of Israel—and, after 1948, the State of Israel—and its Mediterranean surroundings represent a familiar scenario, in which biblical memories and future hopes are located. But what is this sea all about? And where are its boundaries to be drawn?

For the French historian Fernand Braudel, the Mediterranean is “not a landscape, but innumerable landscapes. Not a sea but a succession of seas.”¹ David Abulafia understands it as a space of many names: *mare nostrum*, *Mittelmeer* or, in Hebrew, *Yam ha-gadol* (Hebrew: “Great Sea.”)² Nowadays, the Mediterranean seems to have lost much of its evocative power as a sea of encounters and dialogue, to become a divisive space, full of visible and invisible frontiers that bespeak both old and new ethno-religious and national struggles. It is true that if one looks at the Mediterranean from the point of view of classical Judaism, one of its alleged key-features—that is connectivity and the existence of social, cultural and commercial exchanges between different people of the region

This introduction has been written collectively by the editors; specifically, Dario Miccoli is the author of pp. x-xii, Giorgia Foscariini of pp. xiii-xv and Marcella Simoni collaborated to the final revision.

¹ Fernand Braudel, “Méditerranée,” in *La Méditerranée. L'espace et l'histoire*, ed. Fernand Braudel (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), 8.

² David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), XXIII.

—does not seem to be so prominent, since a kind of particularistic identity often dominated biblical Jewish culture. Even though an element of particularism has been always present in Jewish history, early modern and modern Mediterranean Jewish societies took a more ambivalent path when it came to intercommunal and interethnic relations: one of proximity and reciprocity, of exchange and confrontation.³ The Mediterranean and its outer ramifications—that at times include continental Europe, Africa and other territories—were for many both a homeland and a diaspora, a space of refuge and where to build a better life, but also a region of conflict and persecution.

Homelands and Diasporas understands the Mediterranean as a historical and socio-anthropological trope through which looking at a variety of Jewish experiences of dialogue and clash, exchange and enmity, migration and settlement, both inside and outside the spatial boundaries and geographical reality of the Mediterranean region.⁴ The former is a point of departure, from where to start travelling through Jewish history and identity and try answering different questions that are crucial for the field of Jewish Studies in the twenty-first century.

The volume takes ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora’ as two overarching themes piecing together contributions that, in some cases, have to do with quite different topics and different methodological perspectives. In relation to the notion of ‘homeland’—intended either as the mythical and biblical Land of Israel or, later on, as one of the many empires and nation-states where Jews lived, ending with the advent of Zionism and the birth of the State of Israel—the volume looks at it as a space where Jewish identities develop and are discussed. It can be a real, physical territory or an imagined one, or in some cases take the contours of a city, a nation, a feeling of belonging or else.

Secondly, there is no need to acknowledge to what extent the ‘diaspora’ has been crucial in the formation of a Jewish cultural identity, both before and after the diffusion of the Zionist movement. Considering the boom in Diaspora Studies and the recent advancements of the field, it might be useful to conceive this category in a nuanced manner as “a synchronic cultural situation applicable to people who participate in a

³ See: Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), esp. 21-44. Consider also the five-volume work by Shlomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967-1988).

⁴ David Abulafia, “Mediterraneans,” in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. William Vernon Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64-93.

doubled cultural (and frequently linguistic) location”.⁵ More than of one Jewish diaspora, one should perhaps talk of many diasporas, each experiencing Jewishness in its own way—so as to confirm that Jews, Amos Oz wrote, always have been “a plural noun with numerous singularities.”⁶ Thus, in the volume we reflect upon how different Jewish communities communicated and exchanged ideas, what kind of traditions and customs developed in Jewries far away from the ancestral homeland, and that came in contact with other religions and ethnicities; how Jews remember and express themselves in the literary arena or, finally, how the birth of the State of Israel modified the idea of diaspora itself and what consequences this has at a sociological, political and cultural level.

The organisation of the volume

This volume is divided in three parts. Part I—made of nine chapters—is a collection of essays by various scholars who have worked and researched with Emanuela Trevisan Semi, or who have been inspired by her research and intellectual travels to carry their studies further.

In the first chapter, Tudor Parfitt, linking his work to that of Emanuela Trevisan Semi on Jews and their presence in the African continent, treats the question of settlement of Jews in West Africa. In particular, he deals with Jewish influences along the coast of Africa from the sixteenth century on. The second chapter by Shalva Weil, spans over Emanuela Trevisan’s interest on Ethiopian Jewry, and more specifically on the figure of Jacques Faitlovitch—one of the first scholars to research on the situation of the *Beta Israel* in Ethiopia—and then on the life of Eremias Essayas, one of his forgotten disciples. The third contribution by Yolande Cohen and Nouredine Harrami originates from yet another of Emanuela Trevisan’s research path, that on the memory of the Jewish communities in North Africa, notably Morocco. Dealing with the history of a former synagogue in Meknès, this chapter sheds light on a number of interesting ethnological aspects of Jewish life in the *mellah* of Meknès in colonial and contemporary times. On the same line, dealing with the memories of Jewish communities outside Israel, the fourth chapter by Giorgia Foscari turns to Poland, to analyse the history and activities of the Grodzka Gate as the case of a cultural institution preserving Jewish memory and material

⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *A Travelling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 19.

⁶ Amos Oz and Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Jews and Words* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 176.

cultural heritage in what once was a central corner of the Ashkenazi world. The following four chapters shift the focus from the Diaspora to the State of Israel. In the fifth chapter, Dario Miccoli discusses an Israeli rabbi and writer, Haim Sabato—born in Cairo in the 1950s and nowadays known as the ‘Sephardic Agnon’—to see how the Diaspora and the Land of Israel are portrayed in his literary works. The sixth contribution, by Ilan Greilsammer, deals with the present day Israeli socio-political situation, regarded from the standpoint of the relationships between religion and secularism, in a state defined since its inception as ‘Jewish’. The seventh chapter of this collection, by Marcella Simoni, follows up on another interest of Emanuela Trevisan Semi, the role of museums in processes of national identity formation in Israel or in a diasporic context. Simoni’s paper on the role of toys in the formation of national identity in the 1950s and 1960s in Israel was inspired by various exhibitions at the Eretz Israel Museum and other centres in Israel. The eighth contribution by Uri Ben-Eliezer treats the case of the so-called ‘new wars’ as a mode of waging war in the post-Cold War era. Using the Gaza Wars as an example, Ben-Eliezer frames a new theory to explain such events, discussing the Israeli civil society as well as more traditional actors such as political leaders and institutions. Finally, the last contribution is by Oren Yiftachel who wrote a paper in collaboration with Ravit Goldhaber and Roy Nuriel. Here, they explore the relations between recognition and justice, in the context of the unresolved land and planning disputes between Bedouin Arabs and the Israeli state in the area surrounding the city of Beer Sheva, in southern Israel.

For reasons of time, diverging academic interests or family matters, not all the friends, pupils and present and former colleagues of Emanuela have been able to write a scholarly piece of research to be included in this volume on *Homelands and Diasporas*. Despite its geographical breadth, it still maintains a focus on Jewish history and Israel Studies and Emanuela Trevisan Semi’s research can hardly be contained in one box, regardless of how stretched. For this reason, in Part II, the editors have collected a set of testimonies of people that, in a more informal tone, tell their personal and professional encounter, intellectual exchange, friendship and the fruitful cooperation developed in the course of the years (and decades) with Emanuela Trevisan Semi. Finally, the volume ends with Part III, that we have called ‘the crop’, i.e. a bibliographical appendix listing the publications of Emanuela Trevisan Semi from the journal articles published soon after her graduation in the early 1970s up until today. We are sure that the list will continue to grow even more rapidly now and we are looking forward to new exciting discoveries and debates.

For the editors and for all those that, in various ways, contributed to *Homelands and Diasporas*, this is our way to honour Emanuela's academic itinerary and her great contribution to the field of Jewish Studies. For all of us she is a colleague, a mentor, a professor and most of all a sincere friend. This volume is a collective and much heartfelt thank you for the rigorous training, the generosity and the kindness that we all received over her long career, across and beyond the shores of the Great Sea.

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PART I –

ESSAYS

CHAPTER ONE

NO WITNESS TO BEAR? THE SETTLEMENT OF JEWS ALONG THE WEST COAST OF AFRICA

TUDOR PARFITT

The interrelationship between the African continent and the Jews has been one of the important strands in the work of Emanuela Trevisan. In this paper I should like to examine little studied question of the settlement of Jews in west Africa. Following the persecution of Jews in the Iberian Peninsula it is well known that the remarkable energy of New Christians - whether as Judaisers, committed Christians or agnostics-played a major role in the Iberian conquest and transformation of the territories brought within an European orbit at the end of the fifteenth century. Their role in the Americas, the Ottoman Empire, India and Europe has been well documented. But the presence and impact of Spanish and Portuguese Jews in Africa over time has been somewhat neglected. The recent work of Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta, Kagan and Morgan, among other scholars has begun to rectify this with respect mainly to the Senegal coast.¹

Since the appearance of the work of these and other scholars the broad consensus has been that the only Jewish communities to have established themselves in sub-Saharan Africa in early modern times were these small Sephardi-African communities of Senegal's *Petite Côte*, a stretch of coastline

¹ Tobias Green, "Further Considerations on the Sephardim of the Petite Côte," *History in Africa*, 32 (2005):165-83. See also: Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism 1500-1800* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Mark Peter and José da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Daniel Lis, *Jewish Identity Among The Igbo Of Nigeria: Israel's Lost Tribe and The Question of Belonging in the Jewish State* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2015).

south of Dakar. By the 1660s, according to the Cape Verdean merchant Lemos Coelho, Jewish identity was no longer a feature of the Luso-African descendants of the communities of the *Petite Côte*. “Today” he wrote “by God’s mercy these ports are free from this wicked people [the Jews] and there are only some *mestiços*, their children, who in my time have been reduced to the Catholic religion.”²

As far as anyone knows with the disappearance of these communities of the *Petite Côte* there were no Jewish communities anywhere else along the whole west African coast. A couple of hundred years after Lemos Coelho’s unpleasant comment, Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) the Americo-Liberian writer and diplomat noted that “the great body of the “Dark Continent” has been apparently overlooked by the Jews.... There is not, to my knowledge, a single synagogue in West Africa along three thousand miles of coast, and probably not two dozen representatives of God’s chosen people in that whole extent of country—not a Jewish institution of any kind—either for commercial, religious or educational purposes. Have the Jews no witness to bear in inter-tropical Africa?”³

The existence in modern times of Judaizing movements or of groups with some apparently Judaic characteristics in sub-Saharan Africa, has usually been attributed not to the influence of any incursions of actual Jews or *conversos* such as the ones referred to by Coelho, but to the activity of European colonists and missionaries, who ‘constructed’ such communities sometimes as an exercise in comparative religion on the colonial frontier and more recently to the agency of modern forms of communication, such as the Internet.⁴ However, as we shall see, traces of Portuguese and Spanish Jews who had fled the Inquisition may be found in various parts of West Africa until very much later than the mid seventeenth century and their influence on the local population and therefore perhaps on contemporary Judaic manifestations may need to be reconsidered.

² Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas*.

³ Hollis R. Lynch, ed., *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot* (London: Frank Cass and Co, 1971).

⁴ See: Daniel Lis, *Jewish Identity Among The Igbo Of Nigeria: Israel's Lost Tribe and The Question of Belonging in the Jewish State* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2015); David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Edith Bruder, *The Black Jews of Africa: History, Religion, Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tudor Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: the History of a Myth* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2002); Id., *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Mark Peter and Josè da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora*.

Let us first take a look at what is known of possible Jewish influences along the west coast of Africa starting in the sixteenth century. As we have seen, groups of Sephardi origin along the Senegal coast were almost from the start mixed Afro-Judaic communities. By the middle of the sixteenth century some knowledge of these black Jewish communities was widespread throughout the Portuguese-speaking world. No less a figure than the archbishop of distant Goa, Dom Gaspar de Leao, wrote about black Jews along the coast of Africa. In his introduction to a polemical anti-Jewish work written around 1565, some five years after the establishment of the Inquisition in Goa, he included a general denunciation of Jews who had rejected the Christian message. He wrote: "Judaism is an illness, one that lasted 2,000 years and claimed 2,000 million souls, and had come about because the Jews had originally refused remedy from the hand of the ultimate *médico*, Jesus Christ." This "illness" which afflicted the Jews had the effect that wherever "they have lived they have been cast down and rejected so that even the black Jews of Guinea suffer this curse."⁵ How does one understand this? What he no doubt meant is that even those Jews who had escaped the clutches of the Inquisition and had established themselves safely in Guinea, as Jews, and who even had the support of the local authorities, were not as well off as they imagined and in any event could serve as a reminder to the faithful of the consequences of rejecting Christ and could be sure that the curse would follow them. Whatever is implied by this reference it seems as if by the 1560s the black Jews of Guinea had become a byword for Jews who despite everything had survived Christian attempts to stamp them out: even the black Jews of Guinea. Was Dom Gaspar referring to the well-known communities of la Petite Côte which is situated rather to the north of what was considered Guinea, or was he referring to some other community further down the coast in the vast area known as Guinea or South Guinea which stretched as far as Angola?

The presence of isolated Jews of different sorts further down the west coast of Africa far from la Petite Côte is indeed attested in subsequent years by a number of western travellers. John Ogilby (1600-1676) the English translator and publisher, expressed what was known at the time of the coast of Guinea: "Many Jews also are scattered over this region; some Natives, boasting themselves of Abraham's seed, inhabiting both sides of

⁵ Ora Limor and Guy Stroumsa, eds., *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics Between Christians and Jews* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996).

the River Niger: Others are Asian strangers.” He meant simply that there were African Jews as well as lighter colored Jews living along the Niger.⁶

Reflecting on the nature of Afro-Judaic communities and how they evolved over the next century Mark and da Silva Horta speak a good deal of ‘syncretism’ although this is a term which is only rarely used these days by scholars of religion. Undoubtedly among the Africans “boasting themselves of Abraham’s seed” there was a probably unconscious merging of traditions. One possible example of an individual of mixed tradition was spotted by a French traveller Nicolas Villault de Bellefond who undertook one of the first voyages on behalf of the French West India Company in 1666. He sailed down the Guinea Coast from the Senegal to the Gold Coast, touching at many points. An account of his voyage, with descriptions of the places visited, was published on his return, and soon afterwards translated into English. He narrowly survived a perilous crossing, and as his boatman was pulling towards the shore the latter muttered in relief: “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Mark and da Silva Horta devote a considerable amount of space to this pious invocation of the patriarchs, which the boatman termed a “fetish.” Was this a trace of some Judaic past or influence? Perhaps indeed it was. Similarly, around 1700 we have a description of some black Portuguese inhabitants south of today’s Senegal who appear to be in part descendants of Jews or New Christians, perhaps of the communities of La Petite Côte. We hear that in the Kingdom of Barra was to be found

a black nation which speaks some Portuguese. They build better than the Negroes...According to Labat, the greater Part of these Portuguese have no more Title to the Name of Christians, than of Whites: For, he says, only some few of them are baptised, whose Christianity wholly consists in wearing a great Chaplet about their Neck, a very long Sword by their Side, a Mantle if they can get one, a Hat, a Shirt, and a Poniard. They are very ignorant profligate abhorred by the real Christians, and despised by the Mohammedans who look upon them as People of no Religion; because it is well known that they never pray, but when they are with the Marabouts, and never go to the Christian Church, but about Business: However they are a very stout People, use firearms well, are very ready and enterprising in Business. They serve as factors up the river for the French..... But in Truth they are.... a dissolute Race squandering away upon Women and Wine, not only all they get themselves, but even what belongs to their Employers... We shall conclude our account of them with a Passage from

⁶ John Ogilby, *Africa: being an accurate description of the regions of Aegypt, Barbary, Libya, and Billedulgerid*, London, 1670 (Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011-2012).

le Maire; who says ‘they are partly Jews, partly Christians: That they generally carry a Large pair of Beads, are great Cheats, very malicious; and, in short, have all the Vices of the Portugeze, without any of their good Qualities.’⁷

In the same year an English observer noted that on the Island of Bissau there were suspicions that the “Negrish Portuguese” were of Jewish origin:

They have no Hogs, neither the Portuguese nor Negroes caring to breed them. It can proceed from no religious Principle in the latter, who are neither Jews nor Mohammedans; but what shall we think of the former?⁸

In the early modern period, there was something of a consensus that black Jews inhabited a number of localities along the West African coast as well as the interior. This consensus had already been reached by the Portuguese who imagined black Jews to be living in Angola, frequently accusing local circumcised males of being Jews—even though circumcision was universally practiced by the local Angolan gentile population.

In fact, for the Portuguese, as for other Europeans, there was a powerful sense that there were Jewish polities representing the Lost Tribes of Israel in the African interior. In 1830, for instance, a religious journal noted:

Africa, therefore, presents the only remaining likely place: and the advocates for the existence of the Ten Tribes very confidently maintain that they are enclosed in the interior of that unexplored country.⁹

The widespread nature of this discourse and its continuing relevance over time may be adduced from the fact that when the British were planning a first expedition up the Niger in 1842 to the unknown interior, two London rabbis asked the expedition leaders to take with them letters, in Hebrew and English, which they were to hand to the spiritual leaders of any Jewish communities the Expedition might encounter along the banks

⁷ John Pinkerton, *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels digested by John Pinkerton* (Longman: Hurst, Reese and Orme, 1811).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Littel, *The Religious Magazine; Or, Spirit of the Foreign Theological Journals and Reviews*, (Philadelphia: E. Littel, 1830); see also: Edith Bruder, *The Black Jews of Africa: History, Religion, Identity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tudor Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: the History of a Myth*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2002); Tudor Parfitt, *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

of the Niger. A more sober note with respect to the coast of Loango, just north of Angola, was struck by the missionary John Clarke who wrote a very informative little book on what was known at the time of the languages and dialects of Africa as well as the people and customs of the interior. He mentioned the town of Bonali in Loango which

contains 15,000 inhabitants. Many slaves from Majomba and Quibangua, pass through this country to be sent to Cuba and the Brazils. Oldendorp speaks of black Jews being in this part of Africa; but no confirmation of this has been met with. The practices common in many parts of Africa, are those of sacrificing goats and sheep, making cuttings for the dead, circumcision, and the trial drink; and these do not particularly belong to the customs of the Jews.¹⁰

Jews along the coast like Portuguese Christians had close relationships with Africans living near their trading posts and, as we have seen, they took African wives and concubines. One of the Jews we know to have had initiated relations with a Wolof woman on the west coast was Manuel, the son of the spiritual head of the community of Porto d'Ale, Jacob Peregrino, who was accused of sleeping with one of the daughters of the Wolof king.¹¹

Not only did Portuguese take local women, they also sometimes adopted local dress. In 1619 there was a case where inquisitorial authority was brought to bear on a man born in Malacca and now living in Caccheu, Guinea-Bissau by the name of Manoel da Silva. He was arrested and taken to the Cape Verde Islands and thrown into jail. The charge against him was that he had been seen in Bichangor today's Ziguinchor in Senegal dressed like a local black—*como negra da terra*—wearing rings through his nose and a boubou. Da Silva claimed to be a Christian, and he may well have been, in any event there was no other evidence against him other than he had 'gone native'. Reading between the lines it might suggest that Jews and New Christians were even by this time prone to adopt the garb and habits of the local population and this in itself was sufficient to attract the unwanted attentions of the Holy Office should they fall into its clutches.¹² As they adopted local dress they also in time, in some cases, embraced local beliefs. In this way, the religious practices of Jews and Africans interacted symbiotically in the creation of religious practices analogous to those created by the fusion of Christianity and African religions elsewhere

¹⁰ John Clarke, *Specimen of Dialects: Short Vocabularies of Languages: and notes of countries & customs in Africa* (London: B.L. Green, 1849).

¹¹ Mark Peter and J. da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora*.

¹² Tobias Green, "Further Considerations on the Sephardim of the Petite Côte."

in Africa. Not very much is known of these new religious movements – indeed Judaic religious movements of this sort worldwide require more research. These dislocated people with such traumatic histories on the contested frontier between Africa and colonial interventions eventually in many cases lost contact with the Jews of the world and sought cultural reassurance in the religious and social landscape, which surrounded them. Little is understood of this process.

Perhaps a further glimpse of sorts may be afforded from a source describing New Christians and the Capuchins' struggle against an elitist black secret order called the Kimpasi even further south in Angola. The Kimpasi used a cross-like sign in their rituals. Girolamo da Montesarchio, Capuchin missionary to the Kongo between 1648 and 1668, observed, in puzzlement, that "the members of the [Kimpasi] society had at the entrance of their meeting place a great portico with the sacred sign of the cross painted in diverse colors." Montesarchio's colleague and contemporary Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi also observed the cross and noted: "The devil had taught [the Kimpasi initiates] that to entice New Christians, . . . they should paint on their idols the venerable sign of the cross . . . so as to hide their pernicious sentiments and their sacrilegious impiety." "One would not believe," he lamented, "how many people were seduced by this ruse."¹³ Is this an indication of *anusim*, in the spiritual dislocation of having been forced to give up one religion in favour of another, and through acculturation groping in the alienating circumstances of West Africa towards a religious manifestation which was spiritually familiar—the cross-yet thoroughly African?

The descendants of these Jews and other Portuguese *émigrés*, of Cape Verde islanders, and of West Africans "developed a culture that was itself a synthesis of African and European elements," which was despised by the Portuguese.¹⁴ The Jewish element of this mixed population—which in some places remained a discrete and visible element—seems in others possibly to have been absorbed by the host society.

There are then numerous references after the seventeenth century to black Jews in various places in West Africa. One of these communities, while being little-known or not at all known today, even by specialists in the field of African Judaic studies, was to exercise a profound fascination on western thinkers and travelers for hundreds of years. This strangely unremarked group was influential not so much for what we know about it, because, in truth, we know little about it, but for what it represented for

¹³ Cécile Fromont, *The art of conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (Williamsburg: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

¹⁴ Ibid.

western thinkers for a very considerable time and what it continued to signify in Europe until present times. There is evidence that there were black Jews along the coast of what is today the Republic of Congo, perhaps of Iberian origin, concentrated on the Vili Kingdom of Loango, between the Equator and the mouth of the Congo. The Kingdom of Loango was a powerful, trading centralized pre-colonial African state which survived until the nineteenth century. The Kingdom of Loango had a number of well-constructed towns, including the important walled trading town of Loango itself. The Maloango, Loango's ruler, played the competing trading nations (specifically the Portuguese and Dutch) against each other and Vili middlemen operated as brokers between local traders and European ship captains. This led to great fortunes being made much of which was in the hands of African nobles.¹⁵

As we have seen there was a sense in mediaeval Europe that the interior of Africa was peopled in part by Jews in the form of the Lost Tribes of Israel and this was particularly the case in the West African hinterland. It appears however that a specific connection had also existed for many centuries between the Loango coastline and Jews. Some fifteenth century European maps designated the coast near Loango "the Gulf of the Jews" (*golfo do judeus* or *golfos dos judeos*). Speaking of the great voyages of the explorer Diogo Cão (c.1452-c.1486), the Anglo-German geographer Ernst Georg Ravenstein (1834-1913) speculated: "It may be presumed that Cão, in the course of this second voyage, gained a fuller knowledge of the coast first discovered by him to the north of the Congo. He may thus have visited and named the bay called *Golfo do Judeus*, the Jews' Bay of old maps, either because there was a Jew on board his vessel, or, what is less likely, because he was struck with the Jewish physiognomy of some of the natives." In addition, Martin Behaim's 1492 Globe, the famous Erdapfel (Earth Apple) now in Nuremberg, calls the bay the *Golfo de Judeo* and there is some speculation that Jews might have been exiled here following the persecutions of Jews in Portugal in 1487.¹⁶ The first reference to a black Jewish community in Loango is much later and comes from the pen of Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp (1721-1787) the

¹⁵ Phyllis M. Martin, *The External Trade of the Loango Coast 1576-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

¹⁶ Ernest George Ravenstein, *The Voyages of Diogo Cão and Bartholomeu Dias, 1482-88* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, Limited, 1900); Barry L. Stiefel, *Jewish Sanctuary in the Atlantic World: A Social and Architectural History*, (Williamsburg: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Heinz Edgar Kiewe, "Nigerian Sculpture of a Jewish Trader," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 44/2 (1953): 162-68.

evangelical German theologian who in 1767 was sent to the Danish colonial possessions in the West Indies to write a report on the results of the mission of the Moravian Brethren in the islands. He worked hard and meticulously and produced a lengthy manuscript only a third of which was initially published. The resulting work was published in 1777.

In his book he gave a good deal of detailed and credible information about Africa based on the testimony of the slaves he interviewed. His was the first written account, for instance, of the Igbo people. Among other things he mentioned the existence of a black Jewish community in Loango. According to him Jews had been expelled from São Tomé and it was from these banished Jews that “the black Portuguese and the black Jews of Loango, who were despised even by the local black population, were descended.”¹⁷ Oldendorp’s informant gave further detail. The Jews were so despised by the Negroes

that they will not eat with them. They have their own burial ground, which is located far from the dwellings of the Negroes. Their graves are of masonry, and figures of snakes, lizards and the like are painted on them by those who bury the body. This appears ridiculous to the Negroes. Since such paintings are so dissimilar to Jewish practices, the assumption is, perhaps not improbably, that the writing, or letters, on the Jewish graves appeared to the ‘Negroes’ to be pictures of snakes, lizards, and so forth.¹⁸

Of course the fact that these Jews did not eat with the local population is open to other interpretations than the refusal of “the Negroes” to eat with them. Was there any connection between these curious Jews mentioned by Oldendorp’s observant slave and the Jewish connections along the Loango coast suggested by some cartographers and geographers some three centuries before?

After Oldendorp’s revelation the Jewish community did not exactly explode with joy at the discovery of a new branch of the people of Israel. No Jew to my knowledge went to discover the inner secrets of this remote community. A hundred years after Oldendorp’s book, during the 1873 German expedition to the Loango coast, Adolf Bastian (1826 – 1905), the polymath best known for his contributions to the development of ethnography, and a member of the expedition, seems to have considered

¹⁷ Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp, *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder auf den caribischen Inseln S. Thomas, S. Croix und S. Jan. Herausgegeben Durch Johann Jakob Bossart. Mit Sieben Kupfertafeln* (Barby: Bey C. F. Laux, und in Leipzig in Commission bey Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1777).

¹⁸ Ibid.

that there was indeed some connection between the ancient rumours of a Jewish population on the Loango coast and Oldendorp's community. He noted that in the "land of the Bramas" on the Loango coast was to be found the place referred to by earlier geographers as the "Golfo de Judeos." This is where, as he put it "the villages of the Mavumbu or so-called Judeos" were still to be found in his day.¹⁹ So had a Jewish community persisted for some three hundred years without any description of it reaching the Jewish world and without any known communication between the community and Jews elsewhere? After Bastian's visit to the Loango coast- although the community was frequently mentioned by nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars-no-one else, to my knowledge, went to visit the community and its later fate is unrecorded. Further north in Senegal and elsewhere the ancient Jewish communities seem to have disappeared almost without a trace. Is it fanciful to imagine that the Bani Israil community of eastern Senegal, now practicing Muslims, referred to in an article by Cnaan Liphshiz reported in the Jewish Telegraphic Agency on May 23, 2013 refers to the descendants of these people?

What traces are left of the black Jews of Loango? Today there are Judaising movements in neighboring Gabon. If there are any connections between these movements and the black Jews of Loango is currently unknown and is a question that requires further research.

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¹⁹ Adolf Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste: nebst älteren Nachrichten über die zu erforschenden Länder* (Jena: Hermann Costenoble, 1874-1875).

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CHAPTER TWO

ERMIA'S ESSAYAS:
A 'FORGOTTEN' ETHIOPIAN JEW
IN JERUSALEM

SHALVA WEIL

Crossroads

My association with Emanuela Trevisan Semi has spanned over thirty years. It is confined to her work on Ethiopian Jewry, in general, and focuses on Dr. Jacques Faitlovitch's pupils, in particular. Dr. Jacques Faitlovitch (1881-1955), a student of Semitic languages at the Sorbonne under Prof. Joseph Halevy, left Paris under the sponsorship of Baron Edmond de Rothschild for his first expedition to Ethiopia in 1904.¹ During this visit, he surveyed the situation of the Beta Israel in Ethiopia and was perturbed by the Christian missionary influence on the group then known as the *Falashas*.² In order to counter this activity, he decided upon a plan of action. Over the course of thirty years, Dr. Faitlovich brought out of Ethiopia twenty-five young men,³ whom he 'planted' in different Jewish

¹ Jacques Faitlovitch, *Notes d'un Voyage Chez les Falachas (Juifs d'Abyssinie)* (Paris: Leroux, 1905).

² The Jews of Ethiopia also called themselves "Beta Israel." I use the designation "Falasha" advisedly in the knowledge that today the term is stigmatic. However, in a historical context, and when I quote from letters from the era, I do not wish to change what people said and wrote.

³ Faitlovich, *Notes d'un Voyage Chez les Falachas*. In 1962, Richard Pankhurst published a seminal work on the foundations of education, printing, books, and literacy in Ethiopia, in which he mentioned for the first time a relatively large group of 22 Beta Israel pupils who had studied abroad [Richard Pankhurst, "The Foundations of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book Production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia," *Ethiopian Observer* 6, no. 3 (1962): 241-90.] When I first met Tadesse Yaacov in Addis Abeba in 1986 [for his biography, see Shalva Weil,

communities in Palestine, Europe and Egypt: the first two visits are documented by Faitlovitch himself.⁴ Due to the Italian Fascist occupation of Ethiopia, Faitlovitch was prevented from travelling to Ethiopia in 1935, and this brought an end to his visits. Faitlovitch’s aim was to promote and implement educational projects among the Beta Israel, a ‘lost’ tribe, and bring them in line with world Jewry. He succeeded in establishing a school for the Beta Israel in Dembea in 1913, which shut down and was transformed into the Addis Abeba school for the *Falashas* in 1923.⁵ He appointed Taamrat Emmanuel as the principal of the school⁶ until the school was closed by Fascist forces.⁷ In practice, only few, if any, of the boys whom Faitlovitch brought to Europe fulfilled his dream.

After Operation Moses in 1984-1985, both Emanuela and I independently embarked upon personal courses of study to document the trajectories of Dr. Faitlovitch and his pupils. Our paths crossed at the conferences of the Society for the Study of Ethiopian Jewry (SOSTEJE), at which we (and others) presented on different Beta Israel students, who had lived outside Ethiopia. In 1993, Emanuela was elected President of SOSTEJE.⁸ I attended my first international congress on Ethiopian Jews organised by Emanuela in Venice, and quickly became involved with this organisation. When she resigned in 2004 at the SOSTEJE conference in Addis Abeba, I took over as President.⁹

In the mid-1990s, Emanuela and I discussed the division of labour of the research into Dr. Faitlovitch and his pupils. I had published an ode that

“The Life and Death of Solomon Isaac,” in *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel* edited by Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (Surrey: Curzon, 1999), 40–9] we managed to compile an exhaustive list of 25 pupils.

⁴ Jacques Faitlovitch, *Quer durch Abessinien: Meine zweite Reise zu den Falaschas* (Berlin: Poppelauer, 1910).

⁵ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, “The Educational Activity of Jacques Faitlovitch in Ethiopia (1904-1924),” *Pe’amim* 58 (1994): 98–103 [Hebrew].

⁶ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *L’Epistolario di Taamrat Emmanuel: Un Intellettuale Ebreo d’Ethiopia Nella Prima Meta del XX Secolo* (Torino: L’Harmattan Italia, 2000).

⁷ Yitzchak Grinfeld, “The Hebrew School in Addis Abeba at the Beginning of the Italian Occupation (1936-7),” *Dor Le’Dor* 5 (1992): 51–84 [Hebrew].

⁸ SOSTEJE was founded at Yartnon, Oxford University in 1991 by Mr. David Kessler and Prof. Alan Crown.

⁹ I acted as President of SOSTEJE from 2004-2009, and organized several international conferences on Ethiopian Jews. In 2009, Gadi Ben Ezer was elected Chair of the Israeli branch of SOSTEJE, and the international organization of SOSTEJE was effectively disbanded. There has never been an international conference on Ethiopian Jews outside Israel since that date.

the Ethiopian Jews had written and sung on the death of Dr. Faitlovitch in Tel Aviv in 1955 in the village of Ambober,¹⁰ but it was Emanuela who later provided insights into the complex personality of Jacques Faitlovitch and his universal contacts that nobody before or after her has succeeded in doing.¹¹ By a ‘ladies’ agreement,’ we divided up the study of Dr. Faitlovitch’s pupils, which we had begun in the 1980s, carefully pointing out that there had been and were several other players in the arena. Ullendorff, for example, had published two letters from Taamrat Emmanuel to “Al’Azar Desta” (sic).¹² This was none other than Hailu Desta, who had spent many days in my house in Jerusalem prior to his death in the late 1980s.¹³ Each Beta Israel pupil educated in Europe had an individual personality and unique story; all experienced a complete metamorphosis as a result of their contact with a new non-Ethiopian culture. Some died in Europe; others died on their way back or upon their return to Ethiopia. Most who stayed alive played out the conflict for the rest of their lives between their Ethiopian and Jewish identities.

Emanuela often concentrated on the students who had studied in Italy, such as Hizkiyahu Finas,¹⁴ while I focused on students who studied in Palestine, England, or even in Egypt.¹⁵ Notwithstanding, Emanuela also touched upon the biography of Makonnen Levi, who studied in England

¹⁰ Shalva Weil, “An Elegy in Amharic on Dr Faitlovich,” *Pe’amim* 33 (1987): 125–127 [Hebrew].

¹¹ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, “Conversion and Judaisation: The ‘Lost Tribes’ Committees at the Birth of the Jewish State,” in *Judaizing Movements: Studies at the Margins of Judaism*, edited by Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Ead., *Jacques Faitlovitch and the Jews of Ethiopia* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007) and Ead., “East and West through the Conversations between Jacques Faitlovitch and Farid Kassab,” in *Beta Israel: The Jews of Ethiopia and Beyond*, edited by Emanuela Trevisan Semi and Shalva Weil, 45–56, (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2011).

¹² Edward Ullendorff, “Two Amharic Letters by the Falasha Leader Taamrat Emmanuel,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 35 (1986/7): 192–200.

¹³ Taamrat Emmanuel, in his writings, and in turn Ullendorff, utilized the Hebrew name Elazar that Dr. Faitlovitch had bestowed upon Hailu Desta in Germany.

¹⁴ Trevisan Semi, “From Wolleqa to Florence,” 15–39.

¹⁵ Shalva Weil, “In Memoriam: Yona Bogale: One of the Leaders of the Beta Israel,” *Pe’amim* 33 (1987): 125–27 [Hebrew]; Ead., “The Life and Death of Solomon Isaac.” See Ead., “Abraham Adgeh: The Perfect English Gentleman,” in *Ethiopian Jewry in Historical and Contemporary Times*, ed. Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (London: Curzon, 2005), 101–11; see also Ead., “Taddesse Yaqob of Cairo and Addis Abeba,” *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 2, no. 1–2 (2006): 233–43.

with Abraham Adgeh.¹⁶ She also encouraged her colleagues and students in Venice to research additional pupils who were taken by Dr. Faitlovitch to Europe. This led to some productive studies, such as a documentation of the trips of Mengistu Yitzchak and Mekuria Tsegaya to Europe,¹⁷ a profile of Gete Yirmiahu (sic)¹⁸ and an analysis of a play in German based on Solomon Isaac’s life.¹⁹ The methodologies used by different researchers to study the Beta Israel students included interviews with some of Dr. Faitlovitch’s pupils who were still alive, diaries, archival work, and bibliographic research. A summary of six biographies of Beta Israel students who studied abroad can be found in Weil.²⁰ To date, not a single line has been written about Ermias Essayas, another of Dr. Faitlovitch’s pupils, who was selected to study abroad in Jerusalem. The culmination of the collaboration between Emanuela and myself was a joint edited volume,

¹⁶ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, “Ethiopian Jews in Europe: Taamrat Emmanuel in Italy and Makonnen Levi in England,” in *Jews of Ethiopia: The Birth of an Elite*, edited by Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 74–100.

¹⁷ Benjamin Mekuria, “The Long Journey of the Beta Yisrael from Lasta,” in *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel*.

¹⁸ The author has chosen to spell Gete Hermias’ name Gete Yirmiahu. He has been called variously Ghetie Hermias, Gete Wondemagegnehu and Gete Yirmias or Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah); the Hebrew version of his name was bestowed upon him by Dr. Faitlovitch. As usual with Ethiopian names, there is a problem as to how to write them in English. In the case of Dr. Faitlovitch’s pupils, they all had different renderings, as well as “new” Hebrew names, invented by Dr. Faitlovitch. For example, Taamrat Emmanuel is usually written this way in English, and signed his letters in different languages. The *Encyclopedia Aethiopica* editors requested me to write the correct transliterations – Taamerat Ammanuel, Tadesse, Yaqob etc. [Shalva Weil, “Salomon Yeshaq,” “Taamarat Ammanuel” and “Tadesse, Yaqob,” in *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, ed. Siegbert Uhlig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 4: 499–500, 1082–3, 1196–7.] In the case of Solomon Isaac, Solomon’s father was Ishaq, the Amharic equivalent of Isaac. Solomon signed himself in Hebrew as “Solomon ben Yitzchak” or “Solomon Yitzchak (the Falashi)” or in Hebrew “Shlomo ben Yitzchak”. In the entry in the *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, he appears as Salomon Yeshaq (Weil, “Salomon Yeshaq.”). See: Carlo Guandalina, “Gete Yirmiahu and Beta Israel’s Regeneration: A Difficult Path,” in *Jews of Ethiopia*: 112–21.

¹⁹ Sigrid Sohn, “S. Schachnowitz’s Novel *Salomo der Falascha* (1923),” in *Jews of Ethiopia*., 53–64.

²⁰ Shalva Weil, “Beta Israel Students Who Studied Abroad 1905–1935,” in the *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, edited by Ege Svein et al., 209–17, (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Social Anthropology, 2009).

containing the proceedings of the last two international SOSTEJE conferences outside Israel, hosted in Florence, Italy in October 2007 and in Gondar, Ethiopia in November 2009.²¹

Ermias Essayas: the ‘Forgotten’ Student

During one of Emanuela’s visits to Jerusalem in the spring of 2006, she managed to persuade me to rework some primary material I had gathered in the 1980s. With her prompting, I indeed brought out my notes on Ermias Essayas from my archives, and presented the results at the Florence SOSTEJE conference in 2007. Since then, the information on Ermias has lain dormant for a decade. So this is the first time that a biography of this ‘unknown’ student will be published. It is fitting that it is in a Festschrift for Emanuela.

The sources of information on Ermias Essayas are interviews held with Yona Bogale and Tadesse Yaacov, and family members who knew him in the 1980s: some of these informants have now passed away. In 2007 prior to the Florence conference, I interviewed Ermias’ daughter, Zemamu Yirmiyas, then 87 years old,²² with the help of her daughter and granddaughter, Tegest. This was supplemented by archival material from the Faitlovitch Collection at the Sourasky Central Library in Tel Aviv University, and letters exchanged between Dr. Faitlovitch and Taamrat Emmanuel published by Emanuela.²³ The research was not easy in that Ermias can easily be confused with some of Dr. Faitlovitch’s better-known pupils. For example, Bayyuh, renamed Reuven by Dr. Faitlovitch, was also called Issayas, and sometimes it was unclear, both among informants and in the archives, to whom Dr. Faitlovitch and others were referring. Furthermore, another student Gete Hermias was renamed by Dr. Faitlovitch “Yirmiyahu,”²⁴ and it transpired that Ermias was also called Yirmiyahu. In this chapter, the reconstruction of Ermias’ biography relies primarily on interviews and archival material, some of which is reproduced in the Taamrat letters.²⁵

²¹ Emanuela Trevisan Semi and Shalva Weil, *Beta Israel*.

²² Since there were no birth certificates in the Ethiopian villages a century ago, it is unknown whether this is her true age or one she gave me.

²³ Trevisan Semi, *L’Epistolario di Taamrat Emmanuel*.

²⁴ Guandalina, “Gete Yirmiahua and Beta Israel’s Regeneration.”

²⁵ Trevisan Semi, *L’Epistolario di Taamrat Emmanuel*.

Ermias Essayas’ Life-story

Ermias, the son of Bilu and Kenesh, was born in the village of Belebuha in Belessa in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. Ermias began his life as a shepherd, but always strayed from the flock and was interested in studying. He used to pass the *malokse* (monk)²⁶ and would go and talk to them instead of looking after the flock. He learned how to write, and used to scratch words on stones. In the end, he left the flock and started learning with *malokse* Kinde. He became his assistant, bringing him water and basic food, and learned parts of the *Orit* (Torah) by heart.

One day, Dr. Faitlovitch visited the village in Belessa and saw Ermias as he was helping the *malokse*. Faitlovitch learned that Ermias already knew how to read and write. When Dr. Faitlovitch arrived, the villagers were very suspicious of him and thought that he was from “the Mission” (i.e. Christian), and at first did not want to associate with him. However, Ermias stood up against the elders and the religious leaders, who had opposed Dr. Faitlovitch. In the end, the villagers agreed to build Dr. Faitlovitch a house in the village, which doubled up as a schoolhouse, where he could teach the village children Hebrew and Judaism with the help of Ermias. They learned Hebrew songs and the prayers, like *Lecha Dodi Likrat Kala* (Come, my Beloved, to greet the bride)²⁷ and *Adom Olam Asher Malach Beterem Kol Yetzir Nivra* (Lord of the universe, who reigned before the birth of any thing – When by His will all things were made),²⁸ which Zimamu remembered to the day of our interview.

Soon, Dr. Faitlovitch invited Ermias to continue as a teacher in the *Falasha* school in Addis Abeba and then to accompany him to study abroad. However, Ermias had already been married to Lemlem, the daughter of Kes Wasi, although by now they were divorced, and they had one daughter, Zimamu (my major informant). The family objected. Ermias’ departure from the village was dramatic, as were the other turning-points in his life. His parents did not agree that he should go abroad, but one day, he simply fled. His family got together and decided to send his nephews, Abraham Tela, and Yeshayahu Asebo, to go after him to Addis Abeba to persuade him to return. Ermias had already found employ with the Emperor Haile Selassie as a bodyguard. Ermias photographed

²⁶ The *malokse* (monks) were the ultimate religious authority from the Beta Israel. They taught many of today’s *kessoch* (priests). The institution of the *malokse* became extinct in the twentieth century.

²⁷ *The Koren Siddur, American Edition*, trans. Jonathan Sacks. (Jerusalem: Koren, 2009), 318.

²⁸ Ivi, 22.

himself with his two young nephews before they returned to the village empty-handed. Ermias' mother sent him a letter written by a *debtera* (scribe) in which she said:

I gave birth to 12 children, only three remained, one daughter, you and one other. Because of you, I have become weaker and weaker. When I die, come and take my bones to Jerusalem.

Taamrat Emmanuel, the principal of the Beta Israel school in Addis Abeba (Trevisan Semi 2017),²⁹ agreed to employ Ermias as chief teacher. Since the Addis Abeba school was established in 1923, this must have been around the end of 1924. For years, when studying Dr. Faitlovitch's pupils, I knew the photograph of a teacher, more mature and older than the pupils, teaching the Hebrew letters to young pupils from a blackboard. I asked many people who the teacher was; none could tell me. Ermias' commanding personality is evident. In another picture, one can see Ermias sitting on the left side of Dr. Faitlovitch in the most respected position in the school; Dr. Faitlovitch's sister, Leah, is sitting on the right, and next to her Taamrat Emmanuel. Ermias taught in Addis Abeba for one year and then was invited by Dr. Faitlovitch to go to Jerusalem, with two other boys from the school. As far as I can ascertain, Ermias left Ethiopia in 1925 with Reuven Baruch Issayas, Ezra Worku/Tuvia, and Shmaryahu-Belay Mekonnen, and Ermias returned in 1927. They stayed in Jerusalem together. As opposed to some of Dr. Faitlovitch's younger pupils, like Yona Bogale, Abraham Meir and Hizkiyahu Finas, these students were older and Ermias, as teacher, was in charge of the group both during the journey to Palestine, which they appear to have undertaken alone, and during their stay in Jerusalem. On 6 October 1925, Dr. Faitlovitch recorded in his personal diary that he met "Yeremias" (sic) in Jerusalem. For a long time, I presumed that the reference was to Yeremias, namely Hermias Gete, who indeed studied in Jerusalem at the Ezra Hilversvein School. However, a close study of the sources reveals that Yeremias Gete was already back in Ethiopia by this time.

Emanuela has a copy of the list of Dr. Faitlovitch's students including Ermias studying abroad in 1927, which he used to fund-raise, particularly after the establishment of the American *Pro-Falasha Committee*. Dr. Faitlovitch could not afford to omit a single student studying abroad at that time, since he used this list to get money for his enterprises from America, and he had to demonstrate the success of his work. It therefore makes sense that Ermias arrived in Jerusalem in 1925 after teaching at the Addis

²⁹ Trevisan Semi, *L'Epistolario di Taamrat Emmanuel*.

Abeba school for a year, and stayed in Jerusalem till the end of 1926, less than two years, when he subsequently returned to Ethiopia.

During the period in Jerusalem, Ermias studied at school, although he was older than most of the pupils, and also learned to be a *shohet* (ritual slaughterer). On 14 December 1925 (27 Kislev Tarpav), Ermias received a certificate authorizing him to be a *shohet* of chickens from the first Sephardic Chief Rabbi [of Eretz Israel] under the Chief Rabbinate, Rabbi Yacov Maier (1856-1939), and the heads of Rabbis in Eretz Israel. Here, he is clearly called Yirmiyah ben Yeshayahu (Ermias Essayas). According to one of Faitlovitch’s diary entries,³⁰ a year later, Ermias headed back to Ethiopia together with Ermias via Djibouti.

The Denouement

Ermias arrived in Addis Abeba, and then came to the village. Zimamu, in an interview in 2007, remembered his return home. “He came to my village of Dawulesge and he took me. He came with all his nephews, the Teleas, and friends and they built him a new house, they came to make him happy,” she said. Zimamu continued that when he came back from Israel, he had forgotten how to eat *enjera* and he ate other foods. He had a horse. He came from Israel with a lot of money and clothes. All the relatives told him: “You got your certificate; now teach us”.

In a letter from Addis Abeba written on 23 September 1927 and continued on 25 September 1927 from Taamrat Emmanuel to Dr. Faitlovitch, Taamrat Emmanuel complained that Baur and Heintze³¹ wrote to him more regularly than Ghetie Hermias and Ermias!³² However, neither Taamrat nor Dr. Faitlovitch knew that by now Ermias was languishing in his village. He died at the very end of November 1927, or at the beginning of December 1927. The circumstances of his death remain

³⁰ Faitlovitch writes: ‘Allez avec Jermias chez Saim Salim a Djibouti.’ I believe the reference is to Ermias Essayas and not to Ghetie Hermias.

³¹ In 1926, Theophilus Baur and William Heintze arrived in Ethiopia. According to the new introduction to Stern’s important book *Wanderings among the Falashas in Abyssinia*, they were the first European missionaries to work among the Falashas after Flad’s death in 1915 and the brief visit of his son Frederick in 1922-23. Baur and Heintze’s mission ended with the Italian Occupation in 1935 [Robert Hess, new introduction to the second edition of *Wanderings among the Falashas in Abyssinia*, by Henry Aaron Stern (1862; repr., Oxford: Frank Cass & Co., 1968), 26.]

³² Trevisan Semi, *L’Epistolario di Taamrat Emmanuel*, Letter no. 17.

mysterious to this day.³³ By 19 December 1927, Dr. Faitlovitch knew of Ermias' demise. He wrote to Taamrat from New York saying that he was informed of his death on 9 December 1927.³⁴

Cher Taamrat, Je ne me suis pas encore remis de la terrible nouvelle de la mort de Yermias. Ta dépêche supplémentaire, me confirmant la première, m'est arrivé il y a une dizaine de jours et depuis lors je ne fais que méditer sur la perte irréparable que nous venons de subir. Je ne puis me consoler, parce que je crains que sa disparition ne soit un coup mortel pour toute notre action dans l'intérieur. Pauvre Yermias, avec toi s'en va aussi pur le moment tout un projet élaboré en faveur de tes frères, nous tous nous pleurons ton mort premature, ta collaboration nous manquera fortement, mais reste en paix dans ton repos eternal, eleve chéri et ami fidèle, sois sûr que nous ferons notre possible pour que tu n'aies pas souffert en vain, tes frères ressusciteront par tes souffrances et ta mémoire restera chere et vénérée dans l'histoire de ton people.

Transmets, cher Taamrat, mes condoléances à la famille et aux amis de Yermias et dis-leur que je partage la douleur avec eux. Fais-moi savoir de quelle malade il est mort et comment il a passé les derniers mois de sa vie.

Although Faitlovitch had not been in contact with Ermias, he feared that Ermias' passing was a death blow for their project in the Ethiopian interior; his first instinct was to express worry that his own project would now be affected. He was concerned about his reputation among the *Falashas* vis-à-vis the authorities and the reactions of the Beta Israel themselves. In the second part of the letter, he turned directly to Ermias, as if giving a Jewish eulogy at the graveside, where one speaks to the dead person in the second person and remembers his positive qualities. In the last part of the letter, he reverted to Taamrat, requesting him to send condolences to the family and to Yermias' friends, and asking him to tell them that he shared in their grief. He asked Taamrat to inform him of what illness he died and how he passed the last months of his life. The family says that Taamrat never came up to the village to find out but sent his nephew, who brought money for Ermias' widow. Zimamu claims that her mother, Lemlem, never actually received these funds, since they were appropriated by Ermias' brothers. Lemlem, as a widow, was forced to remarry, but she apparently died six years later. On 3 November 1933, Taamrat wrote to Faitlovitch thus: "E' morta la vedova del povero Ermias ch'era remaritat[a] con un fal[a]scia di Seqelt." Ermias' widow, who had

³³ Members of the Ethiopian community have several theories, including murder, poisoning and sickness. I am not analysing these narratives in this chapter.

³⁴ Trevisan Semi, *L'Epistolario di Taamrat Emmanuel*, Letter no. 19.

remarried a *Falasha* (sic) in the Seqelt region, had passed away on the Ethiopian date of 24 Teqemt 1926.³⁵

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, Emanuela Trevisan Semi and I have independently and in parallel documented the fascinating lives of Dr. Faitlovitch’s twenty-five pupils, who studied outside Ethiopia in Europe and Palestine between the years 1907-1936. To date, not a single piece of information has been written about Ermias (Yermias/Yirmiyahu) Essayas, who studied in Jerusalem during the years 1925-1927. The selection of Ermias Essayas to study abroad was unprecedented, in that all Dr. Faitlovitch’s other pupils who left Ethiopia were single, and most, excluding Solomon Isaac, were young and in their teens. Ermias was older, and had been married and had a child. As opposed to many of Dr. Faitlovitch’s other pupils, whom he moved from country to country, dependent as he was upon local funds to sustain the boys, Ermias stayed in one city, Jerusalem, and was only a brief period abroad. Until now, Ermias’ Jerusalem period was entirely unknown, even to members of his extended family.

The research into Ermias Essayas needs to be expanded in the future. It was not easy to gain information in that Ermias can easily be confused with some of Dr. Faitlovitch’s better known pupils, and in particular with Yirmiyahu i.e. Gethie Hermias. In addition, since Ermias was not one of Faitlovitch’s favourite pupils, like Taamrat of Ghetie, and also did not live too long, there is a scarcity of written material. Meanwhile, I have not unearthed any direct correspondence between him and Faitlovitch. Nevertheless, oral history has supplemented the documents we do have in our possession, such as photographs, and the *shehitah* (ritual slaughter) certificate, and the result is a biography of Ermias Essayas presented here for the first time. While Faitlovitch wrote in the letter quoted above³⁶ that Ermias did not suffer in vain, and that his memory will remain dear and will be venerated in the history of his people, unfortunately, the memory of Ermias Essayas has been almost obliterated. My hope is that in this Festschrift dedicated to Emanuela Trevisan Semi, I have succeeded in taking Ermias Essayas out of oblivion and placing his memory in centre-place, to be commemorated in the annals of the history of the Beta Israel.

³⁵ Ibid., Letter no. 38.

³⁶ Ibid., Letter no. 19.

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CHAPTER THREE

FROM SYNAGOGUE TO MOSQUE:
MY GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE
IN THE OLD MELLAH OF MEKNÈS

YOLANDE COHEN
AND NOUREDDINE HARRAMI

Emanuela Trevisan Semi is the inspiration for this presentation. She was the one who encouraged me to visit my grandfather's house in Meknès, came with me for this very emotional return in my family's birthplace, kept the pictures we took there and sent them back to me when I lost them and finally pushed me to realise this project, which formed the background for this presentation within a larger project. The (nostalgic) emotion and several not-so-accidental encounters at a colloquium in Meknès, organized by Nouredine Harrami, were all related to Emanuela's seminal anthropological works in Meknès.¹

Nouredine and I decided to analyse my grandfather's legacy from a dual perspective for this paper: taking the historical research on the house of my grandfather as its starting point, we will reflect on several ethnological aspects of Jewish life in the *mellah* of Meknès. The period covered by the inquiry starts in 1930, when my grandfather bought the

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¹ Emanuela Trevisan Semi and Hanane Sekkat Hatimi, *Mémoire et représentations des Juifs au Maroc: les voisins absents de Meknès* (Paris: Publisud, 2015).

house in the height of the French protectorate. Sold by my uncle in 1969, the synagogue housed in the house (*slat* [in Judeo-Arabic, lit. “synagogue”] *Rabbi Smea’t ya*) is transformed into a small mosque, the only one in the ancient *mellah* at the time. Then the commemoration of the house situated in the old *mellah*, and of its Jewish inhabitants, became the object of the fieldwork conducted recently by Nouredine in Meknès.

Nouredine conducted interviews with witnesses to the process of transformation of the synagogue into a mosque and documented the memories of this house of prayer, which was transferred from Jews to Muslims, as well as its significance in the contemporary space. My contribution was to verify several elements of family history and its transmission in the present, in an attempt to compose a historical, albeit subjective, narrative. Thus, with our two voices, we seek to explore the informal system of communication between Jews and Muslims, past and present, “between the two river banks of colonization,”² which are at the heart of this story, as well as the conflicts over the suppression of memory that it evokes.

The role of this house provides a case study which sheds light on the dynamics of exchange among Jews and Muslims at two moments in their shared history, during and after colonisation. The *mellahs* are separate spaces in certain cities, in which the Jewish populations of Morocco lived, but were also, as Daniel Schroeter and Emily Gottreich noted, places of interaction between Jews and Muslims.³ They were an integral part of the urban fabric and constituted liminal spaces,⁴ from which Jews could leave (to work in the *suq*), while Muslims could enter to carry out their various activities, both economic and religious (such as visiting pilgrimage sites), as well as for entertainment, by drinking alcohol.

The term used to designate such Jewish quarters varied from place to place: they were called *mellahs* in Morocco and *harat* (“quarters”) in Tunisia and in Egypt. In Morocco, the first *mellah* was created in Fès in 1438, whereas the *mellah* of Meknès was established in 1675, following the designation of the city as capital under Sultan Moulay Isma’il. The Jewish community of Meknès, which was of great importance, had significant influence in the religious domain, and was even called ‘Little Jerusalem.’ In response to the poor conditions of life in the *mellah*, a new

² Joëlle Balhoul, *Le culte de la table dressée, rites et traditions de la table juive algérienne* (Paris: Métailié, 1983).

³ Daniel Schroeter and Emily Gottreich, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

⁴ Emily Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco’s Red City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

mellah was built beginning in 1924. The first houses of the new *mellah* were erected alongside the old *mellah*, and the first synagogue was founded in 1926.

Colonisation as well as urban development of the early twentieth century engendered changes in Jewish residential patterns. This was the case in Tangiers, as studied by Susan Gilson Miller who demonstrated that, notwithstanding the concentration of synagogues in the Beni Ider quarter, the area was not defined as a Jewish quarter. The transformation of the city of Tangiers, in the early twentieth century, was linked to the influx of capital and the development of new construction, including the construction of new quarters for the elite.⁵ Moreover, the development of new cities made the traditional structure of the *mellah* obsolete. It resulted in the exodus of the wealthier Jews to the new Europeanised cities, and, consequently, a deterioration of the Jewish quarters along with an influx of non-Jewish populations to those areas. Through our study of the house of Eliezer Berdugo and the changes in the names of sites in Meknès, we seek to investigate the mechanisms of appropriation of Jewish Moroccan urban space and the suppression of the Jewish memory of those quarters.

The grandfather: Eliezer Berdugo, a traditional local personage

I know nothing of him, or almost nothing. His photo dominated my mother's room, and after many changes of residence, it wound up in my house in Montréal. I had to explain to my children that the austere gaze of this proud-looking man in the picture was that of my maternal grandfather. My mother carried this photo with her wherever she lived, and I kept it in memory of her. I still have it, because I throw nothing out; it has its place in my room, until I decide what to do with it. I have had this photo for over forty years, this photo which I do not like, because there is no other memory attached to it, except perhaps the sadness of my mother when she spoke of her father, who died prematurely, on the eve of her wedding in 1948.

⁵ Susan Gilson Miller, "Making Tangier Modern: Ethnicity and Urban Development, 1880-1930," in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, eds. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 128-49. There (130), Miller also argues that: "A more balanced picture sees in Tangier a high degree of cooperation across communal lines among moneyed interests, both Jewish and non-Jewish, for the purpose of profit and status, as the sources will indicate."

Eliezer Berdugo was a notable in the Jewish community of Meknès, who served as judge of the rabbinical court and also mediated inter-communal disputes. Owner of a soap factory in Berrima (a neighbourhood located between the old *mellah* and Sakkakine in the Old City), he also received income from properties he owned in the region of Meknès, and was, among other things, in charge of selling wheat and other grains brought to him by farmers or other agriculturalists. The papers documenting the sale of the house indicate that he was the owner of seven shops, which abutted his house in the old *mellah*. He was the kind of notable described so well by Susan Miller, who wrote of merchants active in Tangiers at the turn of the twentieth century, but unlike the bazaar salesmen of the *mellah* of Sefrou described by Lawrence Rosen.⁶

Thus, he was a well-to-do owner of both agricultural lands and several shops. In 1930, he acquired a large aristocratic residence in the old *mellah*, purchased, according to family history, from another Jew, named Benabou, who lived in Rabat and wanted to sell off his second house. Along with him, came a small group of around fifteen families who had lived in the old *mellah* for several generations – the families Ohana, Toledano, Boussidan, Hassine, and others, who had ‘made it’ in the wholesale business of basic commodities like grain, oil, sugar, and – in his case – *beldi* (“local”) soap. They distinguished themselves by their clothes (traditional *djellaba* and *tarboosh* at home and European suit at work and in public), their aristocratic houses, and their status as community leaders. Living in the old *mellah*, they were both at a distance from non-Jews, separated by walls of religious difference while maintaining relations with all, both outside the walls of the *mellah* and during their working hours. Their status as notables was expressed in numerous ways, both symbolic and real. In the *mellah* their prominence was recognised through their family names, a lineage of well-known families of *hakhamim* (rabbis, religious scholars, lit.: “wise men”), which often entitled them to become community leaders. Members of these families also built or moved to bigger houses in this period, lending a new significance to housing as a status symbol under the French regime. For my grandfather too, moving into this patrician house was certainly a sign of wanting to acquire this cultural capital. Keeping his family in the old *mellah*, while other Jews had already moved to the new *mellah* or even the *Ville Nouvelle*, signaled on the other hand his attachment to the traditional view of being a notable,

⁶ Miller, “Making Tangier”; Lawrence Rosen, *Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations In a Muslim Community* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

supported by an uncontested paternalism and an accepted hierarchy of class and gender.

The cooperation among ethno-religious elites within different cultural communities was commonplace, and is affirmed in numerous studies. In the particular case of my grandfather, however, it remained beyond the influence of the French. Thus, he did not become, as many Jews at the time did, a Westerner or Europeanised.⁷ He was neither an *évolué* nor a *protégé*.⁸ Like the Moroccan subjects of the French protectorate, he spoke only Arabic and wrote only in Judeo-Arabic. Judeo-Arabic, as a written and spoken language, was reduced to the status of a dialect by French linguists in 1930, even though it was the lingua franca of the Jews of the Maghreb.⁹ Thus, my grandfather was attached to an ancient tradition, one that had been totally transformed by French modernity. By ‘choosing’ to remain in the old *mellah*, he rooted himself in a place that was undergoing complete transformation. For him, this space remained a place of commerce and inter-religious exchange. Having his family and businesses alongside the artisans and traders who lived in these very narrow alleys and these houses all crowded together, he was an integral part of this ancient Jewish community with its many synagogues. The purchase of the house in 1930 marked his involvement and the engagement of this small group of notables in relation to their surroundings—both separate and symbiotic. Much research has characterised these spaces as ghettos—paradoxical or ambiguous spaces enclosing the Jews, yet open to commerce. In the case of the old *mellah* of Meknès, we witness intense convivial inter-personal relationships between Jews and Muslims in daily life, alongside a respect for strict rules of separation in the spaces they lived in, as regulated by the laws of *dhimma* (restricting their rights while authorizing their cult).

But what occurred to these relations in post-colonial Morocco? Some answers may be found in the sale documents of the house and the built-up areas, while others are provided by analysing the transformations of the quarter and its street names.

⁷ Yaron Tsur, *The Jews of Casablanca: A Study of Modernization in a Colonial Jewish Society* (Tel Aviv: The Open University Press, 1995).

⁸ Mohammed Kenbib, *Les protégés. Contribution à l'histoire contemporaine du Maroc* (Casablanca: Publication de la Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines de l'Université Mohammed V, 1996).

⁹ Oren Kosansky, “When Jews speak Arabic: Dialectology and difference in Colonial Morocco,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 58/1 (2016): 5-39.

The Berdugo house: from synagogue to mosque

The house is located at 25, Derb al Ghoufrane. At the time, the street was called Salouat-s, as is attested in the old bill of sale. The buyer was Moulay Hachem ben El Mahdi ben Mohamad El Alaoui Slimani. According to his son Ahmed, the house was purchased in 1965, although the bill of sale is dated October 8, 1969. The sale was not done hastily and under pressure, as was the case with many Jewish properties both in the *mellah* and elsewhere, when, in the years of mass migration to Israel, Jewish properties were sold at much reduced prices. This explains the price of 27,500 dirhams, or 5,400 dollars, which was considered as high by the standards of the period. The house has four stories. The ground floor housed a synagogue (called a *masjid*, a place of prayer, in the bill of sale) and seven shops. The apartment on the second floor is today the residence of Ahmed, the son of Moulay Hachem. With respect to the circumstances surrounding the purchase, Ahmed told us that his father learned from a merchant in the quarter that “Ouled (the son of) Berdugo was looking to sell”. Ahmed added that his grandfather knew Eliezer Berdugo, further evidence of cross-cultural exchange.

The seventeen synagogues of the *mellah* experienced a variety of destinies. Some fell into ruin, while others were transformed into residences. *S'lat Berdugo*, as it was called by many residents, was open all the time during the lifetime of my grandfather's. It is also known by its other name *slat Rabbi Semahya* which was, according to residents of the quarter, the largest synagogue of the *Mellah Al Bali*, and today serves as a mosque for the Friday prayer. At present, the mosque remains the only place of Muslim prayer in the old *mellah*. An *imam* conducts the daily prayer in the mosque, while a *khatib*, assigned by the Ministry of Endowments, conducts the Friday prayer service.

The transition

Residents cite the years of 1965 and 1968 as the time of the foundation of the mosque. An *addendum* on the obverse of the bill of sale details the transfer of the *masjid* and of the commercial establishments on the ground floor to a *waqf* (“[Islamic] religious endowment”) on 17 November 1969, less than a month after the conclusion of the legal sale. All those we asked linked the establishment of the mosque to the transfer of the ground floor properties to the *waqf* of Moulay Hachem, buyer of the Berdugo house. The mosque can accommodate a hundred worshippers. An *imam* and a *mouzen* (*muezzin*) officiated at the dedication; the mosque has no minaret,

but four loudspeakers on the top floor of the house broadcast the call to prayer.

The transfer of the site of prayer from Judaism to Islam resulted in other important changes. Two ruined houses next to the synagogue were purchased and annexed in order to enlarge the prayer hall and provide space for a hall of ablutions. This period—the expansion of the space of the synagogue—has been forgotten by residents of the quarter, who assume that the mosque takes up the total space of the synagogue. Thus, they assert that *S'lat Berdugo* was the largest synagogue of the quarter, although actually the synagogue took up no more than a quarter of the space of the current mosque. Once the construction was done, a *sadaqa* (a ceremony consisting of the hosting of a meal and the recitation of the Koran) was held inside the mosque. Did the *sadaqa* mark the conversion of the site or was it simply a ritual meal marking the opening of the mosque? It is hard to tell. The current *imam*, who was head of a Quranic school in the old *mellah* at the time, asserted categorically that no conversion ritual was performed:

We simply cleaned and dusted the place, as it had not been in use for quite a while, and we arranged the room in order to lay down the prayer rugs.

Apparently, the *imam* was unaware of the major renovations that took place. He briefly reported that Islam only requires ordinary rules of cleanliness in order to pray at a site belonged to the People of the Book.

Conversion

Thus, we find a variety of discourses concerning the conditions of the transformation of the synagogue into a mosque. Some informers declare that a particular ritual needed to be performed; they use the term *tahroura*, which refers to the ‘circumcision’ of the synagogue. Thus, a local shoemaker said,

It was a *jamaa* (place of prayer) of the Jews which became a *jama'a* of the Muslims... It's like when you marry a Jewess and you convert her to Islam.

For the *imam* of the mosque, this transformation was a completely valid act within Islam. He based his judgment on the Jews' and Muslims' shared belief in the same divinity.

We can pray in a place where Jews pray. It is not a problem. We are the same, the Jews and us. They love God and we do the same thing. The difference is in the messengers.

Thus, for the *imam*, according to Islamic law Muslims have the right to appropriate a Jewish place of prayer if Jews have left it, but the opposite may not be done.

We have the right of succession (to inherit their places of prayer), whereas they do not have the right. A Jew may not be heir to a Muslim.

The theologians we spoke to agree that the confessional identity of places of prayer in Islam is unimportant. In their point of view, it is legal to pray in a place of prayer of Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and alike. What counts is that the place that comes in contact with the body of the worshipper, should not be dirtied by ritually impure substances such as blood, alcohol, urine, etc. Apparently, not all the informants knew the exact steps of the transformation of the synagogue into mosque, whereas the memory of the existence of the Jewish place of prayer does form part of the collective memory of the quarter. It does not evoke any particular attitude or negative reaction, as exists in the case of other synagogues transformed into mosques, for example in Oran.¹⁰

Transformation of a place of prayer: migration and the re-appropriation of space

The point of view most widely accepted in the quarter today emphasises the departure of the Jews and the absence of a place of prayer for the Muslims. The inhabitants know that the mosque was opened in a place that served as a synagogue. The ground floor's transfer to the *waqf* by the buyer of the Berdugo house is also known. The informers estimate that from 1965 to 1968, the years mentioned as the foundation time of the mosque of Salouat-s street, there were no more than a dozen Jews left in the quarter, most of them artisans (*snayyiya-s*) and small tradesmen of the same socio-economic class as their Muslim neighbours. The synagogue was closed for several years preceding the opening of the mosque. "The Jews (of the old *mellah*) prayed in the new *mellah* or in a *jamaa* ("mosque") opposite the fountain (in the old *mellah*)," said a veteran of the

¹⁰ Dalila Senhadji Khiat, "Les mosquées en Algérie ou l'espace reconquis: l'exemple d'Oran," *L'Année du Maghreb*, 6 (2010), available at: <http://anneemaghreb.revues.org/907> (last accessed 11 April 2017).

quarter. At that time, there was no place of prayer for Muslims in the old *mellah*.

According to some informers, the transformation of the mosque into a synagogue was the result of the collective action of the Muslim residents, now the majority, to acquire a mosque. Given the absence of a place of Muslim prayer in the quarter, the inhabitants formed a committee to present the problem to the religious authorities of the town (the delegation of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs). Given the lack of an empty plot of land on which they could erect a mosque, the representatives of the Ministry asked the residents to find a place that could serve as a place of prayer. Representatives of the neighbourhood, led by a local delegate who lived opposite the Berdugo House, found the *S'lat Berdugo*. Thus, in coordination with the owner, they proposed the purchase of the two ruined houses in order to annex them to the former synagogue and transform the entire property into a mosque.

Differing memories of the Jewish quarter

This episode offers an interesting standpoint for analysing the transformation of Jewish quarters in Morocco in the period subsequent to independence. Thus, we witness two types of re-appropriation of space in those quarters: on the one hand, there is a shared memory of conviviality which we still can see through the architecture of the *mellah* (old and new); on the other hand, the suppression of Jewish names in the streets bears witness to erasing that presence altogether.

A shared memory

The Jewish past of the two quarters (the old and the new *mellahs*) continues to speak through the architecture of the buildings: the shape of the balconies in the new *mellah*, which were built only by certain masons who lived during the period of Jewish presence, the Stars of David, which may be seen here and there on the facades, the interior passages between one house and another—particular to the old *mellah*—as well as communal and religious institutions (synagogues, schools, dispensaries, etc.), the imposing cemetery of the old *mellah*, with its tombs abutting the walls of Moulay Ismail, the new cemetery. This past is still present in memories, mainly nostalgic, of the generations who lived during the Jewish period, as well as in the stories told by younger people to whom the stories were transmitted in their families. The informants mention vague memories of

Jewish holidays, as well as Jewish sites such as the school, the synagogues (*Slat Laazimi*, *Slat Boussidan*, *Slat Berdugo*) and other communal institutions.

The suppression of traces of Jewish life

In the late 1970s the old *mellah* underwent a project of conversion of its streets (*derb-s*). Three streets with Jewish religious significance were given Islamic names. Thus the Salaouat-s Street, where the Berdugo house was located, which referred to the place of prayer of the Jews of the quarter, was rebaptised *Al-Ghufranei*, forgiveness, as if to signify the divine deliverance from the 'error' represented by the Jewish religion. According to Ahmed, it was his father, the buyer of the Berdugo house who initiated the change of the street name.

Hakham Street now bears the name of an imam, *Imam Al-Boussari*, a religious official and poet who lived in Egypt in the thirteenth century. *Derb Laazimi* (Laazimi Street), which adjoined the synagogue of the same name, *S'lat Laazimi*, is now Ibn Hani Street, named after an Andalusian poet of the tenth century. Only names with no religious significance remain unchanged: *derb Al-Ghandour*, *derb al Kayiss* (allegedly a Jewish figure of the *mellah*), *derb Lamtamar* (lit.: "granary"), *derb el-kharrazines* (the shoemakers' street). The changing of the names of the streets of the old *mellah* was gradual. It resulted from the complaints of several residents and Muslim notables who saw their residence in streets with Jewish names as an insult to their standing as good Muslims.

Politics and religion: the erasure of Jewish spaces

The most surprising change would take place later, at the time of the changing of the names of the new *mellah* in the early 1980s. The name of the quarter itself was changed from *Mellah al Bali* (old *mellah*) to *Al-Fath*. This was hardly an unintentional change. *Al-Fath* in Arabic derives from the root *fth*, signifying opening, conquering, winning, placing on the right path, etc. In the Muslim lexicography, *fath* signifies Muslim conquests and the Islamisation of the conquered. Thus, the conquest is emptied of its violent and war-related significance. The Islamisation of the conquered peoples becomes an act of divine benevolence, which enables the errant to regain the Way of Salvation. Thus, the choice of the name *Al-Fath* for the old *mellah* follows the same logic of dejudaisation and Islamisation that we witnessed in the renaming of the streets of the *mellah*. Thus the *Mellah Al-Bali* becomes the object of an action of *fath*, a new religious marking of its space.

The initiator of the *Fath* (“conquest”) of the old *mellah* was the socialist municipal council, which ruled the city from 1983 to 1992. Only the name of the quarter was changed by them, whereas the street names were spared. It was in the new *mellah*, that a widespread project of dejudaisation took place, among all the streets of the quarter. The new *mellah* was renamed *Hay Riyad*, the name of the place prior to its birth as a Jewish quarter in the 1920s. All the street names of the new *mellah* were changed, except for Palestine Avenue (the commercial and leisure center in the quarter previously, the Boulevard of the Jews, as it was called) and Market Street. According to one municipal official, the archives recording this action are lost. We find new names such as Deir Yassin (that refers to the massacre of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, in 1948), Al-Ourdun (Jordan), Sinai, Al-Aqaba, Hottayne (referring to the battle of Karnei Hittin, between Saladin and the Christian armies in 1187, which brought on the end of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem), Al-Khalil (Hebron), Mahmoud Hamchari (former representative of the PLO in France, assassinated in 1973), Hassan Al Ansari (one of the companions of the Prophet), Ammar ben Yasser (another companion of the Prophet), Shahid (“martyr”) Abderrahmane Amazghar (a Moroccan member of the Arab Liberation Front, killed during a military operation in the north of Israel in 1975), etc.

Petahia Berdugo Street (or Raphael Berdugo, according to another informant) was renamed Salah Eddine El Ayoubi-Saladin. Ibn Maimoune (Maimonides) Street was renamed after an unknown figure, according to an informant, by the name of Abdelsalem Mezgueldi. Israelite Cemetery Street, which borders the new cemetery, became Ibn Zidoun street, named after an Andalusian poet of the eleventh century. David Street became Ammar ben Yasser, Al-Madrasi Al-Israila Street (Jewish Schools Street) became Maarif (lit.: “knowledge”). The name Jerusalem Street was Arabised to become Al-Quds.

The new names manifest a logic other than that which guided the renaming of certain streets of the old *mellah*. In the old *mellah*, only the street names with Jewish religious significance were gradually modified, in response to the requests of notables and residents of the quarter, who wanted to guard their reputations as good Muslims. In the new *mellah*, it was an action initiated by the Municipal Council, in which all the names were changed at once. While the new names reflect a wide variety of registers (religious, political, historical and artistic), the majority refers to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By referring directly to the conflict, a new modality was introduced into the relation with Moroccan Judaism.

This renaming of sites is currently the focus of mobilisation in both *mellahs*, especially among the younger generation. In the old *mellah*, the repeated visits of descendants of Jewish families alerted the population as to the value of their site. Signs with the new name of the old *mellah*, *Hay Al-Fath*, have been removed. The younger generation reclaims the Jewish past of the quarter. The *shmisha* (“little sun”), which decorates the old fountain at the center of the old *mellah* has become the symbol of that past. Some denounce the dejudaisation of the quarter, calling it a racist, criminal, catastrophic or idiotic act. “Why only the Jewish names and not all the others?”, one young tradesman of the old *mellah* asked. These people believe that Jewish heritage is a means of development of their residential space. They are strongly opposed to the local authorities and the Medina Association, which specialises in the protection of the heritage of the old city, judging their actions to be selective and partial.

Conclusion

As a result of this research, my grandfather now appears in a different light than his brothers who moved to the *Ville Nouvelle* in the 1930s. The affirmation of a Judeo-Arab identity, including a language of its own (Judeo-Arabic), a self-definition which ignored French colonisation, social practices determined by daily Jewish-Muslim relations—these were the determinant aspects of his life, even if they are absent from Jewish and Arab collective memory. The history of his house reflects the divergent paths of re-appropriation of space. The built heritage still bears traces of Jewish presence, but Judeo-Arabic is no longer spoken or written, and this modest synagogue has been transformed into a mosque in a quarter that had none. The streets have been renamed in order to erase all Jewish presence in the old and new *mellahs*. Notwithstanding the reconstruction of some synagogues, mainly by the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca, most Jewish sites of prayer have undergone an unenviable evolution.¹¹ In Meknès, we witness two ways of renaming the sites: political and/or religious. This case raises the issue of the memory of the Jewish population and the heritagisation of its traces in the urban space.

More globally, the problematic nature of the memory of Moroccan Judaism may be witnessed in the conflict between politics and religion, a conflict that the past intimacies of living together cannot diminish. The traditional religious register, which—by attributing the status of *dhimma* to Jews—inspired my grandfather’s confidence, no longer exists. In the modern

¹¹ Miller, “Making Tangier.”

political register, this shared memory is denied or effaced by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The transition in the treatment of this memory is marked by the passage from a traditional religious register which regulated the relations between a Jewish minority and a Muslim majority, as expressed through the Islamisation of some of the street names of the old *mellah*—and a modern political register which denies that memory based on outside factors—the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is at the base of the new names given to the sites of the new *mellah*.

If in 2011, the new constitution lists the recognition of Judaism as an integral part of Moroccan identity, we wonder if it means a desire to insert Morocco in contemporary modernity, distancing it from ideological control of politics. By erasing the Jewish presence and then by having ‘second thoughts’ about the process of erasure, we can see this process as an attempt to maintain a balance between religious pluralism—which, more than ever before, is the mark of contemporary democratic diversity—and religious hegemony.

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CHAPTER FOUR

JEWISH MEMORIES AND SPACE
IN SOUTH EASTERN POLAND:
THE CASE OF THE BRAMA GRODZKA
NN THEATRE AND HERITAGE CENTRE

GIORGIA FOSCARINI

I wish to analyse the case of the Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre as a case of a government cultural institution working with Jewish memory and material cultural heritage in Poland, recovering it and using it to redefine both Polish and Jewish identity. But before diving in the history of the centre, its activities and how its work influences the identity and memory formation process in Poland, I would like to give a brief overview on how Jewish memories and spaces were confronted in Poland after the Second World War and the Holocaust.¹

Jewish memory in Poland

Poland has historically been a land of hospitality for Jews, the first Jewish settlement in Poland tracing approximately 1000 years. Before the Second World War Poland was the country with the largest Jewish population in the continent. According to the *American Jewish Yearbook*,² in the late 1930s, about 9.5% of Poland's population was Jewish, around 3 million people. However, by 1950, after the Holocaust and the post-war pogroms,

¹ This paper was first presented at the conference "Juifs Disparus: Enjeux de Mémoire. Entre Redécouverte et Appropriation," Université de Lausanne, 12-13 June 2017.

² [N.A.], "Statistics of Jews", *American Jewish Yearbook*, 37 (1935-1936): 349-85: 363 at www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=10052 (accessed: 22/05/2017).

Poland's Jewish population was reduced to as little as 45,000 people,³ and Jewish memory became an issue hardly touched in the Polish public discourse, even more so during the communist state.

During this period, Jewish Polish memories were put aside, and new memories and national narratives were built on the premises of a supposedly ethnically homogeneous Polish State. The recovery of this kind of national narrative was also favoured by the fact that Poland's landscape was greatly modified by the war and the Holocaust, both from a material and from a demographic point of view. From a demographic point of view the shifting of Poland's borders, and the murder of the great majority of Polish Jews during the Holocaust, left a country where the population was for the greater part Polish Catholic. As for the material traces of Jewish presence, in most cases they were forgotten, destroyed or repurposed. Poles were thus left with their own undisputed memory of history, and physical absence facilitated a symbolic obliteration of the Jews. The Holocaust was "Polonised."⁴ Communities of memory were created on a nationalistic basis,⁵ thus not including in the recollection of history, memories of groups not considered part of the nation. Jews were thus not included in the national group, being considered as the archetypical "Other." On the other side, in the post-Holocaust recreation of Jewish identity, Poland was considered just as a site of abjection, any other history or narrative being overridden by those of the Holocaust.

It was only around the 1970s and the 1980s that the first cultural activities, and public debates around Jewish themes began also in Poland, thanks to the circulation of literary and cinematographic works such as Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah*,⁶ which was first screened in Poland in 1986. At that time, raising interest on Jewish themes, meant fostering a multicultural and multi-ethnic conception of Poland, and it was considered as a form of cultural activism and political resistance against the Communist state. After 1989 and the fall of the Iron Curtain, attention on Jewish issues and Holocaust, now considered as a primarily Jewish event, rapidly escalated. The opening of Poland's borders to mass tourism inevitably forced Poles to confront with external representations of their country, and the paradigm of "martyrological messianism" built around

³ [N.A.], "Statistics of Jews", *American Jewish Yearbook*, 52 (1951): 326-96: 337 at www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=10073 (accessed: 22/05/2017).

⁴ Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, "Attitudes of Young Poles Towards Jews in Post-1989 Poland," *East European Policies and Societies* 14/3 (2000): 565.

⁵ William James Booth, "Communities of Memory: on Identity, Memory and Debt," *American Political Science Review*, 93/2 (1999): 249-63.

⁶ Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah*, 1985.

the Polish nation started to crumble.⁷

Even more so after the publication in 2001 of Jan Tomasz Gross' book *Neighbours*, about the massacre of Jedwabne, when nearly the entire Jewish population of the village was murdered by their Polish neighbours. The publishing of this book triggered a harsh debate not only about Polish-Jewish relations before and during Second World War and the Holocaust, but also about Poland's self-image and identity as a nation. In particular, it interrogated old conceptualisations and versions of history which was 'cleaned' to avoid Poland's "dark past."⁸

Memory and Space in Poland

The debate raised by the publication of the book by Gross was the most famous among many others that took place at the time over the relationship between Poles and Jews during and after the Holocaust, about the identity building process of Poland as a nation, and the questions of re-appropriation and re-signification of Jewish space in Poland after the war. Especially at a local level, space became one of the main lenses through which identities and a sense of collective self were (re)created.⁹ Either by carrying on a nationalist and mono-ethnic conception of Poland, thus totally ignoring traces of Jewish presence, or by fostering an open and multicultural conception of the Polish nation, by recovering and including those traces in the public narrative of a place. Memory was turned into something that could be seen. According to Sławomir Kapralski, Polish perception of the past, and thus its present identity, was formed and expressed through "memoriscapes."¹⁰ Memoriscapes can be defined as a mixture of memories (both material and symbolic) and landscapes, which are spaces invested with a cultural meaning, a construction with the purpose of creating and maintaining a group's identity. Thus, memoriscapes are the

⁷ Geneviève Zubrzycki, "History and the National Sensorium: Making Sense of Polish Mythology," *Qualitative Sociology* 34 (2011): 25-6.

⁸ Joanna B. Michlic, "The Dark Past: Polish-Jewish Relations in the Shadow of the Holocaust," in *Imaginary Neighbours: Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust*, eds. Dorota Glowacka and Joanna Zylińska. 21-39, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

⁹ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" *Diacritics*, 16 (1986): 22-7.

¹⁰ Sławomir Kapralski, "Amnesia, Nostalgia and Reconstruction: Shifting Modes of Memory in Poland's Jewish Spaces" in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, eds. Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng, 149-69, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

spatial materialisation of what can be defined national collective memory.¹¹ The selection of memories building up the ‘final memoryscape’ is the result of power relations, thus a political matter, insofar as it is used to normalise, hierarchise, marginalise or even erase practices, memories and minority groups different from the accepted norm. Memoryscapes influence the way we perceive space but are also influenced in turn by the dominant narrative in a society. In this sense, we can consider them as a mirror of a given society in the present moment, of its self-perception, and of the attitude towards its own collective history and past, playing a huge role in the re-signification of national identity after a traumatic event. This is precisely the reason why Jewish memory was for a long time obliterated from the Polish memoryscape, and on the other side why Jews have identified Poland for a long time only with the camps.

At present, museums, cultural institutions and others *lieux de mémoire*¹² (monuments, commemorative slabs etc.) portraying and remembering Polish-Jewish past can be fully considered as a part of Poland’s memoryscape, constituting a space where to display, ask for recognition, and provide a context for the re-creation of the cultural legacy of minorities, in this case of the Jewish one.¹³ However, since Jewish presence was brutally erased from the Polish land, and few traces of Jewish culture remained in Poland, the recovery and preservation of Polish-Jewish memory and identity were placed first and foremost in the hands of non-Jewish Polish actors. It is precisely with this aim of providing recognition to a group that played a great role in the definition of what is Polish identity that the Grozka Gate – NN theatre, museum was founded in Lublin.

Jewish presence in Lublin

The first historically documented signs of Jewish presence in Lublin date back to the second half of the 15th century, when Jews were granted the privilege of free trade in the city. In the 18th and 19th century, the Jewish community in the city flourished making it an important centre of Jewish social, cultural and political life during the interwar period. Most of Lublin’s Jews were assimilated and secularised, in spite of the growing

¹¹ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

¹² Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: les Lieux de Mémoire”, *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24.

¹³ Tamar Katriel, “Homeland and Diaspora in Israeli Vernacular Museums,” in *Memory and Ethnicity: Ethnic Museums in Israel and the Diaspora*, eds. Emanuela Trevisan, Dario Miccoli and Tudor Parfitt. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2013).

anti-Semitic displays among Polish society. Before the war, in 1939, Lublin's Jewish population numbered 42,830 people and constituted 31% of the total of town's 122,019 inhabitants. After the war, when Lublin was finally liberated in 1944, of the 42,830 Jews that lived in town, only around 300 Jews survived the Holocaust, and among them only 15 were pre-war inhabitants of Lublin.¹⁴ After the Kielce Pogrom (1946) about 1,300 more people emigrated from Lublin and the surrounding region, and the number of Jewish inhabitants in town diminished to around 1,000. During the 1950s a few hundred Jews still lived in Lublin, but most of them left Poland after the anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic campaign of 1968, leaving Lublin with virtually no Jewish presence after the war.

Vicarious witnessing and the case of the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre”



Pictures of Lublin's Jewish quarter before (left) the war and today (right).

Photo credits: <http://teatrnn.pl/en/>

Completely destroyed during the war, the area of the former Jewish quarter and its remains were for a large part covered in concrete and turned into a parking lot after the war, thus erasing most of the traces of Jewish presence in Lublin, as the pictures here below show.

It is precisely with the aim of recovering the erased memories and the forgotten Jewish past of the city that a group of memory activists,¹⁵ started to research about Lublin's Jewish past and found out that the Grodzka Gate was the point of connection between the Christian part and the Jewish part of the town. The empty space on the side of the Gate was once

¹⁴ The Holocaust Research Project:

<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/lublin.html> (accessed 22/05/2017).

¹⁵ Allison Shona, “Residual history: memory and activism in modern Poland,” *Nationalities Papers*, 43/6 (2015): 906-26, 907.

occupied by Lublin's Jewish quarter, hosting houses, synagogues and community buildings. The "NN Theatre"¹⁶ was then established in 1990 as a cultural institution funded by the Polish government, with the aim of giving back to life the ruins of the Grodzka Gate, while bringing back Lublin's Jewish history. From then on, the Gate and the neighbouring houses were extensively renovated, and in 1998 the place was renamed "Grodzka Gate–NN Theatre" (in Polish: *Brama Grodzka*). At the beginning, the activities of the centre revolved mainly around the theatre, but the main aim was to restore the memory inscribed in that specific location and connected both to Lublin Jewish past, and to the history of the Polish town before the war. The project had also a wider aim which was to create a living space in Lublin's Old Town, which was considered to be quite an abandoned and dangerous area of the city. And in fact, the whole area of the Old Town had been forgotten from a long time by the public authorities and the problem of degradation of historic monuments and buildings was present on a massive scale. Through the renovation of the Gate and of the adjacent buildings, as an institution the Grodzka Gate–NN theatre managed to convert Lublin's Old Town in a venue for cultural and touristic activities, thus revitalising it and making the NN Theatre the natural setting for artistic and theatrical performances mostly dedicated to uncovering and remembering the Jewish past of the city and the victims of the Holocaust.

The first cultural project implemented between 1998 and 1999 by the new-born association and linked to the memory of the place was made of two large documentary exhibits called "The Great Book of the City" and "Portrait of a Place" about the history of the city before 1939. The exhibitions featured unique photographs, maps, and documents related to the Polish-Jewish history of Lublin prior 1939. Based on these two installations, the permanent exhibit of the Centre was later conceived and arranged in the form of a theatrical scenery. One of its major elements is a model of the pre-war Old Town of Lublin and Jewish Quarter. The model reveals the extent of destruction inflicted on the body of the city during the Second World War. It was the first exhibition in Poland to use multimedia to such a great extent. Almost in parallel to this first project the Grodzka Gate staff began to work on another project, called "The Oral History project." This project consisted in recording the personal histories and memories of thousands of people who lived in Lublin before World War II and the Holocaust. In 10 years the Gate's staff managed to record and

¹⁶ NN stands for "No Name" and it is a way used by *Brama Grodzka* activists to address the void left by the absence of Lublin's Jewish population, by underlining their anonymity.

upload on the Centre's educational portal more than 3000 hours of memories.¹⁷ At the same time, many educational projects were created to give both students and educators the chance to approach the topics of Polish-Jewish history and of the Holocaust in a new way. Following, many more projects related to the Jewish past of the town were conceived, realised and inaugurated by the Grodzka Gate.¹⁸ These projects were built around the idea that, even if erased or hidden, the Jewish history of the town was still present in the topography of the place, and that it kept coming back.

One of the latest exhibitions arranged by the Gate in 2009, and still in place, is entitled "Lublin, Memory of the Place." This exhibition dedicated to the pre-war Lublin, and located in the spaces of the Gate, is designed as the interior of an archive, and it gathers all the sound and audio testimonies, photographs and documents, about the city of Lublin, and more specifically about the Jewish quarter of the town before the war. The exhibition includes hundreds of photographs, and some recreated sounds of the pre-war city. On the shelves there are thousands of files each one with information about a specific street and house of the pre-war Lublin.

Finally, in 2016 the Memory Trail¹⁹ project, entitled "Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust" was conceived as an itinerary made of various stops signposting in the public space of the city the various sites connected to the Holocaust of Lublin Jews.

In the different projects developed by the association, signposting creates the knowledge necessary to notice and develop in present time the dimension of absence, by allowing the visitors to realise what is there no more and for which reason.²⁰ This is useful especially considering that most places are no longer conspicuously marked in relation to the historical events that took place there.

NN Theatre-Grodzka Gate: Educational Activities

Alongside the exhibits, the Grodzka Gate has been running for many years now numerous educational activities, with the aim to disseminate

¹⁷ Brama Grodzka Multimedia Library:

<http://www.biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibra>, accessed 06/06/2017.

¹⁸ Brama Grodzka–NN theatre website:

http://teatrnn.pl/kalendarium/node/1510/history_of_the_“grodzka_gate_–_nn_theatre”_centre (accessed 03/06/2017).

¹⁹ Brama Grodzka– NN theatre website: <https://teatrnn.pl/pamiec/en/memory-trail/> (accessed 03/06/2017).

²⁰ Geneviève Zubrzycki, "The politics of Jewish absence in Contemporary Poland," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52/2 (2017): 250-77, 268.

knowledge about the Polish Jewish heritage and history of Lublin. The Grodzka Gate's workshops and educational activities are differently targeted to the local community and to a broader audience of students, visitors and tourists. Many of the workshops are directed to primary, middle and high school students. They are thus conceived in an interactive and captivating way so to get the young participants involved. Among the activities foreseen there are workshops about the Jewish life and culture in Lublin; literary workshops about Yiddish and *shtetl* literature and the life of people who inhabited the town and the region before the war; and workshops dealing with the theme of the Righteous among the Nations. To foster cooperation between students and teachers from the whole Lublin region and partner schools in Israel, the Grodzka Gate organises also Polish Jewish Youth Meetings, so that Polish and Israeli teenagers have the chance to meet and to know each other. Finally, after many years of cultural activities and educational workshops, in 2015 the Grodzka Gate organised the first edition of its Summer School, in collaboration with other educational and memory institutions in the region (WSPA University College; Panorama Kultur Association). This 10-day program was aimed at university students and professionals in the field of memory and education engaged in the field of Jewish studies and/or of Polish-Jewish descent. The main aim of the Summer School was not only to remember and talk about the Holocaust in Lublin and the surrounding region, but also to explore the long history of the Jewish community in Lublin, the heritage of the *shtetls*, and the specificity of the multicultural provincial centres of Jewish life, the multiple narratives related to the different memorial sites and spaces that now have become places of memory. Finally, from the year 2000 on, the Grodzka Gate begun to develop a series of online resources to disseminate knowledge about Lublin, its past and its cultural heritage. In particular, they started to build a portal which hosted databases of texts, visual and audio material, among them testimonies and lectures.²¹

Grodzka Gate and the Jewish heritage in Poland

I had the opportunity to experience personally some of the work carried out by Grodzka Gate activists and cultural mediators during the ten days I spent in Lublin as a guest of the Grodzka Gate and a participant in the first

²¹ Leksykon Lublin: <http://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/> (accessed 03/06/2017); Brama Grodzka Multimedia Library: <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibraaction=ChangeLanguageAction&language=en> (accessed 03/06/2017)

edition of the Memory Place Presence Summer School in 2015. I was one of the five non-Jewish participants in the program, while the others were Jews coming from all over the world (Israel, USA, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany). The ten-day workshop was quite an intense experience: participants travelled all around South-Western Poland searching for traces of its Jewish past, and meeting with large numbers of people undertaking memory initiatives individually or as part of an association, to revive the memory of their lost “Jewish neighbours.” Sometimes, memory was indeed turned into a touristic business, but most of the small cultural and memory enterprises we saw worked in the direction of recovering Jewishness and rediscovering Poland’s cultural diversity. The goal that the people we met shared was to remember, and in a way to recreate, Jewish presence in Lublin and Poland. With these words Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, the founder of the Gate described its work:

We can also describe the things we do as ‘laboratory’, a ‘laboratory of memory’. In the notion of laboratory there is the essence of our activity – search, experiment, discovering the new. It is amazing when the knot or rather amalgam of many activities produces an important social effect. This is a sort of social alchemist work.²²

But what is the social work he refers to? Unlike most Holocaust tourism enterprises that comes and goes from Poland and does not engage in questioning with the identity of the Other (both on the Polish and on the Jewish side), the Gate’s activities foster an intercultural dialogue and an historical discussion on national groups and identities (Polish and Jewish) by inquiring and exploring them thoroughly, engaging with difference instead of flattening it, finally leading to a possible “everyday” reconciliation. By everyday, I mean a less official and a more individual process, where finally people encounter one another as individuals and experience the reconciliation personally, creating new networks bridging ruptures generated by group suffering and traumas, allowing for the creation of new memories and human bonds between people. All of my fellow travellers came to Poland on what Erica Lehrer defined as “Jewish quest travel to Poland.”²³ This kind of travel gives the chance, both to

²² Interview to Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, founder of the Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre: Theatre NN website: Subjective History of the Centre: <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/Content/42696/SubjectiveHistoryoftheCenter.pdf>, accessed 13 November 2017

²³ Erica Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited. Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2013), 13.

Poles and Jews, “to think more critically about their collective and individual identities, and to rework them in significant ways.”²⁴ This process of self-critical engagement with one’s identity can be read in the words of some of the participants in the program. One of them said:

From someone who believed they only had German Jewish roots, I did eventually discover through genealogy that I also have Polish roots and many from rabbinic dynasties. I am apparently a direct descendant (13th great-granddaughter) of Meir ben Gedalia (Maharam) from Lublin, and I felt so lucky to be able to visit the place where one of my ancestors had lived. I had a wonderful time, and it was an honour to participate and learn from you. You really have an excellent program and I am so very impressed with the work you are doing. (...) However, one thing that I did not have is the physical experience in the space, seeing and hearing the Polish perspective in person, and seeing, listening, and speaking to people working in the field of memory work. I had never visited Poland before, so this experience had been invaluable to me because of my interest in memory work, Jewish studies, and Jewish cultural heritage in general. (...) It was very a powerful and moving experience for me to experience a space where Jewish Poles once had a rich civilization that had blossomed for almost a thousand years – a space where only three short years of large-scale destruction undid most of it and almost completely destroyed a minority group. Jewish heritage and history in Poland belongs to all of Poland and you need to continue what you are doing.”²⁵

and another:

I came (...) knowing little about Jewish Polish history and almost nothing about Jewish-Polish relations in the modern period. (...) I left the program with more knowledge and more questions than when I entered it. I also left feeling very inspired by the work done at *Brama Grodzka* and by the instructors and my fellow participants.²⁶

Conclusions

From the activities of the Gate and the testimonies of the participants to the Summer School program, it can be assumed that Lublin’s community

²⁴ Ibid., 14.

²⁵ Danielle Angres-student in the Memory-Place-Presence Summer School program Memory-Place-Presence Summer School Program: <http://teatrnn.pl/summerschool/edition-2015/> (accessed 03/06/2017).

²⁶ Vardit Lightstone-student in the Memory-Place-Presence Summer School program Ibid.

and its memories are defined in relation to its past, but, at the same time, manipulating the surrounding space and collective memories, by, for instance in this case, retrieving memories that have previously been silenced or erased.²⁷

Far from the global mass-mediated and produced field of heritage tourism, which plays the lion share in Poland, the cultural production of the Gate can be counted in the number of the diverse grassroots activities—educational, artistic, memorial etc.—that speak about the history and memory of Polish Jews in a participatory and shared way. The work carried out by the Grodzka Gate and its partners, can be defined, along with Lehrer, as a: “regeneration, re-articulation and redefinition” not only of the Polish national community, and of the local Jewish community, but also, in a broader way, of “ideas of post-Holocaust Jewishness itself.” The activities of the Grodzka Gate, by creating “sites of pluralism,”²⁸ not only go in the direction of promoting a liberal culture within the Polish society itself but are also a way to provoke deep and crucial questioning of contemporary Jewish identity in Europe and outside.

The Grodzka Gate, and its Polish and Jewish partner institutions, can be located in a “space,” both physical and symbolic, where Jewish and Polish projects are vital to each other in a process of identity self-definition which is undergoing nowadays. Convergence of Polish and Jewish cultural and educational projects related to Polish Jewish memory and heritage foster self-reflective and inter-subjective dialogue. In this case, it can be seen that pluralism is not just accepting what is different but starts with seeing and recognising one’s own individual diversity. Against a European background struggling more and more with nationalisms, trying to include in its societies ethnic diversity, and to figure out new ways to conciliate different identities, I would argue that Poland is quite a special case where identity claims and cultural diversity are framed and faced in the present time, but in relation to the country’s past. Poland, and more specifically the Grodzka Gate case, can thus be seen as a test, an experiment, to forge new ways to introduce difference and the “Other” in a more inclusive national narrative.

²⁷ Sławomir Kaprański, “Amnesia, Nostalgia and Reconstruction: Shifting Modes of Memory in Poland’s Jewish Spaces,” in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, 149-69, 163.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

Post scriptum

Per concludere questo mio contributo desidero ringraziare di cuore Emanuela Trevisan Semi, che ancora chiamo “prof.,” per la guida intellettuale che mi ha offerto in tutti questi anni e per la sua presenza umana; per le discussioni, sempre stimolanti e interessanti (non solo di argomento ebraico) che hanno punteggiato la nostra conoscenza, e per avermi accompagnata fino al dottorato, anche quando, io per prima, non ci credevo.

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CHAPTER FIVE

“BECAUSE OUR PATH HAS NO END”: DIASPORA AND LAND OF ISRAEL IN THE NOVELS OF HAIM SABATO

DARIO MICCOLI

A Cairo-born Jew, rabbi and grandson of rabbis, “Sephardic Agnon”, cantor of the Eastern Jewish tradition, headmaster of a *yeshivah* in the West Bank settlement of Ma‘aleh ‘Adumim. These are some of the definitions that can be given of the Israeli novelist Haim Sabato, whom – even though little known outside of Israel – represents quite an intriguing author of contemporary Hebrew literature. In this chapter, I present Sabato and his literary work, focusing in particular on the novels *Be-shafir heveyon* (“In the beauty of concealment,” 2014), the Sapir Prize *Te’um qavanot* (“Adjusting sights,” 1999) and *Bo‘i ha-ruah* (“The wind comes,” 2007). The three books are based upon Sabato’s personal story and set in the decades that go from the 1950s to the Kippur war (1973). They can be read as a personal literary voyage that, however, also reveals the tensions between Jewishness and Israeliness, Diaspora and return to the Promised Land, as well as the cleavages between *mizrahim* and *ashkenazim* that exist in Israel.

Haim Sabato was born in Cairo in 1952. He grew up in a traditional and religiously observant milieu, counting among his ancestors a number of important Cairo- and Aleppo-based rabbis and scholars, for example his maternal grandfather rabbi Aharon Choueka.¹ He moved to Israel as a child and lived in the neighbourhood of Qiryat Ha-Yovel, Jerusalem. The

In this chapter, I always quoted from the English translation of Haim Sabato’s works when one was available. All citations from *Be-shafir heveyon* are my translation from Hebrew.

¹ See his biographical profile in: Zvi Zohar, “The halakhic and religious literature,” in *Egypt*, ed. Nahem Ilan (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Tzvi, 2008), 105 [Hebrew].

neighbourhood, initially known as Beit Mazmil, expanded in the 1950s to host Jewish migrants from the Arab world in newly built *shikunim* ("housing projects"). It is there that Sabato studied in religious schools and then moved to the renowned *Yeshivat Ha-Kotel*, in the Old City. In his early twenties, he was drafted in the army and fought in the Kippur war, an experience that left an indelible mark on him—as well as on many other Israelis of that generation. Later he attended the *Yeshiva Merkaz Harav*, one of the centres of religious Zionism, became a rabbi and founded near Ma'aleh 'Adumim the *Yeshiva hesder Birkat Moshe* which combines religious and military training.

From Cairo to Beit Mazmil

Sabato is in many ways an exception both when compared to other contemporary rabbis and scholars, as well as to other Israeli writers of Egyptian ancestry. In relation to the former, Sabato is considered a moderate voice, following the steps of rabbinical figures like the French-born Aaron Lichtenstein and distancing himself from neo-Hassidic ideals to propose a more nuanced approach to tradition and the *halakhah*.² When compared to Israeli novelists of Egyptian origin like Yitzhaq Gormezano Goren, Ronit Matalon or Nissim Zohar, Sabato instead is far from the usual portrayal of Egypt as a cosmopolitan environment, populated by polyglot and secularised men and women, who dreamt of Paris and spent the summer on the shores of Alexandria.³ This kind of Egypt features little in Sabato's works and what is evoked, mainly is a familial environment whose contours faded upon migrating to Israel: "From time to time, mother told about her childhood, about Egypt, the school of the *Lycée* and all she had left there in Cairo. Her youth was left in Cairo, the books, the

² See Haim Sabato, *In quest of your presence: conversations with rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2011) [Hebrew].

³ Let me refer to Dario Miccoli, "Another History: Family, Nation and the Remembrance of the Egyptian Jewish Past in Contemporary Israeli Literature," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 13/3 (2014): 321-39. On the history of the Jews of twentieth-century Egypt: Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews of Modern Egypt, 1914-1952* (London: IB Tauris, 1989); Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Michael Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Middle East Conflict* (New York: New York University Press, 1992) and Dario Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt: An Imagined Bourgeoisie, 1880s-1950s* (London: Routledge, 2015).

notebooks, the documents and her childhood friends and she liked to remember this in her stories.”⁴

That of Sabato is not the typical Egyptian Jewish family, and while its members resented the Francophilia widespread among many Jews of early twentieth century Cairo, they nourished profound ties with the Land of Israel and its Hebrew culture too. In *Be-shafir heveyon*, the protagonist’s mother recalls how in Cairo her brother Jacko, “when he grew up, he used to lay under our big table, immersed in the books of Lamartine, De Musset, Verlaine. [...] Father [i.e. rabbi Aharon Choueka] collected [books] from anywhere he could get them. The short stories Agnon published with Shtibel, *Giv’at ha-hol*, *Leilot*, we did not know who Agnon was and what kind of name Hemdat was. But we were moved, through the stories and Hemdat the scent of the Land of Israel came [to us].”⁵

Surely it is not a coincidence that Shmuel Yosef Agnon, one of the greatest modern Hebrew writers, is evoked—here and in others of Sabato’s books, for example in *Emet me-’eretz titzmah* (“The truth will go forth from the land,” 1997)—as an author frequently read in the family. As mentioned at the beginning, some critics argue that Sabato represents a kind of contemporary Agnon. This similarity is not due to the setting of Sabato’s novels, that are quite distant from the surrealist and oneiric atmosphere so typical of Agnon, but to language and the usage of literary motifs derived from Jewish religious literature and folklore—even though from a Middle Eastern instead of *ashkenazi* perspective. One could think of intertextuality as another element that characterises the literary production of both writers,⁶ to the point that it is possible to conceive their works as one story divided into several chapters and with recurring themes, characters and places. In the case of Sabato this is something that comes out of each of his novels too, that in some cases—for instance *Be-shafir heveyon*—are made of interconnected short stories that do not necessarily follow a linear plot.

However, Sabato’s poetics and approach to tradition are very different from Agnon’s. Whereas for Agnon, “modern Hebrew literature [...] is nothing less than a substitute for the sacred texts,” for Sabato the two, the

⁴ Sabato, *In the beauty of concealment* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2014), 53.

⁵ Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 54. *Giv’at ha-hol* (“The hill of sand”, 1919) and *Leilot* (“Nights”, 1913) are two of Agnon’s early short stories, published by the German publisher Shtibel. Hemdat is the name of one of the protagonists.

⁶ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, “Postfazione”, in Shmuel Y. Agnon, *Racconti di Kippur* (Florence: Giuntina, 1995), 74.

secular Hebrew and the sacred Jewish texts, are part of a same canon.⁷ In thinking so, Sabato shows to what extent he belongs to a line of literary and philosophical thinking different from that of Agnon. He continues a typically Sephardic rabbinic and scholarly approach that, at least since Ottoman times, mediated between past and present, Jewish law and modernity going beyond the template of the *Haskalah*.⁸

Other contemporary intellectuals of *mizrahi* origin can be said to follow a similar path, for example the poets Amira Hess, Shva Salhoov, Aviva Pedaya and Almog Behar. Yet, the case of Sabato is different from them insofar as he is not just a writer but also a rabbi and a member of the settlers' world. That said, the settlers and the life they carry on—that are the subject of the much-praised *Ha-giv'ah* ("The hilltop," 2013) by Assaf Gavron or of one of the novels of Mira Magen—do not appear in Sabato's work.⁹ The author prefers to return time and again to a very precise timespan, which goes from the 1950s to the Kippur war, or in other cases goes back to the vanished world of Egypt and Ottoman Aleppo from where his ancestors came. Moreover, in contrast to a tendency to deterritorialisation that characterises a number of Israeli writers of the last two or three decades, for whom Israel is only one among the many possible spaces from where to narrate a story, Sabato chooses to connect his literature to this land in a profound manner.

This does not mean that he is continuing along the way of authors like S. Yizhar that, in *Yemei Tziklag* ("The days of Tziklag," 1958), actualised

⁷ Gershon Shaked, *Shmuel Yosef Agnon: A Revolutionary Traditionalist* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 24. Consider also: Elliott Resnick, "'Literature Can Express Purity, Faith, and Closeness to God': An Interview With Rosh Yeshiva and Award-Winning Author Rav Haim Sabato," *JewishPress*, 5 August 2015, available at: <http://www.jewishpress.com/indepth/interviews-and-profiles/literature-can-express-purity-faith-and-closeness-to-god-an-interview-with-rosh-yeshiva-and-award-winning-author-rav-haim-sabato/2015/08/05/>, accessed 31 October 2017.

⁸ This was common practice among late Ottoman and post-Ottoman rabbinical authorities. See: Zvi Zohar, "Sephardic Jurisprudence in the Recent Half-Millennium," in *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: from the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*, ed. Zvi Zohar (New York: New York University Press, 2005): 167-95.

⁹ On the two authors: Yaahov Herskovitz, "Settlers Versus Pioneers: The Deconstruction of the Settlers in Assaf Gavron's *The Hilltop*," *Shofar*, 33/4 (2015): 173-89; Emanuela Trevisan Semi, "Le contraddizioni del 'pensare in modo materno' nelle colonie ebraiche della Cisgiordania in un romanzo di Mira Magen," in *Il genere nella ricerca storica*, eds. Saveria Chemotti and Maria Cristina La Rocca (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2015): 164-77.

the (Jewish) biblical past through a new, physical (and Hebrew) contact with the land.¹⁰ Sabato adopts a multilayered language that dismantles the boundaries between sacred and profane, biblical past and Israeli present and reinterprets everything as part of a diachronic *continuum* that cannot be disjointed. In his view, even the most mundane things and memories, from the puddles of Beit Mazmil to popular *kibbutz* tunes, are part of a sacred Israeli Jewish landscape, or better to say: “they are the Land of Israel, like the carob in the transit camp, the figs of Ein Kerem, the prickly pear of Malhah, like the anemones and the cyclamens, like Hadassah Ha-Ktanah. That is the Land of Israel, like ‘Wheat in the field, blown in the wind’, the first song we learnt from Aunt Nehama in Israel, a few days after we made ‘*aliyah* from Egypt.’”¹¹

Even though at the beginning *Be-shafirir heveyon* only seems to be the story of “a new immigrant from Egypt. This is how they called me,”¹² it becomes the elegy for an Israeli homeland that, despite poverty and war, still embodies a Jewish dream survived through the centuries and the Diaspora. For the protagonist’s aunt Nehama, arrived before 1948 from Egypt to live in a *kibbutz* near Rehovot: “Sixty-five years have gone by since then, in every orange that I see, that I smell, I look for that scent, the scent of Netzer Sereni, that pure scent of *Eretz Israel*. What, don’t you grow anymore oranges like these in the gardens of *Eretz Israel*?”¹³ Nevertheless, the Diaspora never entirely disappears and brings with it memories that are both sweet and sour. In the case of the Hungarian-born Farkash—the Holocaust survivor that is at the centre of *Bo’i ha-ruah*, one of the most renowned of Sabato’s novels—who still remembers all the people who were with him “not in this world, but in the *other one*”, everyone is forever an immigrant: “New immigrants, old immigrants, this land too, it is both old and new.”¹⁴ The past and the present give birth to a new memorial landscape that includes not only the traumas of the Diaspora or the harsh life of the *ma’abarot* (“transit camps”), but also—perhaps more than else—biblical reminiscences, traditional tunes and the perfume of the *kibbutz*’s oranges.

¹⁰ Yaron Peleg, “Writing the Land: Language and Territory in Modern Hebrew Literature,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 12/2 (2013): esp. 298-300.

¹¹ Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 72. *Shibolet ba-sadeh qora’ah ba-ruah* (“Wheat in the field blown in the wind”) is the first verse of a renowned *kibbutz* song by the Polish-born Israeli composer Matitiyahu Shelem.

¹² Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 11.

¹³ Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 170.

¹⁴ Sabato (2008), *From the Four Winds* (New Milford: The Toby Press, 2010), 13.

Religion and its rich heritage help the protagonists of all of Sabato's novels to get through the difficulties of life in Israel without feelings of resentment or anger towards the nation's establishment and the *ashkenazim*. As opposed to other *mizrahi* authors, that openly criticise the approach that the Israeli establishment long had vis-à-vis the *mizrahim*—for example the poets Erez Biton and Sami Chalom Chetrit—Sabato takes a more reflexive stance. This has to do with its religious and political leanings, and is symptomatic of his approach to being a writer. Thus, as opposed to what some critics posited, *mizrahi* authors do not need to be counter-canonical or counter-hegemonic: for Sabato the real challenge is not to disrupt a literary canon that already is much more open than it used to be some decades ago, but to enlarge it from within.¹⁵ He does not seek to subvert the *status quo*, but creates narrations that make the *mizrahi* experience known to a wider (secular and Orthodox) public, presenting it—in a way that resembles the description of the old *yishuv* and the Sephardic community of Jerusalem by Dan Benaya Seri—through elements deemed interesting for non-*mizrahim* too: for instance, the warmth of family life, biblical quotes, the Holocaust, the experience of the army.¹⁶

This does not imply that Sabato minimises the cleavages between *mizrahim* and *ashkenazim*, that instead are evoked with bittersweet words:

I remember it clearly. My mother stood by the truck with tears in her eyes. She had a crying infant in one arm and a sleeping baby on her shoulder. [...] my father tried to comfort her with verses from the Bible about the wonders of the Land of Israel. [...] We were left by ourselves. It was our first night in the Land of Israel. We were, my father said, in a fine place.¹⁷

So, the author seems to contend that even in such dire times his profound religiosity helped overcoming the difficulties of the migration, that now—at a distance of several years—can be looked at with irony: “Father was certain that in Israel everyone prayed together. How naïve we were then.”¹⁸

¹⁵ For example: Smadar Lavie, “Blow-Ups in the Borderzone: Third World Israeli Authors’ Groping For Home,” *New Formations*, 18 (1992): 90.

¹⁶ Adia Mendelson-Maoz, *Multiculturalism in Israel: Literary Perspectives* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), 107.

¹⁷ Sabato (1999), *Adjusting Sights* (New Milford: The Toby Press: 2003), 12-3.

¹⁸ Sabato, *From the Four*, 20.

Traumatic memories in Sabato's Israel

Despite his religious-based optimism, Sabato acknowledges how a number of traumatic memories made it difficult for old and new Israelis, *mizrahim* and *ashkenazim* to “pray together.” One of these memories is the Holocaust—whose presence can be found both in *Be-shafir heveyon* and *Bo'i ha-ruah*. In the first, a young *mizrahi* child learns about it at school when on *Yom ha-Shoah*—the Israeli memorial day established in 1953 to commemorate the Holocaust and the Jewish Resistance during the Second world war—the teacher gathers all the students in the schoolyard to

read a verse of the Book of Psalms: ‘Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed’. None of the children understood the verse, none really knew what this *Shoah* was, even their parents did not know. In Beit Mazmil there were many survivors from Hungary, but in those days nobody spoke about it.¹⁹

But the Holocaust occupies an even more central place in *Bo'i ha-ruah*, where young Haim befriends the mysterious Hungarian survivor Farkash. In this novel, Sabato touchingly portrays the stark contrast between the warmth of the *mizrahi* families and the silence of the European immigrants arrived “from *over there*”:

An elderly couple lived in the house next door to us. The house was shut all day and night, and the windows were covered with heavy dark blinds. Our family and neighbors who had emigrated from Egypt [...], we were all used to open homes, neighbors coming and going without asking permission, windows wide open, the scent of fried and spicy food wafting through the area, the voices of children joyfully playing around. But in the houses of the Hungarians there was always silence, and they always asked us, the children, to be silent, totally silent.²⁰

Two different memories, two different diasporas coexist in Beit Mazmil, to the dismay of the young protagonist that does not understand fully why the Hungarians always look so sad and melancholic. As Sabato explains, back then – that is, in the early 1960s – the Holocaust was something that many wished to forget or knew little about.²¹ As opposed to other novelists

¹⁹ Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 21.

²⁰ Sabato, *From the Four*, 16.

²¹ See: Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yihya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley:

of *mizrahi* origin, that either portray the Holocaust and the Second world war from the perspective of their family's little known experience—think of Yossi Sucary's description, in *Benghazi Bergen-Belsen* (2013), of the Libyan Jews deported to Nazi concentration camps—or present it as a foreign but haunting memory that makes them feel estranged from the rest of the nation, as in the case of Dudu Busi's *Ima mitga'ga't le-milim* ("Mother is longing for words," 2006), Sabato views the Holocaust as both foreign and familiar.²² Even though his family did not experience it directly, *Bo'i ha-ruah's* protagonist grows up surrounded by Hungarian neighbours and the Eastern European tales that Farkash tells him. Beit Mazmil is presented as a microcosm where, despite poverty, Eastern and Western Judaism slowly start to re-emerge. While Sabato does acknowledge the difficulties in the process of absorption of the new immigrants to Israel, he does not criticise its rationale. As Cyril Aslanov puts it, "[he] is denouncing disparities within the system without putting in question its legitimacy as a whole, let alone the legitimacy of his own ideological system."²³

Aside from the Holocaust and the difficulty of integration, the event that disrupts most the worldview of Sabato—and risks shaking the beauty of the Land of Israel filling it with new tragic memories, that mirror those emerging from the old Diaspora—is the Kippur war. This conflict is an existential experience and a deep personal watershed. Despite the very specific perspective of Sabato, his view reflects an Israeli generational understanding of the Kippur war as Feige writes—"the quintessential war and [...] the greatest national trauma." Furthermore, for believers and

University of California Press, 1983); Don Handelmann and Elihu Katz, "State Ceremonies of Israel: Remembrance Day and Independence Day," in Shlomo Deshen, Charles S. Liebman and Moshe Shokeid, eds., *Israeli Judaism: the Sociology of Religion in Israel* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 75-86.

²² Yochai Oppenheimer, "The Holocaust: A Mizrahi Perspective," *Hebrew Studies*, 51 (2010): 303-28. More generally, see: Judith Roumani, "Sephardic Literary Responses to the Holocaust," in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. Alan Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 225-37.

²³ Cyril Aslanov, "Is There a Right-Wing Alternative to the Left-Wing Bohemianism in Israel?" *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, 23 (2012), available at: <https://bcfrj.revues.org/6800>. Sabato's view contrasts with that of the many *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* writers – from Shimon Ballas and Sami Michael, to Aharon Appelfeld – that especially since the 1970s criticised the Israeli meltin' pot ideology, as noted by: Gershon Shaked, *The Shadows Within: Essays on Modern Jewish Writers* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 166-8.

followers of the *Gush Emunim*'s ideology, like Sabato, the war also is conceived as part of a national-religious narrative and a dramatic, but inevitable episode of suffering along the road to redemption.²⁴

Sabato does not focus much neither on the bloodiest aspects of the conflict, or on the figure of the Arab enemy. However, this is not so unusual in the Israeli literary and cinematic representations of war emerged since the 1980s, in which, as opposed to what occurred in earlier periods, Arabs are often absent or appear indirectly.²⁵ In *Te'um qavanot*, the trauma of the war mainly is a psychological and existential one, to the point that little dimension of physical horror is uncovered. The author reflects at length about the meaning of violence and all the characters of the novel are deeply affected by the dynamics of the conflict. Furthermore, the Kippur war is evoked in conjunction with other traumatic episodes in Jewish history. This puts Haim and Dov, the two young protagonists, at the centre of a story that only the Diaspora-born elders seem to understand fully:

And together we had parted from Dov's mother on Brazil Street in Beit Mazmil an hour before. 'War', she had said. 'War! What do you know about it? I know. And I know no one knows when you'll be home again. No one'.

[...] 'Ima!' Dov said. 'This isn't Romania or World War Two. Think of it as a school outing—we'll be back in a few days'.

[...] We thought we'd be back soon. During the three terrible days that followed, I kept seeing the Rabbi of Amshinov before me. [...] Until I heard of Dov's death.²⁶

Despite the frenzy of fighting, throughout the war Haim and his comrades debate complex issues of life and death, morality and religion. If the dialogue between them at times may seem surreal, it allows to understand how a group of young Orthodox soldiers experienced and came to terms with the war:

After a while Eli asked:

'What will be? Do you think the Syrians will take Tiberias? Who'll stop them, the divisional clerks?'

²⁴ Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 58.

²⁵ Marcella Simoni, "'Spara e prega!' Il cinema israeliano a trent'anni dalla guerra del Libano," *Passato e Presente*, 21/88 (2010): 113 and onwards.

²⁶ Sabato, *Adjusting Sights*, 4-5.

[...] How could we lose the war? The Redemption was under way. The State of Israel was proof of it. Could the Redemption be militarily defeated?

[...] Gidi watched us all. He knew we were debating a religious point. He said, 'I don't know what you're talking about or what your books say, but I do know one thing. We're going to win this war. We're going to win it because we have to.'²⁷

Praying and discussing theological issues in the middle of combat, is for the protagonist a kind of survival tactic and a way to continue practising religion—even its most quotidian, ritualised aspects—in such tragic circumstances.²⁸ For *Te'um qavanot*'s protagonist Haim, the Kippur war becomes even more challenging when, shortly after the fighting begins, his best friend Dov—who has been assigned to a different tank—goes missing and never returns from the battle. As the war comes to an end, Haim knows that he will always remember the bonds built with Dov during the years of Beit Mazmil and while studying in the *yeshivah*:

I looked at the moon and saw Dov. We had sanctified the moon of *Tishrei* together, the two of us, in Bayit ve-Gan with the rabbi of Ashminov. [...] What was it Rabbi Akiva once said? The Owner of the fig tree knows when it is time to gather His figs".²⁹

The army—together with the *yeshivah*—are the two defining spaces in Haim and Dov's life. As many studies on Israeli militarism have showed, here the army and the war experience are a rite of passage during which Haim ceases to be the young immigrant from Egypt to become a more aware Jewish man and a full-fledged Israeli.³⁰

But paradoxically, the war is a moment of freedom too, as for the first time the protagonist gets out of Beit Mazmil and the *yeshivah*, discovering remote corners of the Land of Israel and its ancient vestiges. In *Be-shafir heveyon* Sabato describes how during a day off from fighting in the Golan Heights, the protagonist and some of his friends, all "sons of the *yeshivah*"

²⁷ Sabato, *Adjusting Sights*, 82-3.

²⁸ Nissim Leon, "The Significance of the Yom Kippur War As a Turning Point in the Religious-Zionist Society," in *The 1973 Yom Kippur War and the Reshaping of Israeli Civil-Military Relations*, eds. Udi Lebel and Eyal Lewin (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015) 49-50.

²⁹ Sabato, *Adjusting Sights*, 143.

³⁰ I refer to: Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

from Jerusalem, decided to go to Safed “to breath the air of purity.”³¹ This group of young Orthodox soldiers strolls in the city—known since the early modern era for being one of the greatest centres of Jewish mysticism. In Safed, they pray in synagogues, admire the beauty of the city and then recite the *piyut* that gives the title to the book, *El mistater be-shafir heveyon* (“God hides in the beauty of concealment”), on a slope that leads to a cemetery. There, the young Zion tells his friend that:

the *piyut El mistater be-shafir heveyon* of rabbi Avraham Maimin, that every Shabbat we recite at the beginning of the *baqashot* [lit. “supplications”, prayers recited during Shabbat], between the tanks, in the hut of the generator in Tel Hirus that is on the border with the Syrian enclave, originated here on these stones, or next to them.³²

Similarly to other religious Zionists, Sabato assigns a redemptive meaning to the Jewish national enterprise, bringing Jewish traditional texts and symbols to the middle of today’s Israel.³³ This is visible also in the author’s challenging writing style, which includes not only biblical verses but also long quotes of medieval *piyutim*, or of *piyutim* written by Sabato himself. It is arguable that in his texts the Land of Israel is presented as a territory that includes the (post-)biblical Jewish past and the Israeli present. On the other hand, Palestinians are absent and even Arabs are mentioned only as enemies beyond the border. In some other cases, they appear as distant figures located in the author’s family past—like when someone from the Land of Israel goes to Syria to visit the grandfather of *Emet me-’eretz titzmah*’s protagonist and found this great rabbi and Talmudist selling fabrics in the market of Aleppo, “grappling with rolls of satin fabric, a variety of glossy silk of which the Arabs of the countryside were especially fond.”³⁴

Here again, Sabato’s approach contrasts with that of other writers of Middle Eastern Jewish origin, from the Iraqi-born Sami Michael to Moshe Sakal and his *Ha-tzoref* (“The diamond setter,” 2014), that instead talks at length about Arab-Jewish relations and has a Syrian-Palestinian at the centre of the story. That Arabs are not part of Sabato’s literary geography probably has to do with the author’s political inclinations. More generally, it mirrors an exclusively Jewish memorial landscape within which, as one critic wrote:

³¹ Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 25.

³² Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 28.

³³ Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, esp. 205-207.

³⁴ Haim Sabato, *Aleppo Tales*, 203.

Hannah and her seven sons, the Ten Martyrs, the pogroms in Ukraine, Holocaust children taken away from Judaism by Christian nuns, the pain of the 'olim from Egypt, Syria and Libya, they are all the same thing, links in a long chain of persecution, torments and faith in the concealed God.³⁵

For Sabato, there is no difference between the biblical Land of Israel and the State of Israel: the soldiers of the Kippur war are like the ancient Israelites, or the pioneers that founded the first *kibbutzim*, since all “guard the Land of Israel.”³⁶ As for the Diaspora, it can never be the true homeland of his characters, that—while in Cairo or Aleppo—always long for *Eretz Israel*.

Conclusion

As this chapter shows, the novels of Haim Sabato are characterised by inextricable bonds between historical reality—filtered through the author’s or his family’s past—and literary fiction. Sabato’s view of Jewish history, and of the links between Diaspora and Land of Israel, is based upon a diachronic memory in tune with the author’s beliefs, that conceive the biblical past and the Israeli present as part of a Jewish *continuum*. This is why, for Sabato, today’s Israelis—be they *mizrahi* Jews, Eastern European Holocaust survivors or else—can either “live in the unspeakable past, or [...] move on and create the future,” and it is the second option that his utopian Zionist outlook prefers.³⁷ Whereas the Diaspora is the site where the proud memory of a Jewish East resides—“even though neither our parents nor ourselves ever saw Aleppo or Tedef with our own eyes. We never saw them with our mortal eyes, but saw in the visions of the heart”—Israel is “our land, [that] we have been waiting for so many years and she was waiting for us as well.”³⁸

And if in the 1980s one of the firsts Israeli writers of Egyptian Jewish origin—the Alexandria-born Yitzhaq Gormezano Goren—depicted Egypt as

³⁵ Yaad Biran, “Instead of the Zionist narrative, Haim Sabato goes back to the faith”, *Ha-'Aretz*, 3 October 2014, available at:

<http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/prose/.premium-1.2445077> [Hebrew]. The Ten Martyrs (*'aseret harugey malkut*) were ten rabbis killed by the Romans in the period after the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem.

³⁶ Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 32.

³⁷ Yael Unterman, “Memoir: How Naive We Were Then”, *Ha-'Aretz*, 20 December 2010, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/books/memoir-how-naive-we-were-then-1.331690>.

³⁸ Sabato, *Aleppo Tales*, 4 and Id. *In the Beauty*, 70. Tedef is a Syrian town about thirty kilometres east of Aleppo.

the centre of his literary geography and Israel as one of the diasporic spaces he and his ancestors encountered since the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century,³⁹ Sabato follows another and perhaps more traditionally Jewish worldview. According to him, Egypt and Syria, even though worth remembering, only are the prelude to the true Israeli Jewish homeland—which, in turn, appears as the centre where everything began and eventually will end. But despite the omnipresence of Jewish tradition and the numerous quotes from the Bible or medieval *piyutim*, books like *Be-shafir heveyon* or *Bo'i ha-ruah* could emerge only from Israel and its contemporary vicissitudes. From his own perspective—that of a Cairo-born '*oleh*', fighter in the Kippur war and West Bank *rosh yeshivah*—Sabato talks about issues that are at the core of the Israeli experience and of modern Hebrew literature: from the tensions between modernity and tradition, Diaspora and return to Zion, ending with the consequences of what Gershon Shaked defines the “Hebraisation of Judaism” in its new national environment.⁴⁰

It is undoubted that his literature will leave some readers with a sense of discomfort, since it sometimes portrays quite an idealised Israel that stands in sharp contrast with the reality of a nation where decades-old societal, political and cultural tensions are still there and, in many respects, far from being solved. At the same time, Sabato's novels are the testimony of an Israel that rarely emerges from the literary arena and should not be overlooked: an Israel that, from its own religious and political perspective—which combines biblical reminiscences, modern nationalism and forms of ethnic pride—still believes in the existence of the Zionist dream and in the biblical idea, troubling as it might be, that “the truth will go forth from the land.”⁴¹

Post scriptum

I wish to conclude this chapter by noting that I would not have been able to write it were it not for Emanuela Trevisan Semi, her teaching and all the advice she gave me since I first met her in a classroom of Ca' Cappello in 2003. Back then, I was an undergraduate student of Middle Eastern

³⁹ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, “Israele come diaspora ed Egitto come centro nella Trilogia Alessandrina di Y. Gormezano Goren,” in *Il mio cuore è a Oriente: Studi di linguistica storica, filologia e cultura ebraica dedicati a Maria Luisa Modena Mayer*, eds. Francesco Aspesi, Vermondo Brugnattelli, Anna Linda Callow and Claudia Rosenzweig (Milan: Cisalpino, 2008), 759-69.

⁴⁰ Shaked, *The Shadows Within*, 104-10.

⁴¹ Psalms 85: 11.

Languages at Ca' Foscari, quite sure of the fact that I would have graduated in Arabic—perhaps with a thesis on an author of medieval Arabic literature. A trip to Israel, the felicitous meeting with Emanuela and her classes on Agnon, Amihai, Yehoshua, the *mizrahim* and Israeli society, eventually convinced me that it was Hebrew I wanted to study. Since then, we have always been together, so to say, and initiated a scholarly dialogue and then friendship that took us from Venice—I shall never forget the many evenings spent chatting, in the cosiness of her house in Castello—to places as different as Rome, Paris, New Orleans, Jerusalem and Sana'a.

It is for these and many other reasons that, for me, the human and scholarly itinerary of Emanuela has come to exemplify—were I to quote the famous kibbutz song *Shibolet ba-sadeh* that the young Haim Sabato loved so much—a “path [that] has no end” and a “chain [that] never breaks.”⁴²

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⁴² Sabato, *In the Beauty*, 118.

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CHAPTER SIX

FRONTLINES BETWEEN RELIGION AND LAICITY IN THE JEWISH STATE

ILAN GREILSAMMER

For several years, I had the great pleasure to teach the topic of this article in the framework of the MIM Master course directed by Emanuela Trevisan at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. This encounter with first-rank students from all the countries of Europe was for me a rewarding experience, and I am very grateful to Emanuela for having invited me to be part of the MIM.

In this article, I will try to describe the present Israeli situation, and to analyse the main developments occurred in this field since the creation of Israel in 1948.¹ I gave my article the title of “Frontlines between Religion and Laicity,” because it is a real struggle between two sides, the religious (orthodox and ultra-orthodox *haredi*) and the non-religious camps, and I want to point out here that the frontlines *did not change very much since 1948*. As in an entrenched war, each camp tries to keep his advantages, to move forward and to take over even a very small part of its adversary's territory. It should be emphasised, before dealing with this topic in-depth, that the question of the place of religion and of religious rites, while being important in the media debate, is not *the* crucial problem of Israeli politics. The question of religion and its interaction with the public space is obviously secondary to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the real issue, which can form, consolidate a government or cause its fall, and which mobilises the great majority of the population. Most Israelis (out of the ultra-orthodox) are finally ready, even with great pain, to sacrifice their opinions on economic, social, internal and religious matters and to vote according to defence and Palestinian issues, because they see these issues as a matter of survival. There is no doubt that, if and when, the Israeli-

¹ Claude Klein, *La démocratie d'Israël* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1997).

Arab conflict will be solved, internal problems like religious coercion in the public space will surge again and probably destabilise Israeli society. As the left-wing politician Yossi Sarid rightly said, "Israel is in danger of peace..." First of all, I would like to remind some fundamental tenets of Judaism, because the aim of the Zionist movement, which achieved the rebirth of Israel, was the creation of a Jewish State (or "a State for the Jews," according to the title of Herzl's book *Der Judenstadt*). Judaism is mainly a religion of *mitzvot*, which means divine commandments to do or not to do certain acts. What we call a religious Jew, or an orthodox Jew (in Hebrew *dati*) is a Jew who strictly observes all these commandments, as they appear in the Torah and as they are explained and detailed by the Sages in the Talmud and the *Shulhan Arukh* codex.

There are today many "non-religious" (in Hebrew *hilonim*) Jews in the world, simply because Jewish identity is not *necessarily* religious. It is something which has often to be explained to a Christian observer. To be Jewish is an 'objective' and given condition: if you were born from a Jewish mother you are Jewish, independently of what you believe and practice. Until the end of the eighteenth century, all the Jewish communities in Europe (*Ashkenaz*) and in Arab countries (*Sefarad*) were religious communities, and most of the Jews were observant and accepted the spiritual authority and leadership of their rabbis. Non-observant Jews were scarce (the most famous example is of course Baruch Spinoza in seventeenth-century Netherlands). Since the French Revolution and the end of the ghettos as a consequence of the Emancipation, Jewish identity became extraordinarily diverse and Jews adopted all kinds of self-definition. Part of the Jews remained observant, even ultra-observant, but most Jews in the world adopted other ways to express their personal Jewish and universalist identity: assimilation, liberalism, socialism, communism, traditionalism, reform and conservatism Judaism, etc. (today, in the US, conservative and reform Jews constitute a strong majority of the Jewish community).

For this reason, we should see the Zionist project which appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century, as extremely ambitious and even utopic, because it aimed to reunite in a common territory a maximum of Jews (or even the totality of the Jewish People) to constitute together a nation-state. It was utopic, because not only Diaspora Jews had diverse perspectives towards their integration within their home societies and hold political and social views quite contradictory, but also because they had very different religious practices, ranging from extreme laicity or even anti-religion to ultra-orthodoxy. The utopia of the founders of Zionism

was that they sincerely believed that such an ingathering of the Jews in a common nation-state was feasible.

Since the very beginning of the Zionist movement, i.e. the creation of the “Lovers of Zion” (*Hovevei Zion*) in Europe in 1881, nearly all religious authorities, the great Torah Sages, the most important rabbis in Europe, the heads (*admorim*) of Hassidic courts, the leaders of the foremost Lithuanian Talmudic academies, declared themselves as extremely hostile to this new ideology. They had many reasons to oppose it, theological as well as practical reasons. From a theological point of view, Jewish religious tradition has always interpreted the dispersion and the exile of the Jews as a divine punishment. God harshly punished his Chosen People and deprived it of its Land, because the Jewish people has betrayed him and has refused to observe the Commandments. This terrible punishment is already inscribed in the Torah. But as it is written in the books of the Prophets, one day will come and God will remember His people, decide that the time of Redemption has arrived and that His people is authorised to come back to the Promised Land. Every human attempt to put an end to dispersion and decide that Exile is finished, before God has so decided, is a rebellion against God or even worse, a “false messianism,” the most dreadful danger in Jewish history.

From a practical point of view, the fact that the Zionist movement was organised, established and directed by non-religious Jews, Jews who did not observe the *mitzvot* and were often anti-religious, led the great Torah Sages to be extremely defiant and to reject this ideology. Therefore, nearly all important rabbis in Europe declared themselves as anti-Zionist and created an international organisation to fight Zionism and preserve a very strict religious orthodoxy: the *Agudat Israel* (“Union of Israel”) movement was established in Katowitz in 1912.

However, not all the rabbis supported this fight against Zionism. A number of them were ready to accept the political goals of Zionism in the way they were expressed by Theodor Herzl. Considering the extreme sufferings of European Jews and the pogroms, they supported the political idea of a Jewish state, and they joined the Zionist movement, while underlining that they would never accept that such a State interfere in religious matters and education. Their point of view was that the situation of the Jews in Europe being extremely dangerous, a Jewish State could be an instrument to guarantee Jewish physical survival and the future of the Jewish people. This current of orthodox Judaism came to be called “religious Zionism” in opposition to the anti-Zionist line of *Agudat Israel*. It established in 1902 its own international movement, the *Mizrachi*, that is the acronym of “Religious Center.” His main thinker, probably one of the

most important Jewish thinkers in the twentieth century, was Rav Abraham Hacoen Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine under the British mandate. Rav Kook, in his action as in his writings, gave his full support to Zionist political goals, and refused *Agudat Israel*'s position that the Zionist leaders and pioneers were not legitimate on religious grounds. On the contrary, for Rav Kook, the return of the Jews to *Eretz Israel* and the ingathering of the exiles clearly signalled the end of Exile and the beginning of messianic times. Later on, his son Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook gave an extremely nationalistic interpretation of his father's teaching and led, after 1967, the settler's endeavour in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

So, during all the period of the British mandate which preceded the creation of Israel (1920-1948) coexisted in Palestine two orthodox movements: the anti-Zionist *Agudat Israel*, and the Zionist-religious movement which followed the teachings of Rav Kook and joined the pioneers' movement and enterprise. In the 1930s, *Agudat Israel* changed and became more "non-Zionist" than "anti-Zionist," and in the 1940s (especially in the context of the *Shoah*), it was ready to accept a Jewish State under strict conditions. This important change in *Agudat Israel*'s political stand led the most extremist and fanatic part of the ultra-orthodox to make secession and continue the fiercely anti-Zionist line of the party (the so-called *Neturei Karta*, the Guardians of the City).

After the *Shoah*, on the eve of Israel's birth, when it became obvious that Great Britain would put an end to its presence in the country following UN intervention, and that a terrible war was on the verge of breaking up between Jews and Arabs, David Ben Gurion tried to define the role of religion in the future Jewish state. Why did he think that a simple separation between religion and State according to the French pattern was impossible to achieve? Because many of the *mitzvot* which are essential for observant Jews need the "participation" of the public space, i.e. a legal and official framework. In other words, a Jewish state cannot be "neutral" towards religious practice.

Two examples can illustrate this situation. *Shabbat*, which begins on Friday evening and ends on Saturday night, is the most sacred day for observant Jews. On that day, it is strictly forbidden to work. It is clear that in order to allow an Israeli Jew not to work on *Shabbat*, the laws of the State should guarantee his right not to be fired or bothered by his employer because of his day of rest. The idea is not to forbid a Jew to choose to work, but to give him the legal possibility not to work. Another example is kosher food, or *kashrut*, the dietary laws which any orthodox Jew has to observe in a very strict manner. If he works in an Israeli ministry, a public

institution, a university, a school or the army, he needs to have a lunch with kosher food. If there is no kosher food, he will not eat and be discriminated. Of course, if a Jew leaves in the Diaspora, he cannot impose on his home authorities (or public schools) to give him kosher food in the public space. But in a Jewish State, the religious Jew can request public authorities to give him by law the full possibility to practice his religion, which means the availability of kosher food.

On the eve of Israel's independence, David Ben Gurion was confronted to this cruel dilemma. On the one hand, as he was a non-practicing Jew who deeply believed in laicity, modernity and democracy, he would certainly have preferred a strict separation between religion and the State, and he said so. He personally admired the French model of separation adopted in 1905. On the other hand, he knew the Jewish tradition and religious laws very well, as he had been brought as a child in the orthodox educational institutions of Eastern Europe, and he perfectly understood the danger of not giving orthodox Jews the possibility of practicing their *mitzvot*. The danger was that orthodox Jews, and especially the ultra-orthodox, would fiercely oppose the State, make "secession," place themselves "outside" the public framework, and put into question the nation's unity. They would organise themselves out of parliament, and maybe launch subversive activities, something which could be extremely dangerous at a time when Arab countries were preparing a total war in Palestine. Anyway, the personal view of David Ben Gurion was *mamlachtiut*,² "[global] Statism," which means that he saw the Jewish State as being able to fully include all Jews, whatever their ideas, orientations, practices or identities. He certainly did not want orthodox Jews to place themselves 'outside.'

This is the reason for which, a few months before the creation of the State, Ben Gurion, who was the undisputed leader of the dominant party, *Mapai*, decided to send to the great Torah Sages, the rabbis of *Agudat Israel*, a letter in which he gave some very precise commitments concerning the practice of the religion in the future Jewish State, and explained the legal framework which would guarantee it. This letter is very well-known in Israel, it has been called the "letter of the *status quo*."³ Why? Because it was said that this letter fixed and preserved the situation

² On the key Hebrew notion of "*mamlachtiut*," see Arye Z. Carmon, *Beyond Exile and Return, Redefining the Concept of "Peoplehood"* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 1994).

³ On the Status Quo in the first years of the State, see Marver H. Bernstein, *The Politics of Israel: The First Decade of Statehood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

which was current before the birth of the State in mandatory Palestine. Ben Gurion promised four things, which would be respected in the State of Israel forever, without any limitation of time:

1. He gave the orthodox rabbinic leaders (and of course Muslim and Christian authorities concerning their own people) full authority on civil status. As we know, civil status covers a very large territory and a wide range of issues: not only questions of marriage and divorce, but also questions of fatherhood, who keeps the children in the case of divorce, monthly fees to be paid to the spouse after divorce, and especially the extremely challenging issue of “Who is a Jew?” The commitment of Ben Gurion was that all these problems would be solved by the orthodox rabbinate according to the *halakha*, the orthodox religious law. In fact, the prime minister abandoned a fundamental field of decision of the State and gave it to the orthodox rabbis. What does that mean exactly? It means that there would be no separation of religion and the State in Israel.

2. The second commitment of Ben Gurion was that *Shabbat* and all Jewish festivals would be ferial, and that no Israeli citizen would be obliged to work on these days. Of course, it did not concern fundamental public services such as the police, firefighters, hospitals, defence forces, etc. In cities where public transportation did work on Shabbat before the creation of the State, like Tel Aviv, it would continue to work as before. But in other Israeli cities, mainly in the capital, Jerusalem, and between the cities, there would be no public transportation at all on Shabbat. Quite soon, the two main problems which would surge are the absence of public transportation (buses) on *Shabbat* and the closure of shops on the only day of leisure of the Israelis.

3. The third commitment was that in every public institution such as ministries, schools, universities, defence institutions, etc. the only food to be served would be kosher food. Serving non-kosher food would be strictly forbidden in the public space.

4. Finally, Ben Gurion promised the rabbis that the State would respect the full and absolute independence of the existing educational trends and would never interfere in their programs or ways of teaching and learning. There were three educational trends: the non-religious (*mamlachti*) schools, the Zionist-religious (*mamlachti-dati*) schools and the Independent (*haredi*) schools. Today, within the ultra-orthodox educational trend, the Sephardic *haredi* have also their own schools, under the auspices of the *Shas* party. In fact, what Ben Gurion promised the ultra-orthodox, is that no one would check what they teach, how they teach and who are their teachers.

These were the four points of the famous Israeli religious *status quo*.⁴ A little later, feeling their strength, ultra-orthodox rabbis succeeded in obtaining a fifth commitment. Ben Gurion accepted that the young ultra-orthodox, on certain conditions, would be exempted of military service. The young *haredi* would not serve in *Tsahal*, if he simply declares to the recruiting officers that he “devotes all his time to Torah learning in a *yeshivah*” (*torato umanuto*, the Torah is his art).

I do not need to say that these five unlimited commitments by the most important leader of Zionism and Israel were very problematic. To say the least, they were strikingly anti-democratic and violated the rights of the non-religious or mildly religious population. It gave a full monopoly to the orthodox establishment, which would do its utmost to repel any attempt of non-orthodox movements to share a part of its power. Ben Gurion’s most problematic commitment concerned the monopoly of the orthodox rabbinate on the Israelis’ civil status. This is a crucial field, in which the rabbis would be all-powerful. There would be no civil marriage in Israel, no civil divorce, Jewishness would be fixed according the *halakhah*, etc.

For example, at their wedding, non-religious Israelis would not be able to refuse the presence and the blessings of an orthodox rabbi. As, according to the *halakhah*, divorce can only be “granted” by the husband, the latter will have the possibility to take revenge on his wife by refusing to grant the divorce and so prevent her to marry again. Moreover, according to the *halakhah*, there are cases in which somebody is simply prevented to marry, for example if he is a *mamzer*, born from an illegitimate union. All this religious legal framework can easily be considered as an intolerable violation of democratic and human rights.

Closing shops, supermarkets and public transportation on *Shabbat* would also discriminate the non-religious population, in a country where *Shabbat* is the only day of rest and leisure. For example, people who have neither a private car nor the financial means to take a private cab, would not be able to visit their family which lives in another city, or go to the seaside on a sunny *Shabbat*.

The two other Ben Gurion’s commitments constituted also a discrimination in favour of the ultra-orthodox population. First, the *haredi* (independent) educational network will obtain huge subsidies from the public budget, but the State will have no right to control this network. Are the people employed in *haredi* schools fully competent, have they the necessary qualities to educate young children, have they acquired a very

⁴ Ilan Greilsammer, *Israel: Les hommes en noir* (Paris : Presses de Sciences Po, 1999).

basic formation allowing them to become teachers? And as the disciplines which are taught in these schools are exclusively religious, the Talmud or the Bible, without any teaching of mathematics, modern Hebrew or foreign languages, how will the “graduates” of this system be able one day to find a job and earn a salary? Obviously, this kind of education will maintain the ultra-orthodox population in a state of poverty, and the country will be forced to devote a large part of its budget to helping the *haredim*.⁵

The other discrimination which, with time passing, became intolerable for most of the Israelis, is the exemption of military service granted to the young ultra-orthodox learning in a *yeshiva*.⁶ While all other young Israelis, aged eighteen to twenty-one, devote three full years of their life to the army, and may be killed or wounded, the young *haredim* can study, and quite often not to study at all, rather work and earn money.

Let us note right now, that seventy years exactly after David Ben Gurion gave these commitments to Agudat Israel’s rabbis, the situation has not changed, and the so-called *status quo* remains fully in force. This very fact puzzles most observers of the Israeli political scene. Why is it surprising? Because it is obvious that these “arrangements” are deeply undemocratic, in a country where most of the laws and the judicial system are based on democratic principles. Israel likes to define itself as the only democracy in the Middle East, a democracy similar to Western Europe or North America countries, while in actual reality there is no separation of religion and state.⁷ Another reason to be extremely surprised of this situation, is that Israeli society has fundamentally changed since 1947. Huge waves of immigrants arrived from Arab countries, from Eastern Europe, from Russia, from France and America, from Ethiopia and elsewhere, and this country is today extremely different of what it was on the eve of the Independence war, when Ben Gurion felt obliged to grant the ultra-orthodox such extravagant advantages in order to guarantee internal peace.

⁵ Eliezer Don-Yehiyah, *Cooperation and Conflict between Political Camps, The Religious Camp, the Labor Party and the Education Crisis in Israel* (unpublished PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976).

⁶ On *haredi yeshiva* students and the exemption: Oriana Almasi, *Deferral of Military Service of Yeshiva students whose study is their profession (Tal Law)* (Jerusalem: Knesset Research and Information Center, 2012).

⁷ On the attitude of the ultra-orthodox towards the law, see Gad Barzilai, *Communities and Law, Politics and Cultures of Legal Identities* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Moreover, let us remember that the two main political parties in Israel, the parties which were at the head of most Israeli governments, the Labor Party and the *Likud* define themselves (in principle) as non-religious parties. None of the past prime ministers, Ben Gurion, Sharett, Eshkol, Golda Meir, Rabin, Peres, Shamir, Begin, Barak or Sharon was a religious man. The present prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu is not religious. And as Israel has no written constitution, the *status quo* commitments were merely government promises. It would have been very easy in theory to enact new laws cancelling, or at least mitigating the rules of the *status quo*. However, even if there were very slight adaptations on minor issues during these seventy years, ninety-five percent of the rules of the *status quo* are still in force today. On the contrary, the ultra-orthodox succeeded in pushing the frontline and winning more territory. For example, in 1977, when Menahem Begin became prime minister for the first time, they obtained that *El Al*, the national airline, would no more fly on *Shabbat*. Of course, there are more shops and cinemas open on *Shabbat* and on Jewish festivals, even if the orthodox continue to fight in order to have them closed. Husbands who refuse to divorce are now frequently put in prison until they finally agree to grant the divorce to their wives (but if they flee the country, it remains impossible to force them, and the wife cannot marry again). Special military units, without any feminine presence and with all orthodox religious facilities have been established in *Tsahal* for the young ultra-orthodox who would like, in rupture with their milieu, to serve in the army. And there are many other slight adaptations, in comparison with the situation which existed in the first years of the State. But it remains that, in 2017, the five commitments of the *status quo* remain as they were. The question is: why?

I think that there are three main reasons for the continuation of the *status quo*, which can be qualified an antidemocratic legal framework in a rather democratic country.⁸ The first explication lies obviously in the dreadful party system which prevails in Israel. This party structure exists mainly because of the electoral system which has been adopted by Israel, even before the creation of the State. Voters are represented at the Knesset, the only parliamentary chamber in Israel, according to proportional system, with a representation threshold rather low (today, it needs a list of

⁸ Ruth Gavison, *Can Israel be Both Jewish and Democratic? Tensions and Prospects* (Jerusalem: The Van Leer Institute, 1999); Ben Goldberg, *Discourse of Religion on Politics in Israel: The Compatibility of Judaism and Democracy* (unpublished PhD dissertation, New York University, 2003); Adam D. Danel, *A Jewish and Democratic State, A Multiculturalist View* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2003).

candidates 3.5 % of the vote to be present at the Knesset). The threshold has been raised a little recently, but this step only forced various parties of the same political family to unite in a common list towards the elections. For example, the Arab parties have been obliged to constitute a Join Arab List, the two *ashkenazi* ultra-orthodox factions were prevented to split, the two Zionist-religious parties (moderate and extremist) had to join in the same list, etc. But it remains that a system of proportional representation with a low threshold encourages the proliferation of small or middle-range parties, and this is the source of the problem. Since the creation of Israel, all successive Knesset have been terribly fragmented, with a great number of parliamentary factions eager to impose their particular views. None of the largest party has ever reached an absolute majority of seats, and, even at the height of his hegemony, the Labour Party of Ben Gurion did not win more than about forty seats (among 120). Therefore, the day after the election, the head of the party which wins more seats than the others, begins immediately to court the little parties to have them join his coalition, which has to include at least sixty-one deputies. So, the question is: where can the future prime minister find the twenty to forty supplementary deputies who will enable him to have a stable coalition? In the Israeli context, where there is no reasonable possibility to invite the Arab anti-Zionist parties to join a government, the only “natural” candidates to enter any coalition are the religious parties. Today there is one religious-Zionist party (*Ha-Bayit Ha-Yehudi*, The Jewish Home), which is moderately religious but extremely nationalist, and two ultra-orthodox parties, one *ashkenazi* (*Yahadut Ha-torah*, Judaism of the Torah) and one Sephardic (*Shas*, *Sefardim Shomrei Torah*, Sephardic Guards of the Torah).⁹ As they know perfectly well that they are indispensable to the formation of any new government, they can ask what they want and be sure that it will be immediately granted: huge amounts of money and subsidies, portfolios, political appointments, etc. But their most crucial demand is always: do not touch the *status quo*. They ask the future prime minister to commit himself not to make any change in the field of religion and State, and they always receive instantly a positive answer.¹⁰ In fact,

⁹ On the *Shas* Party and the Israeli Right, Dani Filc, *The Political Right in Israel, Different Faces of Jewish Populism* (London: Routledge, 2010) and on the return of ultra-orthodox to active politics under Begin, Daniel J. Elazar, “Religious Parties and Politics in the Begin Era, in *Israel in the Begin Era*, ed. Robert O. Freeman (New York: Praeger, 1982):102-20.

¹⁰ Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don Yehiya, *Religion and Politics in Israel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Shmuel Sandler and Aaron Kampinsky, “Israel’s Religious Parties,” in *Contemporary Israel*, edited by Robert

the two largest parties which can be called by the President to constitute a government, the *Likud* and the Labour Party, are mainly interested in other issues such as foreign policy, defence, the Palestinian question, the Middle East, economic or social issues, etc., and even if they do not feel “comfortable” with the *status quo*, that is not their main focus. So, whether the government is formed by the Centre-Left (Labour) or by the Right (*Likud*), the *status quo* is always maintained and even reinforced.

In theory, in order to have the *status quo* modified, the two largest parties could decide to govern together in a “great coalition” (like the CDU and the SPD in Germany), without the religious parties. But this theory does not apply in Israel. When the *Likud* and the Labour Party governed together in the 1980s, under Yitzhaq Shamir and Shimon Peres, they did not dare to touch the *status quo*, because they knew that in the future, when the “great coalition” would come to an end sooner or later, they would be obliged to court again the religious parties. As I shall later explain, when the *Likud* of Binyamin Netanyahu and the non-religious *Yesh Atid* party of Yair Lapid governed the country in 2013-2015, many observers thought that this combination would lead to a serious attempt to change the *status quo*, because Lapid had put his veto to any participation of the ultra-orthodox parties in the government. But it was a total deception, nothing happened, and finally the only real effort of *Yesh Atid* was to limit the exemption of military service. Anyway, even this attempt was a complete failure, and as soon as the *Likud* formed a new government with the religious parties in 2015, all these minor changes were repelled. The other possibility would have been to change the electoral system. In theory, the Knesset could have mitigated proportional representation by a certain measure of majority vote, or divided the country in circumscriptions of vote, and it would have reduced the weight of the small parties and their ability to blackmail the major parties. But, of course, this did not occur, because none of the small or middle-range parties is ready to vote for such a reform which amounts for a “political suicide” for them.¹¹

But I do believe that the electoral system is only one of the reasons of the extraordinary stability of the religious *status quo* in Israel. Another

O. Freedman (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2009): 112-49; Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Theocratic Democracy, the Social Construction of Religious and Secular Extremism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹¹ Eva Etzioni-Halevy, *Political Culture in Israel, Cleavage and Integration among Israeli Jews* (New York: Praeger, 1977); Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehyia, *Civil Religion in Israel, Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

reason is linked to the sociology and demography of the Israeli population. It is true that one of the major waves of immigration in Israel, the “Russian” immigration of the 1990s is mainly non-religious (part of it is even non-Jewish). But most other waves of immigration were and are at least “traditional” on the religious level. The Yemenites, the Iraqis, the Moroccans, the Tunisian, the Algerians, more recently the Ethiopians, or the present French or American immigrants are mostly religious Jews, whether orthodox or mildly “traditional”. Of course, many of them are not truly orthodox, and not all of them observe strictly the Ten Commandments. A great part of them are what we can call “slightly observant.” For example, many of them attend *Shabbat* services at the synagogue and have a great respect for rabbis and religious rites, but they watch television on Saturday afternoon or go to a football match. They have a very strong relation to ceremonies and traditions. The consequence is that they put only a very mild pressure on political parties and on the various governments to change the *status quo*. They can be “bothered” by some rules of the *status quo*, but they will not raise barricades in order to obtain civil marriage or to end the orthodox establishment’s monopoly. They will never ask that non-kosher food be allowed in public restaurants and cafeterias and will never go on strike for allowing buses companies to work on *Shabbat*. And they really do not care if mathematics or English are taught in ultra-orthodox schools. Yes, they will ask for some practical adaptations, but not in a way the political parties would feel compelled to fully change the situation.

Another reason of the perpetuation of the *status quo* seems to be, in a paradoxical way, the flexibility and the smartness of the religious parties. These parties, for which the preservation and, if possible, the extension of the *status quo* constitute a fundamental goal, know perfectly well what is bearable and what is unbearable for the non-religious public. They know that there are a few issues which are particularly shocking for this population. One of these is the horrendous situation of women who cannot marry again because their husband refuses to grant them the divorce. Another one is the fact that a great number of young Israelis of Russian origin serve in fighting units but are not recognised as Jews because their mother is not Jewish. The non-religious population certainly dislikes the closure of shops and places of entertainment on *Shabbat*, and they are appalled by the huge subsidies which are granted to ultra-orthodox institutions without any control. Above all, they are reticent to accept the full exemption of military service given to ultra-orthodox youngsters. The religious parties know perfectly well that these are very sensitive matters, while, on the contrary, there will be scarce support in the population for

non-orthodox religious movements, the Conservative and Reform movements. So, the religious parties, which face a rather indifferent secular camp, have a remarkable capacity of adaptation and it helps them in all their endeavours.

Recent developments in the field of religion and State confirm our evaluation that the *status quo* is not about to be modified.¹² Many Israelis hoped that the new centre and non-religious political party *Yesh Atid* would bring a major change in this situation, reinforce the camp of laicity and push a little the front-lines in the “good” direction. *Yesh Atid*’s leader, Yair Lapid followed his father’s path, who had earlier founded a non-religious (some would say anti-religious) party, *Shinuy* (Change). In the 2013 general elections, *Yesh Atid* succeeded in winning nineteen seats, it was called by the *Likud* to be part of the government coalition, and his leader, Yair Lapid, was appointed Minister of Finance, a very substantial portfolio. Right from the beginning, an important signal was launched, with the refusal of Lapid to let the ultra-orthodox parties be part of the government. It forced *Shas* and *Yahadut Ha-Torah* to be in the opposition, a very curious situation for these parties who were used to be part of any coalition.¹³ Among all the components of the *status quo*, *Yesh Atid* choose to focus on the exemption of military service and asked for a severe punishment for ultra-orthodox who refuse to serve. The *Likud* accepted to be flexible on this question and voted for certain adaptations. Quite quickly, a conflict erupted between the two leaders, Yair Lapid and Netanyahu, and after only two years the coalition was dissolved by Netanyahu and new elections were called. In the general elections of 2015, the *Likud* won thirty seats, decided to return to what it calls its “natural alliance” with the ultra-orthodox, and *Yesh Atid* (which lost eight seats) came back to opposition. Not only the situation returned to what it was before 2013, but the ultra-orthodox parties obtained new and very substantial advantages in the coalition deal with the *Likud*. The leader of the *Shas* Party became Minister of Housing (with full authority on local government), the leader of *Yahadut Ha-Torah* became Minister of Health

¹² On the future of religion and State in Israel, Shlomo Hasson, *State and Religion in Israel, Possible Scenarios* (Baltimore: University of Maryland, 2015); Yossi Beilin, “What will be Jewish and What Will be Democratic in the State of Israel at the end of the 21st Century?,” in *The Jewishness of Israel*, eds. Aviezer Ravitsky and Yedidiah Z. Stern (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2007): 739-70.

¹³ See Asher Arian, *The Second Republic Politics in Israel* (London: Chatham House, 1998); on the consociational model as an explanation of the *status quo* in Israel, see Reuven Y. Hazan and Moshe Maor, *Parties Elections and Cleavages, Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

and another deputy of this party was appointed Chairman of the parliament's Finance commission, a very powerful and strategic post. I am not sure that such a reversal of the *Likud*'s coalition choice is linked to the *Likud* being conservative and having many religious members and voters: if the Left wins the Knesset election one day, it will be very difficult and probably impossible for the Labour Party or for *Yesh Atid* to form a coalition without the religious parties.

In the present government, the three religious parties have succeeded in having all the adaptations of the *status quo* repelled, the full exemption of military service has been reaffirmed, and no concession to the non-orthodox religious movements has been made. Presently, ultra-orthodox soldiers wearing their uniform, who dare to visit their family in their home neighbourhood are severely attacked and often beaten without any reaction from the government, showing that there is an attempt to dissuade other *haredi* youngsters to serve. In the same spirit, an attempt to devote some place at the Wailing Wall to the prayers of the non-orthodox movements has been thwarted by the religious parties as well as a project of organising (orthodox) conversions to Judaism outside the framework of the official rabbinate.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

PLAYING WITH HISTORY: TOYS IN ISRAEL IN THE 1950S AND 1960S

MARCELLA SIMONI

This essay stems from a visit at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, which in the summer of 2009 displayed a small exhibition of “Israeli toys from the 1950s and 1960s” in the “Youth and Art Education Wing.” A later search for some scholarly literature on this subject revealed a greatly researched article by Haim Grossman, published on *Israel Studies* in 2004.¹ Here, the author examined a large number and various types of toys produced *in loco* during the British Mandate and in the first decades of Israel’s statehood, as well as the ideological and marketing strategies behind toy production at the time. Grossman also discussed how toys, and board games in particular, were means to transmit patriotic/nationalist values to the Zionist (and then to the Israeli) youth, and the political implications of omitting various geographical and/or historical details on the maps, setting and boards of strategy games. He also called for the development of new researches in this field. Certainly, the exhibition at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem represented a valuable response to that call, even though it did not produce a catalogue.

That exhibit was in part echoed a few years later at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv in 2011 where Shelly Shenhav-Keller curated another related exhibition, “A Land and Its Dolls: Israeli Souvenirs and National Identity.” The latter focused on a particular kind of toy that spoke of the Israeli self-representation, connecting it to tourism in the form of dolls as souvenirs.² Two other exhibits should be mentioned in this context: “Gift

¹ Haim Grossman, “War as Child Play: Patriotic Games in the British mandate and Israel,” *Israel Studies* 9/1 2004: 1-30.

² Shelly Shenhav-Keller and Haim Grossman, eds., *A Land and Its Dolls: Israeli Souvenirs and National Identity* (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 2011). For another study on dolls through a gender perspective see Maya Balakirsky-Katz,

to our children: culture of children in the kibbutzim” that opened at the Museum of Art in Ein Harod in 2012 curated by Einat Amitai³ and “As We Were,” an exhibition at the Municipal Art Gallery in Beit Yad Labanim in Ra’anana that opened the following year thanks to the work of Ofra Fichman.

Emanuela Trevisan Semi’s research has not touched, to my knowledge, on the field of toys and on the politics connected to the production and fruition of toys. However, she has worked extensively on the relationship between museums, exhibitions and identity formation, whether in a national or diasporic context; in this respect, I hope this essay can be considered part of a research theme inspired by Emanuela’s interests as a way to reflect on broader social, political and cultural themes.

Toys between children and adults

Much literature on the subject of toys for different historical contexts has shown the extent to which toys are revealing of a society’s *Zeitgeist* and of attitudes towards the Other;⁴ even more so, if we consider them as material objects that help cultural, national or identity formation, not to mention the well-known gender dimension that they connect to.⁵ Toys are not only a miniaturisation of an adult society that children imagine, recreate and

“Dressing Up: Religion and Ethnicity in Israeli National Dolls,” *Gender and Religion*, 5/1 (2015): 71-90.

³<http://www.zionistarchives.org.il/en/AttheCZA/AdditionalArticles/Pages/ShaiLeyeladenu.aspx>, accessed 20 November 2017.

⁴ See for example Elizabeth Chin, “Ethnically Correct Dolls: Toying with the Race Industry,” *American Anthropologist* 101/2 (1999): 305–21; Bryan Ganaway, “Engineers or Artists?: Toys, Class and Technology in Wilhelmine Germany,” *Journal of Social History* 42/2 (2008): 371-401. Sarah Z. Gould, *Toys Make A Nation: A History of Ethnic Toys in America*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2010); Christopher P. Barton and Kyle Sommerville, *Historical Racialized Toys in the United States* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2016); Roy T. Cook, “Ninjas, Kobe Bryant, and Yellow Plastic: The LEGO® Minifigure and Race,” in *LEGO® and Philosophy. Constructing Reality Brick by Brick* ed. by Roy T. Cook and Sondra Bacharach, 91-101, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 2017).

⁵ See for example two of the well-known posters of the Giornata del Giocattolo Italiano (Day of the Italian Toy) of 1933 and of 1936 <http://alessandrialisondria.altervista.org/alessandria-1933-giornata-del-giocattolo-italiano/>; <http://www.collezionesalce.beniculturali.it/?q=scheda&id=743> by Adolfo Busi, both accessed 21 November 2017, where racism and militarism are well intertwined and celebrated through the representation of the young Balilla.

transform; as much psychoanalytic literature has demonstrated, they are also relational and transitional objects through which both children and young adults mediate and represent a reality that may be conflictual and traumatic, whether on an individual or a collective/national scale. As Margaret Higonnet has written, toys help “children negotiate times of stress and separation as well as individual conflicts.”⁶ Looking at tin soldiers in Wilhelmine Germany, or at role playing in cowboys and Indians, many case-studies have demonstrated that child play has very often transmitted a national and identity point of view, as well as specific gender roles.⁷

However, toys also fall into the sphere of competence of adults, in different ways: adults orient the cultural and economic choices that underlie the production and commercialisation of toys; in recent decades, the business of safety certification has made the role of adults even more prominent. As the planetary successes of the three *Toy Story* movies and of the various Lego movies (and their spin-offs) show, toys are also part and parcel of the cinema industry and of mass consumerism, thus serving adults’ direct as well as children’s indirect interests.⁸ Finally, toys are also the objects of adult collections and from these often come the exhibits that are displayed in various museums, whether as temporary shows in larger museums or in (usually) smaller ones specifically dedicated to toys. Such exhibitions play at least two functions: for the youngest among visitors, they represent an educational tool by showing a historical past which becomes tangible, while for the adult public toys of the bygone days often

⁶ Margaret R. Higonnet, “War Toys: Breaking and Remaking in Great War Narratives,” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 31/2 (2007): 116-31, p. 118; Lois Rostow Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive. Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis, and Development*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁷ For three examples among the many possible, see David Hamlin, “The Structures of Toy Consumption: Bourgeois Domesticity and Demand for Toys in Nineteenth Century Germany,” *Journal of Social History*, 36/4 (2003): 857-69; Michael Yellow Bird, “Cowboys and Indians. Toys of Genocide, Icons of American Colonialism,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 19/ 2 (2004): 33-48; Susan Broomhall, “Imagined Domesticities in Early Modern Dutch Dollhouses,” *Parergon* 24/2 (2007): 47-67; Bryan Ganaway, “Character Dolls: Consumer Culture and Debates over Femininity in Late Imperial Germany (1900-1918),” *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3/2 (2010): 210-32.

⁸ Alan L. Ackerman, “The Spirit of Toys: Resurrection and Redemption in Toy Story and Toy Story 2,” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 74/4 (2005): 895-912 and Lewis Robert, “It’s a dangerous world out there for a toy”: Identity Crisis and Commodity Culture in the Toy Story Movies,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 42/4 (2017): 417-37.

resuscitate a past full of nostalgic memories, which inevitably becomes also idealised and distorted.⁹ A study of the toys of a given place and time can therefore lead to many different directions. In this essay, I would like to focus on the relationship between toys and the creation of a national community in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s.

The national community and toys

Traditionally, historiography has discussed the history of the 1950s and 1960s in Israel through three major lenses. First, the growth in importance, number and status of the military. Between 1948 and 1967, the newly established State and its army fought four wars (the War of 1948, the so-called Border wars, the Suez Campaign of 1956 and the Six Day War in 1967),¹⁰ a state of affairs that kept the State's institutions and society in a condition of extenuating incertitude and continuous mobilisation. Within this tense context came of age the first generation of conscripts under the guidance of charismatic generals like Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon, and the army's prestige—and that of its élite—grew considerably. These are some of the elements that help explain the centrality of militarism and of the army and of its heroic representations in the country at this founding time.¹¹ The second prism through which these two decades have been studied is the so-called *kibbutz galuyiot*, the 'ingathering of exiles', the immigration of at least 1,200,000 Jews, half of which came from Arab countries, a phenomenon which transformed not without difficulty the geography of settlement, the culture and the character of the newly established State, and that of the migrants themselves, and which has now

⁹ Avishai Margalit, "Nostalgia," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 21 (2011): 271-80; see also Haim Grossman and Hagai Marom, *Board Games of the Past*, (Ramat Gan: Marom Tarbut Yisre'elit, 2012) [Hebrew].

¹⁰ See Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1997); Mordechai Bar-On, "Small Wars, Big Wars: Security Debates during Israel's First Decade," *Israel Studies* 5/2 (2000): 107-27.

¹¹ See at least Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998); Eyal Ben-Ari, Edna Lomsky-Feder, eds., *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); Gabriel Sheffer and Oren Barak, eds., *Militarism and Israeli Society*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).

developed into a field of study per se.¹² Finally, the third prism which has been used to investigate Israel's first decades is the political philosophy that kept militarism and immigration within one coherent political framework, that took the name of *mamlahitiyut* (statism), and that was embodied by David Ben Gurion's persona and political leadership. As it is well known, *mamlahitiyut* placed the State, its institutions and its symbols at the centre of the individual and collective life of the nation.¹³

These major themes represented the scaffolding on which Israeli society was built in these two decades, pervading the security, economic, and development policies of the times, as well as the political rhetoric; as I have shown elsewhere, the posters issued every year to celebrate Israel's independence repeatedly returned on the theme of the nation in arms on the one hand, and of the 'ingathering of the exiles' on the other.¹⁴ The very same themes also found their way in the popular culture and in the material objects of those days: following Emanuela Trevisan Semi's lead

¹² See at least Ella H. Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19 (1988): 1-35; Henriette Dahan-Kalev, "You are so pretty - you don't look Moroccan," *Israel Studies* 6 (2001): 1-14; Ella H. Shohat, "A Reluctant Eulogy: Fragments from the Memories of an Arab-Jew," in *Women and the Politics of Military Confrontation. Palestinian and Israeli Gendered Narratives of Dislocation* ed. by Nahla Abdo and Ronit Lentin, 262-76 (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002); Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews. A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Emanuela Trevisan Semi and Piera Rossetto, eds., *Memory and Forgetting among Jews from the Arab-Muslim Countries. Contested Narratives of a Shared Past, Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 4 (2012). Emanuela Trevisan Semi, Dario Miccoli, Tudor Parfitt, eds., *Memory and Ethnicity: Ethnic Museums in Israel and the Diaspora* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). For just a few literary testimonies, see the novels by Sami Michael, Shimon Ballas e Eli Amir. For video and film see at least Samir, *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs—The Iraqi Connection*, 2002 and the so-called trilogy of Viviane Amsalem by Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz, 2004, 2008, 2014.

¹³ See at least Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Ilan S. Troen and Noah Lucas, eds., *Israel: the First Decade of Independence* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995); see also Orit Rozin, *The Rise of the Individual in 1950s Israel. A Challenge to Collectivism* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ See Marcella Simoni, "Celebrazioni nazionali in Israele tra politica e cultura popolare," in *Celebrare la nazione. Grandi anniversari e memorie pubbliche nella società contemporanea* edited by Massimo Baioni, Fulvio Conti, Maurizio Ridolfi, 278-300, (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2012).

that I should not miss the Jewish Museum located at the very end of the Jewish Cemetery of Fez in Morocco, I stumbled on a *bombonnière* for a *bar mitzvah*, or possibly for a wedding, that emerged from a dusty box; probably sent from Israel to relatives, it consisted of a miniature Israeli soldier with the lace for holding sugar-coated almonds still in place.¹⁵ As it is to be expected, and as material objects with a broad circulation, many toys also reflected the spirit of these times, some more than others.

“Our wars” and other games

Most board games and illustrated children book produced and published in British Palestine/Israel between 1940 and the end of the 1960s came from the factory of Benjamin Bar-Levy, immigrated from Warsaw aged twenty-seven, who remained in business for the following fifty years. Smaller toy factories were Amrana, based in Ramat Gan, Mishakei Peretz and Massada located in Tel Aviv, and Hotza’at sfarim Ha-haim (which was also a small publishing house) based in Haifa.¹⁶ Not all the toys produced by these (and a few other) factories necessarily gave voice or amplified the national and patriotic themes of war, militarism, immigration, nation-and/or state-building; other more obvious and neutral objects for child play kept being produced side by side with patriotic toys. Even going back to the last phase of the British Mandate, which also represented a moment of peaking nationalism in Palestine, a catalogue of the “Association of Manufacturers of Toys” of Tel Aviv from the 1940s showed dolls, checkboards, miniature objects for gardening, cooking and making music, toy cars, planes and trains, wood and cloth animals and so on.¹⁷

Looking at the two decades after the foundation of the State, Haim Grossman and Hagai Marom have divided their volume on Israeli toys in

¹⁵ See also Haim Grossman, “Soldier and Army of Peace and Security: Images of the Israeli Soldier and Army in the New Year Greeting Cards,” *Zmanim* 81 (2003), 42-53 [Hebrew]. On this particular museum see Emanuela Trevisan Semi, “Museums of Moroccan Jews in Israel: What Kind of Memory?” In *Memory and Ethnicity, Ethnic Museums in Israel and Diaspora*, edited by Emanuela Trevisan Semi, Dario Miccoli and Tudor Parfitt, 45-75, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

¹⁶ David Tartakover, “The Pioneer of the Game Industry in Eretz Israel,” in *A Trip Across the Country. Games from Mr. Barlevy’s Store*, edited by David Tartakover, 94-7, (Jerusalem: Eretz Israel Museum, 1999). [Hebrew].

¹⁷ Association of Manufacturers of Toys, *Palestine Toys* (Tel Aviv: no publishing house, [1940s?]). I would like to thank the research staff of the Museum of Childhood in London for calling my attention to this material.

various thematic sections, showing a variety in production that went well beyond the games which involved a simulation of war and of immigration about which I will write below. Some were based on soccer, like *Football challenge* (*Itharut kaduregel*) and *Yaacov Hodorov*, a board game from Amrana that celebrated the homonymous goalkeeper, considered then (as well as today) Israel's greatest.¹⁸ Others were adventure-based games to be played in distant James Bond-like scenarios (*Mission S.B.-Mivtza'a S.B.*, *The Sixth Sense-Ha-hush ha-shishi* with the participation of Roger Moore, *Secret Agent 007-Sohen hashai*), all the way to the moon (*Missile to the Moon-Til le-yareah*; *Conquest of the Moon-Qibush ha-yareah*) or around the world in eighty days (*Saviv le-'olam be-80 iom*). Raffles with numbers, images of animals, towns or fairy tales, backgammon, checkers (*Damka*), Monopoly (*Monopol*), alphabets in wooden cubes and other fantasy or educational games completed the picture; as we shall see below, other games were more directly connected to the ancient or more recent history of the Jewish people on the one hand, or to the geopolitical situation of the State of Israel on the other.¹⁹

However, looking at the strategy games produced in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, war emerges as a prominent theme and as another testimony of its pervasiveness in the country's daily life in this period. *Our War. From private to commander* was the flagship board game of the Bar-Levy factory in the 1950s. Despite the name, it was not really a war game; rather, it reproduced the national educational message of the historical connection between the people and the land, that children/players/soldiers should explore, get to know and be able to defend. The map of the land had very undetailed borders and, in the words of Haim Grossman, its epitome was a recurrence of the idea of "a voyage through the country" over a game board with an educational orientation.²⁰ Other games were revealing of the centrality of the soldier (male and female) in the new Israeli State and society and of the army as their founding institution: the raffle *This is Israel* (*Zot hi' Israel*) replaced the traditional numbers with symbols of the State (the logo of the army, the national flag, the images of

¹⁸ David Marouani, "Yaacov Hodorov, age 79, Israel's greatest keeper," *Haaretz* 1 January 2007, <https://www.haaretz.com/soccer-yaacov-hodorov-age-79-israel-s-greatest-keeper-1.208777>, accessed 28 november 2017. The images for these boardgames are in Grossman and Merom, *Board Games of the Past*, respectively at p. 77 and 79.

¹⁹ The images for these board-games are in Ivi respectively at p. 165 and 190 (football), 191, 171-75, 169 (planetary explorations), 155 (around the world in eighty days).

²⁰ Grossman, *War as Child's Play*, p. 7.

soldiers and of other characters considered important nation-building, like teachers for example). The aim of *Our army ranks* (*Dargot Tzeva'enu*) was to educate the younger generations to recognise the ranks of the military, familiarising themselves with the hierarchy of that organisation. For the same purpose, there also existed a domino, whose tiles depicted the various units of the army.²¹ Haim Grossman gives many other examples of this vast repertoire which celebrated the soldier as central in the imagination and reality of Israeli children: from the board game *Yes Sir!* (*Ken Ha-mefaged!*)—where the player could only advance overcoming the numerous and unpleasant obstacles put forward by a somewhat stiff sergeant major—to the board games produced after the Suez War (1956). Among them *Sinai*, where the winner would be the first to arrive to the Western coast of the peninsula. In this strategy game the enemy was almost absent and the obstacles came mainly from the natural or the mechanical world (a desert storm, a heat wave, floods, engine problems in the vehicles etc.). On the contrary, the enemy was indeed very present and active in *The Second Round* (*Ha-sivuv ha-sheni*), another strategy game also inspired to the Suez War, as well as in others discussed in much greater detail by Grossman.²² Such an overall prominent role found a correspondence not only in the reality of the wars being fought, but also off the battle fields, during the national celebrations and military parades, for example those that took place during Independence Day.²³ This was indeed what a game called *Here comes the army* (*Hineh ba' ha-tzava*) represented, by unrolling a “long reel of paper on which were drawn many pictures of marching soldiers (...) stretched between two small wooden poles.”²⁴

As it can be easily imagined, the Six day war generated a whole wave of new board games in which the victorious army was represented (and played) in a heroic way: this was the case of *Tzahal in its bravery* (*Tzahal bi-gvurato*) and of *The Victory Game* (*Mishaq Ha-nitzahon*). The latter invited players on a journey “in the wake of the victorious war that lasted six days, taking place on the map of the enlarged Israel from Kuneitra in

²¹ Ivi, pp. 9-10.

²² An image for *Yes Sir!* (*Ken Ha-mefaged!*) and for *The Second Round* (*Ha-sivuv ha-sheni*) boardgame is in Grossman and Merom, *Board Games of the Past*, respectively at p. 63 and p. 67.

²³ Maoz Azaryahu, *State Cults. Celebrating Independence Day and Commemorating the Fallen in Israel 1948-1956* (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1995).

²⁴ Grossman, *War as Child's Play*, p. 11.

the North down to Suez in the south.”²⁵ Other games that celebrated the IDF for its valour, bravery, and strategic ability in this period were entitled *Three wars-Three Victories* and *The Six Day War. The Brigadiers’ Game* (*Mishaq ha-‘alufim*) did not have the Six day war as a specific background, but was played out with the whole Middle East in mind.²⁶

The new centrality of the (toy) soldier

With strategy games came the first miniature soldiers that carried and defended the Israeli flag, and the production of dolls representing the most popular characters of the military establishment. Among them, there existed various versions of Moshe Dayan in wood or cloth, coming in various sizes. Considering nostalgia as one of the factors that drives collectors, some of these dolls—and others reproducing young male and female pioneers, young members of youth movements and soldiers—are now sale on ebay and other websites for hundreds of dollars.

The existence of miniature soldiers that carried the national insignia in Israel represented a breakthrough for various reasons; it naturally helped strengthen the national pride for a young population group that had belonged to a persecuted religious and national minority until a few years before. And it also gave a sense that a normalisation was finally taking place: in the same way as French, German, Italian or English children had been playing with miniature soldiers carrying their national insignia during the Crimean war (1853-56) or during the First world war for example, now Israeli children could also identify with soldiers that wore the uniforms of their own country. In Israel too, military divisions started to “fall off coffee tables” and “found themselves in the strange grey dream between the floral cushions and the upholstery,” as beautifully described by poet and novelist Laura Kasischke.²⁷ Whether on (or under) a carpet or in society, in the two decades under consideration at least until the Six day war, the victorious Israeli soldier remained a central model in Israeli society, as Oz Almog wrote among others and, as such, (s)/he became the main character also of children’s games.²⁸

²⁵ Grossman, *War as Child’s Play*, pp. 14-5. The images for these boardgames are in Grossman and Merom, *Board Games of the Past*, respectively at p. 71,

²⁶ Ivi, pp. 16-8.

²⁷ Laura Kasischke, “War with Toy Soldiers,” *The Iowa Review* 37/1 (2007): 43-4.

²⁸ Oz Almog, *The Sabra. The Creation of the New Jew*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000.



Image 1: photo ©Marcella Simoni, Israeli soldiers exhibited at the Museum of Childhood, London.²⁹

Familiarising youth and new generations with this type of objects has been widespread practice in many countries in various historical contexts and times. As historian Blake R. Brown has argued looking at the Canadian case, in the 19th century the government had adopted policies that aimed at familiarising the population with firearms; this in turn led to an increase in the sale of toy weapons for children and of air guns among teenagers.³⁰ Focusing on the contemporary scene and on the US market in particular, David Machin and Theo van Leuwen have proposed a similar argument, i.e. that the military establishment shares an interest with the large toy companies (like Mattel, Hasbro or others): in this interpretation, encouraging children to use and play with war-themed toys is not meant to prepare future soldiers, but rather to familiarise children with the idea that war is a legitimate and viable means of conflict resolution.³¹

²⁹ Mignot was the only toy soldier maker to produce soldiers of the Israeli army.

³⁰ Blake R. Brown, "Every boy ought to learn to shoot and to obey orders': Guns, Boys, and the Law in English Canada from the late Nineteenth Century to the Great War," *The Canadian Historical Review* 93/2 (2012): 196-226, p. 197.

³¹ David Machin and Theo van Leuwen, "Toys as Discourse: Children's War Toys and the War on Terror," *Critical Discourse Studies* 6/1 (2009): 53-63. See also Patrik M. Regan, "War Toys, War Movies and the militarization of the United States 1900-1985," *Journal of Peace Research* 31/1 (1994): 45-58.

The situation in Israel in the 1950s and 1960 was different, but one can find some common elements: on the one hand, it does not seem that the Bar-Levy toy factory, or any of the other producers mentioned above, ever received commissions from the army or subventions from the government to produce and market toys with a military or war theme. On the other, it also seems that no such encouragement was needed; through some of the board games and the tin soldiers carrying the Israeli insignia these commercial companies were after all repeating and amplifying the main and founding themes that had belonged to the Zionist movement and that were now represented by the State and in the ethos of its institutions: self-defense, immigration and settlement on the land, thus establishing a good coincidence between national and commercial interests.

In this context, the soldier or the migrant were not only pegs on a board game; they were the characters of a difficult present which, through play, were turned into potential heroes, or at least into the main characters of stories taking place in a manageable world rather than in the difficult reality that Israeli children were experiencing, both from a material and a psychological point of view. Through these and other board games that are the subject of the next paragraph, children from migrant families could normalise (and possibly overcome) their uprooting; they could represent and act the story of their parents and grandparents, of their neighbours and relatives, and possibly transform their own story, into a different finale.

Toys and immigration

Not all the toys Israeli children played with in the 1950s and 1960s were war-themed; many of them did not even originate in Israel. As we can read in "The New York Times" of 26 February 1949 for example, at least 25.000 new toys were collected in the US by the Mizrahi Women's Organization of America for orphans in Israel; on 18 May 1950 "The Washington Post" reported on the delivery of ten tons of toys collected by the American Legion "for children in Israeli immigrant camps."³² These were the *ma'abarot* (transit camps), which represented, together with newly created development towns, the two main means through which the government channelled and managed this flow of migrants over a twenty year period.

Between 1948 and 1964 the Jewish population of the State of Israel doubled, with the arrival/import of about 1,200,000 Jews, half of which

³² "Ask 25.000 toys for Israel," *The New York Times*, 26 February 1949, p. 7 and "U.S. Toys Reach Israel," *The Washington Post*, 19 May 1950, p. 21.

from Arab countries.³³ As it is well known, there is a very large gap between the official rhetoric of the ‘ingathering of the exiles’ as a homecoming on the one hand, and the uphill path towards re-settlement and linguistic, economic and social integration that these Jewish refugees experienced on the other. A tangible example such a gap could be found in the original organisation and narrative conveyed by the “Beit Ha Tefutsot” Museum, called at the time of its opening in 1978 the “Museum of *the* Diaspora” [emphasis added] and since 2016 renamed as “The Museum of the Jewish People.” This gap has been filled in the meantime with testimonies, diaries, letters, novels, movies, documentaries, photographs and exhibitions, specific museums and numerous anthropological, sociological and historical studies. Taken together, this *corpus* gives a more accurate and detailed picture of the cultural and political implications of this process of individual and collective transformation that, from a different angle, Ruth Tsoffar and others have summed with the expression “the abyss of abandonment.”³⁴

Toys enter this history not only as donations from the US by Zionist organisations shipped over to Israel, but also as objects that played an important part in the process of identity transformation of post-war Jewish migrants in the new State. In this respect, these too were patriotic toys, tough of a different nature than the ones seen above. A game of cards of the 1950s called *Kibbutz Galuyiot* (the ‘ingathering of the exiles’) for example reflected well the obsessively returning political theme of the 1950s of incorporating Jewish migrants into the Zionist/Israeli nation, transforming their individual and collective character, manners and dress. The distant lands where Jews had come from were represented in the game as women stereotypically dressed in traditional/national garb,³⁵ the latter

³³ The operations that allowed Jews from Eastern Europe and many Arab countries to arrive in Israel had a logistic-military as well as an economic aspect. See Dvora Hacoen, *Immigrants in Turmoil. Mass Immigration in Israel and its Repercussions in the 1950s and After* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

³⁴ Ruth Tsoffar, “Forget Baghdad. Roundtrip to the Promised Land,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 79/1 (2006): 133-43. See also footnote 12 in this essay and the novels by at least Sami Michael, Shimon Ballas and Eli Amir; for a photographic testimony by Robert Capa, see Robert Whelan (ed.), *Robert Capa. La Collezione Completa*, (Roma: Contrasto, 2001): pp. 498-507. For videos and films see, Israel Broadcasting Authority, *Tkuma*, Jerusalem 1998, episode n. 4, the documentary by Samir, *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs. The Iraqi Connection*, 2002 and the already quoted film trilogy of Vivian Amsalem by Shlomi and Ronit Elkabetz.

³⁵ On the representation of women as allegories of the nation, though for a different time and place and from a more institutional perspective, see Alberto

being the only clue to guess the right provenance among four suggested ones: the Jewish woman representing Italy had a dark complexion and dressed like a folk dancer of *tarantella* or the like; the choice here was between Italy, Afghanistan, Bukhara or Algiers. The lady representing The Netherlands perfectly fit the stereotype of the blond girl with wooden clogs, white cap/bonnet and tulips in a basket. The choice here was between Holland, India, Bulgaria and Hungary. There could as many examples from this game as the lands portrayed, from Yemen to Siberia, from Turkey to Poland and, naturally, Israel.



Image 2 and 3 *Kibbutz Galuyiot. Game for children and youth*. Cover and contents. Source: <http://judaica-bookstore.0catch.com/3/ebay620.jpg> accessed 2 December 2017.

This game consolidated one of the central messages of the ‘ingathering of the exiles’ idea, i.e. demoting the wealth and the variety of the Jewish diasporic experience by applying a paradigm of uniform otherness to all

Mario Banti, *L'onore della nazione. Identità sessuali e violenza nel nazionalismo europeo dal XVIII secolo alla Grande Guerra*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2005). On the Israeli national obsession to incorporate Jewish migrants and in particular *mizrahim* see Tom Segev, 1949. *The First Israelis* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

not-yet-Israeli Jews, regardless of effective past experience. Among the various women on the game cards, the Israeli wore, not by chance, the colours of the rainbow, a metaphor of inclusion that recurred also in various posters for Independence Day in these years.³⁶ Paradoxically however, using garbs worn traditionally in the country of provenance to identify Jews from each nation would appear as a way to stress their national belonging to the countries they had left rather than a shared religious or ethnic belonging among themselves and with Israelis.

Another board game also called *Kibbutz Galuyiot* articulated this national message in a more complex way, by setting the scene for the whole process of collective and mass immigration from four continents (Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas) in various steps, the winner being who would conquer *yitiashvut* (“settlement”) first.

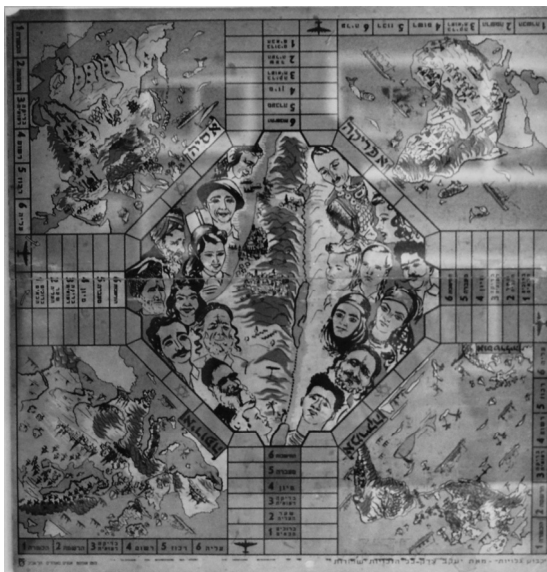


Image 4: *Kibbutz Galuyiot* board game exhibited at “Israeli toys from the 1950s and 1960s.” Israel Museum Jerusalem, “Youth and Art Education Wing.” Photo ©Marcella Simoni.

At the conceptual and geographical centre of this game stood the Land of Israel, depicted without political traits (borders), and marked only by

³⁶ Simoni, “Celebrazioni nazionali in Israele.”

physical elements (a mountainous chain, the lake of Tiberias, the Jordan river and the Dead Sea). The first part of the game was played at the margins of the board, moving from the farthest external corner of the board's outer frame towards its centre, through the following steps: 1. Preparation, 2. Registration, 3. Medical check, 4. Sorting, 5. Concentration and finally 6. Aliyah. The second part of the game would make the player ascend (as in the Hebrew meaning of *aliyah*/ascent/immigration) to the new centre of the Jewish world, i.e. Israel, and then move from the outskirts to the centre of society, both geographically and socially. As the indications show, station n. 1 read "Welcome," followed by 2. "Shaar Aliyah," (originally the name of one of the largest *ma'abarot*, but here intended more literally as Entrance or Gate to immigration); step 3 required a second medical check; at step 4 the player would be collected to go to station n. 5, i.e. the transit camp (*ma'abarah*), to be followed by a triumphal settlement (*yitiashvut*) at step 6. Among the many possible, I would like to underline here three main elements: in the first place, the insisted and obvious centrality of Israel vis-à-vis the Diaspora; secondly, the lack of representation of non-white Jews, even though Africa was designed on the board game as one of the four continents of Jewish migration (even if the immigration of Beta Israel started only in the 1980s); in the third place, that migrants were required to verify their health conditions twice, before and after entering the country. Much literature has investigated the political use of medical categories to in/exclude migrant population groups with measures of quarantine, sanitation and compulsory vaccination programs.³⁷ In this respect, these games can give an idea how the process that the political establishment viewed as homecoming could be perceived as an abyss of abandonment by the migrants.

From a completely different perspective, another board game addressed the complications of the 'ingathering of the exiles.' Called *A package arrived! (Havilah Highiah!)*, this game had been conceived and designed by the well-known Israeli writer and humourist Ephraim Kishon in the early 1960s. One of the recurring themes of Kishon's work as an author, playwright and in cinema has been to expose the incompetence of the socialist (*ashkenazi*) establishment in dealing with the absorption of (mainly *mizrahi*) immigrants. Such a criticism could be accepted by the

³⁷ Bryan S. Turner, *Medical Power and Social Knowledge* (London: Sage Publications, 1987). Among the numerous works by Roy Porter see at least, Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society in England, 1550-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); for the Israeli case see Nadav Davidovich and Shifra Shvarts, "Health and Hegemony: Preventive Medicine, Immigrants and the Israeli Melting Pot," *Israel Studies* 9/2 (2004): 150-79.

political elites by compensating with a heavy handed stereotyped depiction of the very same *mizrahim*, for instance with the creation of Kishon's most famous cinematic character, Salah Shabati in the homonymous film. On the one hand this movie made the history of Israeli cinema for its popularity, its nomination for an Oscar in the best foreign film category and because it won two Golden Globes in 1964;³⁸ on the other, it also helped crystallise in popular imagination the stereotype of the Arab Jewish immigrant in the character of Salah Shabati, the paternalistic father of seven children within an extended family, overprotective of women, backward and ignorant, generally untrustworthy, speaking with a heavy Arabic accent, and wearing a dishevelled Levantine dress and traditional religiosity.³⁹

A package arrived! represented a satire against the Israeli bureaucracy and against the system that both Western and *mizrahi* migrants experienced once in Israel. Here each player would receive a package from a distant land, presumably from one's own country of origin, and would then have to face countless bureaucratic challenges to retrieve it. Among them obtaining a certificate of good conduct from the police, the marriage certificate of the grandmother, confirmation of rabies vaccine, payment of new taxes and so on. The winner would be the first to overcome such difficulties and ultimately get the package.

As in the culture of the times, in games too, the centrality of the Land of Israel was not played out only to demote the Jewish diasporic experience and thus strengthen the national dimension of immigrant absorption and integration; the centrality of the land was a notion that also served connect the ancient history to the modern geography of the land, and as such it emerged also from toys and games. I will now move on to this last point.

Playing on the Land

The history and geography of modern and ancient Israel offered multiple examples, events and characters to develop other type of board games, dolls and educational maps that reflected another classic theme of the national ideology of the times, the exploration of the land and its

³⁸ Me'ir Schnitzer, *Israeli Cinema. Facts, Plots, Directors, Opinions* (Jerusalem: Kinneret Publishing House, 1994), p. 76 [Hebrew]. See also Rami N. Kimchi, "A turn towards modernity: the ideological innovation of Sallah," *Shofar* 29/4 (2011): 1-22

³⁹ Yaron Peleg, "From Black to White: Changing Images of Mizrahim in Israeli Cinema," *Israel Studies* 13/2 (2008): 122-45, pp.122-23.

appropriation through knowledge. As we saw above with *Our War. From private to commander*, sometimes such explorations were placed in a military framework; in other examples, they were connected to the geography of the territory, whether at the times of the Bible or in the present of the newly established State. Anita Shapira and others have discussed at length how the Bible had started to become a cultural and political reference point already in the first decades of statehood: David Ben-Gurion saw its role “as a testimony of Jewish national life in the land of Israel in former times, as a blueprint for reestablishing this way of life, as proof of a glorious past and promise for the future.”⁴⁰ The expression and the concept itself of ‘ingathering of the exiles’ came from the Bible and had messianic connotations; Meron Benvenisti has examined the post-1948 process of national re-naming of the landscape so that it would make reference either to a recent heroic past or to a timeless ancient one;⁴¹ the Society for Biblical Research in Israel established the Bible Quiz for youth in 1958 run yearly on Independence Day; archaeology became the main instrument to “contemporize the Biblical past.”⁴² In short, the landscape was no longer a timeless literary setting for epic fantasies, nor the subject of literary novels, but a very much real natural and historical context that provided the connection between a mythical past and a political present.

This fundamental approach was flanked by another cultural influence, which also emphasised nature-related activities, map reading training, hiking and camping within the framework of youth movements, which had been prominent in early Zionism and remained once the State had been established. As it is well known, youth movements like *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair* had originated in early twentieth century Europe, often as a reaction to the ban on the participation of Jews by other youth movements, the classic example being the *Wandervogel*, established in Berlin in 1901.⁴³ This is not the place to trace the history for the development of that youth

⁴⁰ Anita Shapira, “The Bible and Israeli Identity,” *AJS Review*, 28/1 (2004): 11-42, p. 11. See also Nadav Na’aman, “Reconstructing the History of Ancient Israel: Bible, Archaeology and Historiography,” *Zmanim* 94 (2006): 8-19, [Hebrew].

⁴¹ Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape. The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁴² Shapira, “The Bible and Israeli Identity,” 27.

⁴³ Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1962). George L. Mosse, *Ebrei in Germania fra assimilazione e antisemitismo* (Firenze: Giuntina, 1991), pp. 87-9. David Rechter, “‘Bubermania’: The Jewish Youth Movement in Vienna, 1917-1919,” *Modern Judaism* 16/1 (1996): 25-45; Izhar Ben-Nahum, “*Shomrim Hazaq!*” *The Ha-shomer Ha-tzair Youth Movement in Eretz Israel 1929-1939* (Givat Haviva: Hotsa’at Yad Ya’ari, 2005) [Hebrew].

movement in Palestine and after 1948; in this context, it is interesting to note how also the young pioneers of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair* became dolls to be played with, together with male and female soldiers, generals and immigrants.



Image 5: Dolls exhibited at “Israeli toys from the 1950s and 1960s.” Israel Museum Jerusalem, “Youth and Art Education Wing.” Photo ©Marcella Simoni.

Inevitably, that landscape and the ancient histories that populated it became also the subject of some board games. For example Amarna produced *Massa'ot Meleh Shlomo* (The Explorations of King Solomon) and two quizzes that reproduced the yearly Bible Quiz. Imitating that one, the first was called *Hidon Tanach*; the other, called *Hidon Israel* (Israel Quiz Game), connected the biblical past to the landscape and to the Israel of the times. The latter was closer to two other games *Mi-Dan ve-'ad Eilat* (From Dan to Eilat) and *Tiyul Ba'-Aretz* (Trip on the land/in Israel) that invited children to explore the different regions and cities of the State of Israel from home. Picture puzzles of the land of Israel and of Eilat were marketed with the imperative *Da' et-'Artzekh(a)* (Know your land!)⁴⁴ Maps that represented that land showed how productive its Jewish

⁴⁴ The images for these board games are in Grossman and Merom, *Board Games of the Past*, pp. 32-35.

population was in agriculture and in some industry; a young male and female soldier (almost a young couple) represented the only reference to a small army proudly holding the flag in Eilat, Israel's southernmost border, the last to be secured in 1949. As the example below shows, naively enough nothing else but camels and commercial caravans were represented as the threat coming from the East while from Sinai one soldier on a camel stood more or less opposed to the military couple in Eilat. Gaza and today's West Bank (at the time respectively occupied and annexed by Egypt and Jordan) had been incorporated in the map as part of the State of Israel and no Palestinian Israelis appeared in educational maps, or in any of the games mentioned above.



Image 6: Map exhibited at "Israel Toys of the 1950s and 1960s". Israel Museum, Jerusalem, "Youth and Art Education Wing". Photo ©Marcella Simoni

Conclusions

Some of the board games, maps and dolls that were produced in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s clearly reflected the national ideals and the historical events of those difficult and eventful decades, leading to a coincidence between political and commercial interests that favoured the production and the nationwide success of what Haim Grossman has termed “patriotic toys.” In this essay I have concentrated on three main aspects of this coincidence between the political and national ideals and the everyday policies of popular culture, and I focused on the three most obvious and major themes recurring in these two decades: the army and the three wars it fought between 1948 and 1967 in the first place; secondly, the theme of immigration and its representation on card and board games; finally, how the rhetoric of the ancestral connection to the land and that of its coming alive through its people’s return also found a way to appear in various types of toys. In this respect, toys only represented one aspect within the broader field of popular culture that showed to what extent the latter can serve as a powerful means to spread and consolidate national patriotic messages, something that, in very different circumstances, has been common practice in many other countries. Suffice it to mention here the dolls of the young communist pioneers exhibited at the Toy Museum of St. Petersburg or, on the opposite front, the dolls of the young Fascist Balillas on display at the Toy Museum of Naples. At the same time, the type of toys discussed in this essay might well have represented a way for institutions, and most of all for parents and children, to negotiate and come to terms with a difficult situation from an existential point of view at an individual and collective level.

As we saw in the introduction and in the course of this article, in a broader discourse on the significance of certain toys in a given context, children are only one part of the equation. As mentioned above, war toys have been recognised by some analysts as helping children get familiar with the idea that war can be a legitimate means of conflict resolution. Against this approach there are several examples from Israel and Palestine that proposed a different use of toys as a small symbolic and practical measure to defuse that conflict. In August 1977 for example, the well-known peace activist Abie Nathan launched an invite from *Qol ha-Shalom* - The Voice of Peace, his pirate radio anchored “somewhere in the Mediterranean” for children and parents to join a demonstration where military toys would be destroyed and buried, an event that was attended by thousands and at the time reported in the journal *New Outlook*.

In a different time and place, ten years later in the Gaza Strip, in the midst of the First Intifada, psychiatrist Eyad Sarraj was inviting children to bring stones to his clinic to build things rather using them as a weapon; and finally twenty years further down the timeline, Dr. Benjamin Epstein, a psychologist from the Israeli Trauma Coalition, used toys to help the children from Sderot represent and thus negotiate and possibly overcome their paralysing situation. In a similar project, the Spafford Centre in East Jerusalem was the first NGO to experiment with children testimonies of life and occupation in the West Bank and the re-enactment of given scenes with toys, again as a way to help them overcome fears and memories. Both the latter two examples became part of The War Toys project.⁴⁵

Finally, in the realm of popular culture, toys have become provocative pieces of art at the 2012 Biennale of Architecture in Venice. Here the Israeli pavilion mounted an exhibition that investigated on the relationship between the US and Israel between 1973 and 2008. In the gift shop at the second floor one could find not only some Bibles and miniature plastic dolls of various Israeli prime ministers and American presidents; on display was also a sliding tile puzzle, that better than any historiographical debate not only demonstrated the intertwining of Israelis and Palestinians within one game, but also that playing with the history of the one ultimately equals playing with that of the other.



Foto 7: Venice Biennale of Architecture. Israel pavilion. Exhibit “Aircraft Carrier”. Giftshop.

⁴⁵ <https://wartoysproject.com/israel>, and <https://wartoysproject.com/westbank>, both accessed 11 December 2017.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

WHY IS IT DIFFICULT FOR THE ISRAELIS TO MAKE PEACE WITH THE PALESTINIANS? UNCIVIL SOCIETY AND NEW WAR IN CONTEMPORARY ISRAEL

URI BEN-ELIEZER

Twenty years have passed since Chairman Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands on the White House lawn. The shimmering hopes of those days, however, dissolved into the Second Intifada and since then to other violent incidents that would be termed 'new wars.' The amount of casualties in these new wars is enormous, especially on the Palestinian side in the Gaza Strip, which is under Hamas' rule. Already the Second Intifada, which lasted five years, took the lives of 4,480 Palestinians and 1,115 Israelis, and wounded almost 40,000, three quarters of them Palestinians.¹

The second Intifada was what we would call later a 'new war.' It was supposed to end when the two sides convened and agreed upon a cease fire. To be more precise, such an agreement was achieved in the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in 2005 by Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian National Authority and Ariel Sharon, Israel's Prime Minister. Also, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah II took part in the summit that declared the commitment to bring about the end of the Second Intifada and to move forward a peace process in accordance with the principles of the Road Map.

However, like in many other new wars, the ceasefire led to nothing, and the new war continued. In the winter of 2008-2009 when the Qassam rockets that were launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip continued to fall

¹ On the Second Intifada, see Uri Ben-Eliezer, *Old Conflict, New War: Israel's Policy toward the Palestinians* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

over Israel's cities, Israel responded with a massive, surprise air strike that killed about 270 people and wounded 750 on the first day. Among the objectives specifically targeted was a festive ceremony marking the completion of a training course for 70 police cadets. These were not combatants, but young men looking for gainful work in an area rife with unemployment. It is doubtful if their killing met the test of international legal judgment. Indeed, even within the Israeli security authorities there were deep differences of opinion about the legality of the attack on the ceremony.² Beside the legality of the attack, another question that could be asked was about the rationality of such an operation. What could have been the benefits from it? Anyway, right after the surprise attack, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) launched a ground operation. According to IDF officers, the massive destruction of homes and other buildings in the Gaza neighbourhood was intended to have a deterrent effect. Nobody thought about achieving goals beyond this one. The war continued for three weeks and one day, during which the IDF killed 1,387 Palestinians, 773 of whom did not take part in the violent activities (the Palestinians killed nine Israelis).³ The deterrent effect did not last long. In July 2014, the IDF entered to Gaza again. "Operation Protective Edge" resulted in the death of 2,310 Gazans and almost 11,000 wounded. 65 Israeli soldiers and 5 civilians were killed as well, and 469 IDF soldiers and 261 Israeli civilians were injured. The destruction of Gaza was enormous with 17,000 homes destroyed, mainly as a result of the Israeli bombing.

The Gaza Wars are neither a conventional, state-to-state wars, nor civil wars. In many of their characteristics, they are a kind of war that exists in many places worldwide in the post-Cold War era. Like most of these wars, each part of the violence was just one episode in a continuing chain of horror. Moreover, like many others, the war achieved relative quiet for a while but solved nothing with regard to the chronic problems between the two warring sides.

What do this cycle of violence tell us about the nature of the new wars and their purposes? Does it mean that states are too weak to avoid such violence, and that these wars are non-rational? Alternatively, do the new wars and the new tactics of wars simply represent a rational, planned, highly calculated political attempt by an actor, either the Israeli government or

² On the controversies concerning the killing of the policemen, see Tomer Zarchin and Nadav Shragai, "The State Attorney's Office Allowed," *Ha-Aretz*, December 31, 2008 [Hebrew].

³ The Center for Human Rights in Gaza published somewhat different data: 1,434 Palestinians were killed, of whom 474 were armed. See, *Ma'ariv*, March 12, 2009 [Hebrew].

the Hamas leaders, to convince the other(s) by violent means to accept their will? These are the two perspectives presented in the literature on new wars. The first argument is the ‘non-rational’ one, while the other is the ‘rational’ or ‘instrumental’ one. Using Israel as examples, I will demonstrate the inadequacy of these two perspectives and offer a different explanation regarding the nature, causes, occurrences, and results of these wars. Evidently, there are many answers to the question of “what went wrong?” and “why is it difficult to make peace in Israel?” most of which concentrate on the calculations and considerations of the political leadership.⁴ Perhaps the political leadership, both the Palestinian and the Israeli, and their perceptions (or misperceptions) of reality have a share in the failure. However, in both societies the leaders often change, but peace does not come. I propose another explanation, albeit a partial one, like others. It is based on the idea that not only leaders and states, but ‘society’ itself is an important factor when we deal with causes of wars and even with the war’s characteristics.⁵

Causes and Characteristics of (new) Wars

Already in the 1990s some scholars (for example, Van Creveld and Holsti)⁶ claimed that the days of Clausewitzian wars between nation-states had passed and that the new wars were characterised by the attempt to provide an answer not to the position of States within the international system, but to the character of communities. Beginning with the civil war in Yugoslavia, it was mainly Kaldor who introduced the notion that the war there had assumed a new form.⁷

⁴ Shimon Peres, *Battling for Peace, A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1995), Yair Hirschfeld, *Oslo: A Formula for Peace* (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved, 2000) [Hebrew]; Yossi Beilin *Manual for a Wounded Dove* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2001)[Hebrew]; Gilead Sher, *Within Reach: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999-2001* (London: Routledge, 2005); Ron Pundak, *Secret Channel* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2013) [Hebrew].

⁵ Undoubtedly, one may ask, why is it hard for the Palestinians to make peace with the Israelis? This is, however, a different question, and I do not regard myself as an expert of the Palestinian society.

⁶ Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); Kalevi J. Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁷ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars, Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

Despite a certain puzzlement about the phenomenon and its meaning, it gradually became clear that new wars share certain novel characteristics compared to wars of the past. First, they depart from the usual conventional pattern insofar as they are not exclusively wars between States, certainly not between strong States. In contrast, they are civil wars, or wars that have the characteristics of civil wars, and wars between communities, ethnic, national or religious groups. Sometimes, they are wars between non-States on the one hand, and States, on the other. Second, it seems that in all new wars, the Westphalian state sovereignty over and monopoly on violence, a goal countries had worked hard for hundreds of years to achieve, is now being challenged both from the inside and the outside, and partly as the result of globalisation, which blurred some distinctions between nations and States.⁸ Consequentially, these wars are not waged between professional armies, conscript armies, or mass national armies, even if such armies take part in the conflict alongside other military groups. In fact, these wars involve a welter of forces: militias, autonomous military units, paramilitary groups, regional armies, segments of national armies, tribal armies, national movements, underground organizations, mercenaries, terrorist gangs, etc. They are all military forces that flourish in the wake of the weakness or disintegration of States on whom they try to impose their will. As for the method of fighting, along with the technical capability of the 'strong' side, which is usually the State, the 'weak' side is able to surprise the State and its regular army with new methods, unconventional attacks, and unforeseen tactics, such as guerrilla warfare and terrorism that the state finds difficult to combat.

Another element of the peculiarities of these wars is that they are no longer fought on a specific battlefield, in which one decisive victory can determine the outcome of the war. In these wars, the *loci* of violence often shift from the battlefields to the big cities, refugee camps, and villages – in short, to civilian habitats. Also typical is the attempt to decentralise the war, to create many *loci* of violence, and to continue the action for as long as possible. Furthermore, in wars of this kind, there is usually no declaration of war. The end of the war is never clear either. The dichotomous boundaries between the front and the rear, soldiers and civilians, peace and war, legal and illegal activities, internal and external, local and global, are often blurred as well, as a result of globalisation and reflexive modernisation.⁹

⁸ Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, eds., *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁹ Ulrich Beck and Wolfgang Bonssand Christopher Lau, "The Theory of Reflexive Modernization," *Theory, Culture and Society* 20/2 (2003): 1-33.

How new wars are related to society at large or to some parts of it? For many years, studies in international relations (hereafter: IR) played a leading role as an interpreter of wars, and realism (or later on neo-realism) and neo-liberalism were their main explanatory perspectives. At the centre of the explanation lay the assumption that anarchy, which evolves from the absence of any legitimate political authority over states that could otherwise resolve disputes and enforce agreements, is the main characteristic of the international system.¹⁰ Under these conditions, war may erupt when there is an intentional or unintentional change in the balance of power among states, or when nation-states seek to ensure their security, guarantee their dominance, or expand their power, wealth, position or status within the international system at the expense of other states. This view assumes the rational, utilitarian character of all states and the calculated considerations of their leadership. As the British scholar Michael Howard wrote,¹¹ they would go to war when their leaders concluded that going to war was preferable to avoiding it, and that they stood to gain more through war than they would otherwise. When such considerations are missing or fail to be helpful, neo-liberals propose international institutions to help regulate conflicts, promote cooperation, create dependence, and facilitate relations mainly through the economy. Hence, the faith in the free global economy and other global institutions as tools for restraining war.¹²

It is hard to object to a view that regards utilitarianism as the factor that determines reality with regard to both the causes of war and the reasons for abstaining from war. After all, isn't that what policymakers say they do for us, that they are wise enough to make the right decisions? It is equally difficult, however, to accept such an assumption at face value. After all, states have often gone to war without hesitation, but without any consideration either. Moreover, one of the sides may embark on a war even though the cost of a possible war is formidable when viewed rationally, and the chances of winning are negligible. Furthermore, it is often the case that one of the sides in a conflict knows that it is capable of winning a war, but nevertheless refrains from launching it.

Is utilitarianism capable of fully explaining the cause of the new wars that erupted in Israel from 2000 on? Does consideration of the leadership alone explain its unique character? Indeed, it is our claim that the two

¹⁰ Robert Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate," *International Organization* 48/2 (1994): 313-44.

¹¹ Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars* (London: Counterpoint, 1983), 22.

¹² On this subject in general, see Katherine Barbieri, "Economic Interdependence: A Path to Peace or Source of Interstate Conflict?," *Journal of Peace Research* 33/1 (1996): 29-49.

leading IR approaches, the neo-realist and neo-liberal, ignore key elements that may offer alternative explanations for the outbreak of war and its prevention. These elements, which became more important in the global, post-Cold War, neo-liberal era, are embedded in culture, society and history, as much as in the leadership's calculations, the considerations of the elites, or the mutual relations between nation-states. In fact, they are embedded in the way reality is interpreted in society, by various actors, and in the manner in which such interpretations become accepted truth, sometimes, the one and only truth that exists.¹³

The perspective that can serve as a basis for our claim regarding the non-rationality embedded in new wars is called constructivism. The constructivist perspective appeared in IR studies in the 1990s and argued that ideals, not just material elements (to use Max Weber's terms), can explain international politics. Thus, the constructivists claimed that what had been regarded as free choice and deliberate action in the earlier perspectives was in fact a 'choice' that was directed and determined by pre-existing and socially constructed beliefs, values and ideals. The power of these cultural variables, which reflect subjective interpretations of reality that appear in a specific historical period, lies in the fact that they are often institutionalised, legitimised and objectified, becoming part of the 'nature of things' which represents the truth, if not the 'only truth' that exists. In this historical-sociological process, the dominant values and beliefs are concretised and appear through norms, forms of discourse, rules, standards, principles, scripts, and even collective identities that people accept through forms of socialisation and various mechanisms of social control that guide, direct, and order them (and their organised frameworks) to one behaviour rather than another.¹⁴

¹³ Even when culture is mentioned, for example, by scholars who deal with ethnic wars, it is usually presented not as an independent variable, but as a tool in the hands of political elites who use it to revive ancient hatreds or invent them and use them symbolically to their benefit. See Valère Philip Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict, the Case of Serbia," *International Security* 19/3 (1994/5): 130-66 and Stuart J. Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence," *International Security* 30/4 (2006): 45-86.

¹⁴ On constructivism in general, see Christian Reus-Smith, "Constructivism," in *Theories of International Relations*, edited by Scott Burchill et al. (Hampshire: Palgrave, 1996), 188-212; Jeffrey T. Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics* 50 (1998): 324-48; Nicholas Onuf, "Institutions, Intentions, and International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 28/2 (2002): 211-28.

As for wars, can we assume that a subjective, institutionalised interpretation of reality may serve as the driving force behind them, and not national security needs? Even though constructivists and historical-institutionalists did not write about this question directly, Katzenstein's volume was considered a breakthrough in the field as it exposed scepticism about the relationship between states and rationalism, and a desire to explain the variations among nation-states with regard to security issues in cultural terms.¹⁵ The next step, however, which is an explanation for the causes of war, remained relatively underdeveloped in the constructivist perspective and needs elaboration. The main claim presented here, as a cause for the new wars in Israel is related to fabric of many societies in the so-called late modern or reflexive modernism, which is characterised by a division between civil and non-civil elements.

The Civil and the Uncivil Society

Although there is little agreement about its precise meaning, the term 'civil society' expresses the idea that human beings can realise their desire for freedom and liberty together. It comes from the Latin *civilis* or citizen, which means a free member of the city. It became popular among the philosophers of the Enlightenment, who were looking for ways to eradicate absolutist rule and create a free society based on the 'natural rights' of all human beings.

Scholars usually tend to relate the term 'civil society' to problems of democracy.¹⁶ They rarely connect it to the issues of war and peace.¹⁷ However, both civil society and uncivil society, as two distinctive and binary symbolic codes have a relationship to war and peace that dates back to the Enlightenment. The philosophers of the Enlightenment were looking for the 'good society' and expected it to be reasonable, rational and peaceful. It was a world that they contrasted with what Adam Ferguson described as the 'uncivil' society, described in binary terms as being

¹⁵ Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security, Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Michael C. Desch, "Culture Clash, Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* 23/1 (1998): 141-70.

¹⁶ Gideon Baker, *Civil Society and Democratic Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁷ See Jenny Pearce, "Civil Society and Peace" in *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, edited by Michael Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 404-15. One exception is Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society, An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003) 82-112, which posited a global civil society as a cure to the chronic situation of (mainly new) wars all over the world.

inhabited by the savage, the primitives, the rude, the aggressive, or the fanatic other.¹⁸

The enemies of the civil society, however, did not come from the outside world alone, and soon the term ‘civil’ was perceived as the opposite of both religion and military and even of the kings. After all, the church often supported the kings’ wars through the idea of ‘holy wars’ that were legitimised through the divine.¹⁹ As for the army, the rise of absolutism was accompanied by the growth of a large-scale military organisation that consumed a huge amount of money taken from society itself, prompting antagonism and protest everywhere.²⁰ As for the kings, Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*, which appeared in 1795, blamed them for waging wars for their personal interests and self-respect. Kant’s book did not have much influence in his time, but the French and American Revolutions, with their anti-Royalist and populist perceptions did. Perhaps with these revolutions, the term civil society turned from philosophy to sociology.

By 1815, and from that time on, civil society and peace went hand in hand when highly organised peace societies appeared all over Europe, arguing that decisions about war and peace were not the exclusive realm of kings and army generals alone and those whose motives and interests must be suspected.²¹ Such activities were promoted by liberals, radicals, socialists, and pacifists who refrained from defining their existence neither through private, capitalist interests, nor through the state interests, claiming to be concerned only to the good of society as a whole.

By denying the justification of “civilized wars against the barbarians,” these civil elements within society soon faced numerous enemies, who tried to object the achievements of the Enlightenment. Beginning as a reaction to the French Revolution, a conservative ideology appeared within European societies expressing anti-liberal, anti-secular, anti-egalitarian, anti-

¹⁸ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For more on the differences between the civil and uncivil societies, see Dominique Colas, *Civil Society and Fanaticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Bruce Buchan, “Explaining War and Peace: Kant and Liberal IR Theory,” *Alternatives* 27 (2002): 407-28.

¹⁹ Alan Rey, *Le Robert Dictionnaire Historique De La Langue Française* (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2000): 767; and Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000): 16-20.

²⁰ Volker R. Berghahn, *Militarism. The History of an International Debate 1861-1979* (Warwickshire: Berg, 1981): 8.

²¹ Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks, Modern Germany, Military Conscription, and Civil Society* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); David Cortright, *Peace, A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

democratic and pro-war sentiments.²² This was the face of the uncivil society, which was often highly organised and self-conscious, and pitted itself against the civil society in a way that most theories about the civil society have generally ignored.

Nationalism, especially when ethnicity stood at its centre, also legitimised wars in various parts of Europe. At first, the national idea expressed the desire to establish a new world of nations that was more civil, humane, peaceful, and free.²³ Soon, however, the liberal ideas turned into exclusive Herderian nationalism that put the “needs” of the nation above everything else. If these “needs” were not met appropriately, *Machtpolitic*, militaristic politics were regarded as the necessary answer.²⁴

At the end of the nineteenth century, the uncivil society became a sociological phenomenon. Contrary to the well-known thesis that mass society emerged out of irrational elements and uncontrolled impulses, the uncivil society was in fact highly organised, the result of the proliferation of associational life in Europe, what Boyd would call “the perils of pluralism.”²⁵ In this way, the tendency to sociability and the social solidarity that the Tocquevillian liberals glorified so much was used to destroy any sense of a civil society and to build an uncivil society instead.

From that time on, many European countries were divided between an uncivil, militaristic, anti-Enlightenment discourse and a civil, peaceful, socialist or liberal one. Both presented a challenge to the established structure of power, both provoked the state and its policies, both affirmed the political importance of the public and its solidarity, both developed their symbolic codes by denying and delegitimising those of the ‘others.’ Europe of the two World Wars was an example of the gaining control and taking over of the uncivil elements in many states. The collapse of the Weimer Republic, for example, can be explained through the growing influence of the highly organised uncivil society in Germany between the two World Wars. On the other hand, it was the civil society, according to

²² Graeme Garrard, “The Enlightenment and Its Enemies,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 49/5 (2006): 664–80; Milan Zafirovski, *The Enlightenment and its Effects on Modern Society* (New York: Springer, 2011).

²³ Peter Alter, *Nationalism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 20–2.

²⁴ On the problematic issue of liberal or civic nationalism, see Judith Lichtenberg “How liberal can nationalism be?” In *Theorizing nationalism*, ed. Ronald Beiner (New York: SUNY Press, 1999): 167–88. See also Emilio Willems, *A Way of Life and Death: Three Centuries of Prussian-German Militarism*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1986); Stefan Ludwig Hoffman, *Civil society, 1750–1914* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 44–60.

²⁵ Richard Boyd, *Uncivil Society* (Lanham: Lexington Books 2004): 7.

some scholars, that brought the Cold War to an end at the Twenty Century's end.²⁶ These are of course just two examples, however, based on numerous historical precedents, the question is how can we use the notion of the civil and uncivil society as an analytical tool for explaining the reality of either war or peace, and for understanding the character of war?

As long as states were strong, and stood at the centre of the political arena, the conflicts between the civil and the uncivil societies were many times oppressed or canalised towards hatred to marginal groups or to an outside enemy. The appeal for national solidarity reduced such internal differences. However, with the so-called late, reflexive modernisation, with the end of the Cold War, with globalisation and even neo-liberalism, such denial of societal differences and cleavages became impossible.

It became clear, already, in Poland of the late 1970s. When the concept of civil society reappeared in Eastern Europe in these years, it supplemented the meaning of the old, liberal conceptualisation. It did not deny the Toquevillian model of civil society, which emphasised the importance of associational life, both private and public, that protects individual and group autonomy against any state by creating bonds of trust. It also underscored the importance of the "virtues of civility," namely, values such as tolerance, cooperation, politeness and courtesy, rationality, and altruism as the basis for peaceful relations and solidarity.²⁷ However, in the cultural battlefield of Eastern Europe, this model of 'negative liberty' seemed insufficient to the activists and dissidents as a means of bringing liberty and freedom to all.²⁸ Raising the banner of "the civil society against the state," they presented a radical model of civil society, a kind of Gramscian model that emphasises the importance of social change and the creation of new spaces of resistance to both the state and the market through two different, but inseparable, modes of action, the cultural and the instrumental.²⁹

²⁶ Sheri Berman, "Civil society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49 (1997): 401–29; David Cortright, *Peace works, the citizen's role in ending the Cold War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

²⁷ Edward Shils, *The virtue of civility and other essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1997); Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 57–8; Richard Boyd, "The value of civility," *Urban Studies* 43/5–6 (2006): 863–78.

²⁸ Vaclav Havel, "Anti-political politics", in *Civil society and the State*, edited by John Keane (London: Verso Books, 1988): 381–98.

²⁹ Jean Cohen, Andrew Arato, *Civil society and political theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Jeffrey Isaac, "Civil society and the spirit of Revolt," *Dissent* 40 (1993): 356–61; Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards, "The paradox of civil

Soon, however, the reaction to the outburst of civil society emerged as well, with the same vigour and enthusiasm and an active perception of reality, sometimes around ultra-national, religious fundamentalist, or racist elements. We use the term public sphere, which is a field of discursive connections, to describe the arena in which the relations between the two societies, the civil and the uncivil were organised. It is an arena, sometimes a battlefield, of moral structures, with reference to the common good, with codes and narratives, and institutions and interactions.³⁰

This modified, active, radical perception of the civil and uncivil societies seems relevant to questions of war and peace. Sometimes the existence of autonomous associations free from state control, endowed with what that is known today as ‘the culture of peace,’ is a *sine qua non* condition for condemning war and considering peace as an option.³¹ In other scenarios, however, the influence of the uncivil society is greater and its impact on decisions to go war can be critical. In both scenarios, the civil and uncivil societies may have an influence on both societal and state level. They express values and beliefs, they frame reality in terms of friends and foes, they mobilise supporters, create their organisations, support groups and movements, and they try to translate their beliefs to instrumental politics, and influence state authorities to accept their worldview.

In the following, I use this theoretical framework – regarding the differences between civil and uncivil society and the attempts of both of them to influence society at large, and state policy in particular, on various subjects including on peace and war - as a means to explain the failure of the Oslo Agreements, and the outburst of new wars between Israel and the Palestinians. My contention is that the Agreements failed, and war erupted in part because while both the civil and uncivil societies arose as cultural innovations and alternative collective identities in neo-liberal Israel, the uncivil society was more successful in legitimising its collective

society,” *Journal of Democracy* 7/3 (1996): 38-52; Carolyn M. Elliott, ed., *Civil society and democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³⁰ On the public sphere in general, see Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the public sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 1-50. I accept that idea that the historically emergence of an independent public sphere served as a means for public debates and conflicts. I find it hard to accept Habermas’ idea that the ideal of the public sphere calls for social integration to be based on rational-critical discourse and accept Alexander’s idea that symbolic action and performances of any kind around political matters are there as well. See Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Civil Sphere*, 16.

³¹ Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

representations and in translating them into effective instrumental politics that influenced the state's policy, while the civil society failed to do so. The violence that erupted as a new war had the characteristics that reflect the uncivil society influence and victory.

The essay has three parts. In the first and second sections I present the way a cleavage has emerged in post hegemonic Israel between the civil and the uncivil society. The third section deals with Oslo as a turning point in the relations between the civil/uncivil society in Israel, whereas, the fourth section deals with process that turned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a new war, exemplifying the influence of the Israeli uncivil society on the breakdown of the war and on its peculiar characteristics.

Israel's Civil Society

Upon the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, following a war in which one ethno-national movement vanquished another, the Israeli leadership introduced Statism (*mamlakhtiyut*) as a principle of domination. Statism involved the transfer of functions that in the pre-state period had been carried out by voluntary organisations to the state, which then became responsible for them and for supervising them. This process created a strong, all-embracing, centralised and uniform state that controlled everything.³² A cardinal element of Israeli Statism was the establishment of a single national army, uniform in character, subject to a single authority, and based on universal conscription. Concomitantly, the leadership turned the Israeli population (which was mainly composed of new immigrants) into a nation-in-arms ready to fight conventional wars between States, as in the European model. The idea that Israel must remain strong and united and the population had to be conformist to Israel's basic values, fully aware to their country's security problems, and ready to take part in their solutions, even to sacrifice their life for that, was central to the Israeli nation-in-arms.³³

³² Joel S. Migdal, "The Crystallization of the State and the Struggles Over Rulemaking: Israel in Comparative Perspective," in *The Israeli State and Society*, edited by Baruch Kimmerling (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 1-27; Yagil Levy, *Trial and error. Israel's Route from War to De-escalation* (Albany: State University of NY Press, 1997).

³³ Uri Ben Eliezer, "A Nation-in-Arms: State, Nation and Militarism in Israel's First Years," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37/2 (1995): 264-85; Gershon Shafir, Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The dynamics of multiple citizenship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37-73.

The unprecedented victory in the 1967 Six Day War brought days of glory to the Israel. The IDF's growing importance in those days was related not only to the results of the war, but also to the fact that Israel conquered, and *de facto* annexed, immense territories. The importance of these territories was presented not only in ethno-national and religious terms, with the idea that they were part of Israel's ancestral land, but in rational arguments as well. The additional territory strengthened the small, narrow country by giving it strategic depth. Even when settlements were built in the conquered territories, mainly by spontaneous initiatives of enthusiastic civilians guided by deep religious and national sentiments, the State directly or indirectly accepted and even backed the enterprise, presenting it as essential to Israel's security needs. During those years, the IDF's centrality within society, and its political influence in security issues, the nexus between the political and the military elites, and the various elements of the nation-in-arms, which created a highly obedient, conformist, highly disciplined, and fully mobilised society were considered legitimate especially as means that allowed Israel to take part in and deal more or less successfully with conventional wars: the 1956 Sinai Campaign, the 1967 Six Day war, the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Peace became an issue in late 1970s with the mass movement Peace Now.³⁴ However, only the advent of the 1980s undermined Israel's political culture certainties.

Constructivist scholars talk about a crisis as leverage for a social change. As Finnemore and Sikkink write:

The new ideas often emerge in response to dramatic policy shocks, failures, or crises, where past policies have failed to resolve problems, leading to a search for new conceptions on which to base new policies.³⁵

We can add to this citation the simple fact that new movements emerge as well following traumatic and dramatic events. Indeed, new ideas arose as a result of Israel's invasion of South Lebanon in 1982. It created a huge controversy within Israel, the result of which was a new definition of Israel's war as a "war of choice." The invasion also introduced two new

³⁴ Mordechai Bar-On, *In pursuit of peace: A History of Israeli Peace Movement* (Washington, DC: US institute for Peace, 1996); Tali Reshef, *Peace Now* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1996) [Hebrew].

³⁵ Martha Finnemore, Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking stock: The constructivist research program in international relations and comparative politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 391–416.

phenomena: peace movements and conscientious objection.³⁶ Another area in which the legitimacy crisis appeared at its worst in Israel was the economy. As a result of an annual inflation rate of 460 percent and an inability to respond to societal demands, the Israeli government initiated an economic reform in 1985, privatising many public companies, retrenching its social welfare policy, and allowing free trade, thus creating a neo-liberal system almost overnight.³⁷ In the very same year (1985), the IDF withdrew from Southern Lebanon (except for a security zone), and for the first time in Israel's history, peace and economic growth were linked. Another political change was the emergence of an Israeli 'revolution of associations.' NGOs, which represented a new liberal phenomenon, sprang up around the country in the late 1980s. They raised new topics for debate that had never been dealt with seriously before. These topics revolved around the individual, his/her rights, needs, freedom, ways of life, preferences, body, and the environment.³⁸

The 1987 Intifada, the first substantial Palestinian uprising in the Territories, accelerated the process of the fading away of the nation-in-arms concept. One example of this sea change was the criticism of the oppressive methods that were often employed by IDF soldiers against stone-throwing Palestinians women and children. The peace movements that appeared around 1982 became the carriers of the call for a drastic change and an alternative way of life in Israel, all in the name of new values such as civil rights, humanitarianism, and peace. Like the new associations they were as well part of a new civil society that did not exist at all in Statist Israel. This new civil society teemed with liberal ideas, which included separating society from the State, and allowing individual initiatives, social experiments, alternative modes of life, freedom and autonomy in all aspects of life, and a call for peace.

The end of the Cold War also had a tremendous impact on the Middle East, which was no longer an arena of rivalry between two superpowers. The Arab states lost their traditional supporter, and the feeling of existential threats almost completely disappeared in Israel. In the 1992 the Labour Party, headed by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, won the election with a civil agenda and a promise that Israel would initiate negotiations with the Palestinians. All of these changes indicated that

³⁶ Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

³⁷ Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 273-96.

³⁸ Uri Ben-Eliezer, "New associations or new politics? The significance of Israeli-style post-materialism," *Hagar, International Social Science Review* 4/1 (2003): 5-34.

changes happening worldwide had not left Israel unaffected. The 1993 Oslo Agreements were regarded as the harbinger of that promise. The leaders of the camp supporting the peace efforts were members of the new civil society. Among them were the industrialists who incessantly tried to convince Rabin and Peres that peace would bring prosperity to Israel and to the entire Middle East. Moral reasoning was elaborated as well, as a member of the civil society spoke in terms such as:

We have already tried wars...fifteen years of the Likud [the right wing in power] turned us into xenophobes and imprinted us with mental isolation under the slogan 'Everyone is against us'... Zionism does not mean ruling another nation or a search for living space.³⁹

Despite strong internal objections to the peace initiative, the Israeli parliament voted in favour of a resolution endorsing the agreement by 61-50 and 8 abstained.⁴⁰ Surveys conducted in Israel also showed that the vast majority of Israelis supported the Oslo process. However, the peaceful, civilian interpretation of reality did not last long. In order to understand the reasons for that we need to turn now to the other new phenomenon that has emerged in post hegemonic Israel.

Israel's Uncivil Society

Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) was a fundamentalist movement that began in the 1970s as a protest movement against the peace treaty with Egypt. Quite rapidly, it turned into a settlement movement that tried to convince the government to appropriate the 1967 occupied Territories and make them part of Israel since they were perceived as Israel's ancestral land. The movement's members construed Israel's rapid victory in the 1967 war in messianic terms, as signifying the onset of the redemption of the Jewish people and an historic opportunity to realise Israel within its biblical borders. In accordance with this uncivil view, from the mid-1970s on, its members tried to thwart every peace initiative that would be based on any withdrawal from the Territories.

The attraction and relative success of *Gush Emunim* in winning public support and sympathy was partly the result of the simple fact that *Gush Emunim* presented itself as part of the Zionist movement, indeed, as the reincarnation of Israel's founding fathers. Like many other fundamentalist

³⁹ Moshe Reuven, "We have Already Tried Wars," *Davar*, 5 May 1994.

⁴⁰ Alon Pinkas and Menachem Rahat, "This is the Victory of the 'Blocking Majority,'" *Maariv*, 24 September 1993.

movements in the world, the movement chose to “win friends and influence people” within the Israeli society. After all, according to Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, their spiritual leader, even secular Zionist institutions were part of the process of redemption.⁴¹

The change of the government in 1977 provided support for *Gush Emunim*. It received material benefits and legal protection that made life in the occupied Territories materially inexpensive and tempting. The Begin government confiscated an estimated 40 percent of the land in the territories, arguing that they belonged to no one but the State. This action allowed Ariel Sharon, as chairperson of the Committee of Ministers for settlements, to initiate tens of new settlements. In the 1980s *Gush Emunim* ceased to function as a movement. It was undoubtedly a sign of institutionalisation. The movement’s leaders became leading figures in right-wing political parties and continued to promote the settlers’ goals through a new formal council of settlements called the *Yesha* Council, which was recognised and supported by the Israeli state during the right-wing governments’ rule. All and all, between 1967 and 1995, 136 settlements were constructed in the West Bank, home to 138,600 inhabitants.⁴²

Settlement activities were not the only channel through which *Gush Emunim* transgressed beyond the public sphere to influence the State. Another channel was the army. When the first Intifada broke out in 1987, the settlers felt that the army did not protect them appropriately, and its generals had lost hope of solving the conflict with the Palestinians by force. As the settlers put it, “The army has adopted the slogan of a political solution, like the bent floor of those who cannot dance.”⁴³ The settlers’ conclusion, under the influence of their rabbis, was to become more involved and wield greater influence in the army. Armed with this religious-political approach, the young generation of the settlers and their supporters began to volunteer for the army’s elite units and strove to excel in them at any price. In a religious society this was a very meaningful decision because it entailed an encounter with the secular society and the possibility that its pernicious effects would leave an imprint on the youngsters. The rabbis, though, hoped for the opposite outcome: for the religious youth to leave a mark on their secular peers. Thus, at the rabbis’ bidding, the young men in the crocheted *kippas* (skullcaps) set out to

⁴¹ On Gush Emunim’s theology, see Aviezer Ravitzki, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish religious radicalism* (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved, 1993) [Hebrew].

⁴² On the legal way the territories were confiscated, and the settlements were constructed, see Aluf Ben, “Plea Alback, the ‘Mother of the Settlements is proud,” *Ha-‘Aretz*, 3 April 2004.

⁴³ *Nekuda*, no. 174, January 1994.

influence the army from within. Many of them became officers and did not balk at an army career. They won high regard for their commitment and excellence. Now they could also feel that they were working for their cause within the army from a position of partnership if not superiority. The settlers' cultural politics was quite clear. They viewed themselves as the brake on the rising civil orientation, its 'lack of values,' and tendency to solve Israel's national problems through diplomatic means.

Equipped with anti-Enlightenment ideas and motivated by a fundamentalist ideology, the settlers continually regarded war as the only means Israel should use in order to establish its dominant place in the Middle East. It was the settlers' spiritual leader Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook himself who wrote,

From the national point of view, war is a decree that must be accepted... it belongs to the nation's life-agenda. When there is statehood there is war. War from time to time is a normal thing. The conquest of the Land is a commandment.⁴⁴

Here and there, conflicts between the civil and the uncivil societies within the public sphere have occurred. One such incident occurred on February 10, 1983. At the end of a peace rally in Jerusalem, a grenade was thrown, killing one peace protestor, Emile Grunzweig, and wounded nine others. The right-wing activist who lobbed the grenade was sentenced to 27 years in prison. In his first interview after his release he proudly said that he single-handedly began a campaign that destroyed the Israeli left.⁴⁵

The settlers did all they could to influence the government. The extreme example was the Jewish underground that was active between 1979 and 1984, killing and wounding innocent Palestinians. The underground's main purpose was to destroy the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, believing that such an act would create a colossal, global war that would bring about the days of the Messiah. Meanwhile, the group carried out a series of terror acts, including car bomb attacks against three Palestinian mayors, and killing three Muslim students and wounded thirty-three in the Islamic College of Hebron. In 1984 members of the underground placed bombs under six Arab-owned buses in Jerusalem, but the Israeli security forces discovered them, neutralised the bombs, and

⁴⁴ Shlomo Avineri, "Nationalism and morality in the Rabbi Zvi Yehuda (Kook)" in *Army Laws, Articles and Answers in Military Issues* (Jerusalem: Ateret Kohanim Yeshiva, 1994) [Hebrew].

⁴⁵ Sara Leibovitz-Dar, "Yona Avrushi: Thanks to What I Did...", *NRG*, 26 July, 2011.

arrested twenty-five of them. They were tried; some of them were sentenced to life in prison and the others got relatively light punishments. Nevertheless, the uncivil society already had enough political influence on the State to help the underground members. The sentences were commuted three times, and even those who were sentenced to life in prison were released after serving less than seven years in prison.⁴⁶ The conflict between the civil and the uncivil societies within Israel's public sphere reached its peak when the government brought its decision to make peace with the Palestinians to the public.

Scholars who deal with neoliberalism tend constantly to present reality in terms of a connection between the local and the global. Israel was no exception. It followed a line that appeared in many other places in terms of a conflict and a social division between those societal forces who supported the principle of globalisation, and regarded it as a promise for democracy, openness, liberty and peace, and those who regarded it as a danger to their exceptionality and distinctiveness.⁴⁷ In most cases, these were conflicts around two scripts that, through life styles and identity politics, represented the nature of a society's institutional order and the character of its collective identity.⁴⁸ The Oslo Agreements were the moments of truth in the relations between the two scripts that existed in Israel in relations to questions of peace and war.

⁴⁶ Naomi Gal-Or, *The Jewish Underground: Our Terrorism* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1990) [Hebrew].

⁴⁷ See, for example Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization, a critical introduction* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) in general, and Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005) [Hebrew] writing on Israel in particular. On the ethno-national and fundamentalist reaction to globalisation, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: the Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Richard Caplan and John Feffer, eds., *Europe's New Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Niki Keddie, "The New Religious Politics: Where, When and Why do 'Fundamentalisms' Appear?," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40/4 (1998): 696-723.

⁴⁸ On collective identity see Marsya Zalewski and Cynthia Enloe, "Questions about Identity in International Relations," in *International Relations Theories Today*, edited by Ken Booth and Steve Smith, 279-305, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995). On the term "script," see John Meyer, "World Society, Institutional Theories, and the Actor," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 1-20.

Oslo as a Turning Point

Thus, 40,000 people came to the square next to the Tel Aviv City Hall (now called Rabin Square) to demonstrate support for the peace agreement, and two days later 50,000 opponents of the accord marched in Jerusalem, emphasising Jewish distinctiveness and claiming that “from here [the Oslo Agreements] to assimilation and the total loss of Jewish identity, the way is short.”⁴⁹ In a manner characteristic of the reflexive modern era, two major identities emerged in Israel. One was that of the liberal civil society. The other was that of the uncivil society. Both differed from the old state-centred collectivist approach. The different identities were evident in the different life styles, myths and symbols, with each sector attempting to influence the institutional order and change it. No longer did hegemonic Statism appropriate every divergent movement. Now the struggle had moved, at least to a degree, from the State to society, in which Israel’s collective identity became a variable whose substance and meaning were fought over by the different sectors.

Hamas’ suicide attacks in those years were horrifying in and of themselves. Hamas bombed a bus on April 6 in the northern city Afula, killing eight Israelis. A week later, Hamas claimed responsibility for bombing a bus station in *Hadera*, north of Tel Aviv, and on October 19, there was a bus bombing on Dizengoff Street, the main street in Tel Aviv, which killed 22 Israelis. No less significant was the meaning attached to the blasts in Israel. The militaristic-religious society called them “Arab terror” (instead of “Hamas terror”) and adopted the dichotomous perspective of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ “We go to sleep with Arafat, but wake up with the Hamas,” said one headline in a religious newspaper.⁵⁰

Terrorism carries an emotional and symbolic impact that is no less powerful than the physical damage it inflicts. The Israeli militaristic-religious society exploited that impact skilfully by intensifying the fears not only of the terror, but also of peace itself. They emphasised issues of security and de-emphasised their religious beliefs in the sanctity of the land in order to influence the general public, and they used a simplistic binary thesis according to which the acts of terror represented not a minority of Palestinians but their whole society. These tactics were

⁴⁹ Yair Dreifus, “The Rise and Fall of the Jewish State,” *Nekuda*, October, 1993. On the divided Jewish attitude towards the Oslo Process, see Tamar Hermann, Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar, “Divided Yet United: Israeli-Jewish Attitudes Toward the Oslo Process,” *Journal of Peace Research* 39/5 (2002): 597-613.

⁵⁰ Benni Shukron, “We Go to Sleep with Arafat, but Wake up with the Hamas,” *Hatzofe*, 21 October 1994.

difficult for the hesitant, apologetic, embryonic civil society to counter. The results were evident in public opinion surveys. For example, one survey that was conducted by Arian found that following the terrorist attacks, for the first time since the Oslo accords, the majority in Israel preferred the option of increasing Israel's military might to holding peace talks.⁵¹

Interestingly, it was PM Rabin who did not want to be identified with any grassroots politics, certainly not with the peace movements. During this time, Rabin constantly talked about the importance of peace, but deliberately ignored the peace movements in his words. He was afraid that any connection with them would create antagonism within society and impair his initiative. Throughout the 1990s, before and after the collapse of the process, not one peace activist as such was invited to join the many Israeli delegations to the peace talks. No representative of the movement participated in the signing ceremonies of the various agreements. Finally, no peace movement ever opened up a channel of communication to the Palestinians with whom Rabin talked to push the process forward.⁵²

Rabin thought peace was a top-down initiative that should be left to the government alone. Interestingly, the civil society's peace movements did not challenge that idea. When the societal pressure against the Oslo Agreements became unbearable, Rabin was compelled to ask for help explicitly, but from his party, not from the peace movements. Rabin decried the insufficient response to the activity of the uncivil society, which, he said, was well organised and led by extremists. The Labour Party was not being felt on the streets, he said, and called on the party's activists to join the battle for public opinion and win back the Israeli street from the rampaging far-right extremists.⁵³ His call, however, went unheeded. Political parties had already lost most of their appeal in Israel, a fact that Rabin probably did not understand.

As in the past, the uncivil society's members (at least some of them) did not refrain from using violence when it served their purposes. Dr. Baruch Goldstein was an American-born Israeli, a physician, a settler, and a member of the radical right-wing *Kach* political party. On February 25, 1994, Goldstein killed 29 Muslims as they were praying at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. It was a hate crime that emerged from the extremists of the religious-militaristic society. Rabin's advisors thought that the fury against the settlers that emerged within the Israeli public

⁵¹ Asher Arian, *Israeli public opinion on national security 2000*, Tel Aviv: Jaffa Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University.

⁵² Tamar Hermann, *The Israeli Peace Movement*.

⁵³ Tal Yerach, "Rabin Attacked the Revisionist Lies," *Ha-Aretz*, 4 July, 1997.

following the assassination could be used as an opportunity to remove the 750 Jewish settlers who lived in Hebron, a city of 160,000 Palestinians, and to advance the peace process forward. Rabin hesitated but eventually decided not to take the initiative following the settlers' warning that it would lead to civil war.⁵⁴ Could Rabin have accomplished this goal if he had had an active and militant civil society on his side?

In a deeply divided public sphere, the chances for the Oslo Agreements to succeed without a militant civil society, which was involved with instrumental politics, and succeeded in defining reality in terms of the 'pure' civil society and the 'polluted' uncivil society, were slim. Then, in May 1995, PM Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish fundamentalist who objected to the peace process. The assassination was the climactic event in the struggle against the Oslo process. It clearly showed that the two separate identities, the two societies that now existed in Israel, were on the verge of a clash.⁵⁵ However, a civil war did not occur. It was actually Shimon Peres, who was appointed to succeed the slain prime minister on the night of the assassination, who decided in his brief term of office that relations with the settlers and their supporters would be based on emphasising not the differences between the sides, but what they had in common. Peres' policy of reconciliation had drastic and unexpected consequences. It allowed the settlers to attack their 'leftist' adversaries, alleging that they were weaving a plot against them and exploiting the assassination for their own ends. Thus, and perhaps without intending to, Peres contributed to the coalescence of an institutional structure that encouraged internal unity or pacification over possible peace with the Palestinians. It meant that the settlers could act almost as they pleased without the state taking vigorous action against them.

Then came the horrific terrorist attacks perpetrated again by Hamas in February 1996, which claimed the lives of dozens of Israelis in the big cities and were again interpreted in Israel as proof that the neither the Palestinian people nor their leaders wanted peace. The fact that Hamas represented a minority within the Palestinians, the vast majority of whom supported the peace process and objected to the attacks, did not change the new perspective that was disseminated by the uncivil society. Peres still hoped that his relations with the religious circles would help him in the coming 1996 election. He accepted his advisors' idea not to mention the

⁵⁴ Akiva Eldar and Idit Zertal, *The Lords of the Land: Settlers and the State of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2004) [Hebrew]: 164-5

⁵⁵ See, for example, Haim Marantz, "Insufficient Effort," *Nekuda*, June, 1993. See also Michael Karpin and Ina Friedman, *Murder in the name of God* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998).

assassination of Rabin during the election campaign. In this atmosphere, following the religious-militaristic campaign marked by slogans such as “Peres will divide Jerusalem” and “Netanyahu [the right-wing candidate] is good for the Jews,” and despite all of the predictions, Peres lost to Netanyahu, the leader of the right-wing Likud, which had fiercely objected to the Oslo Agreements in the past. The change in government was not just a change in personalities. It was a shift in Israel’s basic values and beliefs, which soon were institutionalised and translated into the practicalities of a new war.

The road to a new war

As prime minister, Netanyahu did everything he could to avoid the continuation of the Oslo process.⁵⁶ During his term, the ultra-national and atavistic cultural contours became more marked, especially, when he decided on September 24, 1996, to open the Western Wall’s tunnel gate, which was located in the Arab quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, to the public. The gate had remained closed to the public because of the political sensitivity involved. Netanyahu, describing the tunnel as the “rock of our existence,” decided to open it.⁵⁷ The decision attested to the change in Israeli collective identity with an increased emphasis on ethno-national and religious elements. The Palestinians understood the ‘new spirit’ at once. Arafat declared that opening the tunnel’s gate was a violation of the peace process and an act of Israeli lunacy designed to make East Jerusalem—the capital of the future Palestinian state—Jewish, and that it amounted to a declaration of war.⁵⁸ The anticipated scenario duly played itself out. Serious unrest erupted across the West Bank, which very quickly escalated into gunfights.⁵⁹ Dozens of people were killed in the disturbances, among them 16 Israeli soldiers and policemen. Netanyahu blamed Arafat for the event and immediately declared it a war against

⁵⁶ Ron Pundak, *From Oslo to Taba: A derailed process*, (Jerusalem: Leonard David Institute for International Relations, The Hebrew University, 2001) [Hebrew].

⁵⁷ Zadok Yechieli, “The Millionaire Behind the Tunnel,” *Yediot Ahronot*, 4 October, 1996. See also, Rani Shaked, “How the Secret Lobby of the Wall Tunnel in the Territories,” *Yediot Ahronot*, 27 September, 1996 [Hebrew].

⁵⁸ “Fire in the Territories,” *Yediot Ahronot*, September 25, 1996 [Hebrew].

⁵⁹ Rani Shaked, “Fire in the Territories, The Battle over the Barrier,” *Yediot Ahronot*, September 26, 1996 [Hebrew]

Israel's existence.⁶⁰ While not everybody in Israel was convinced, the IDF, whose weakness and helplessness were exposed during the disturbances, was quick to look for drastic and substantial conclusions.

In the military bulletin *Ma'arakhot*, articles began to appear about low-intensity conflicts, asymmetric and limited wars, and the need for a combat doctrine to ensure that Israel would not be drawn into a struggle in which it would be at a relative disadvantage. The writers argued that in this type of warfare the enemy exploits not only the adversary's military weaknesses, but also his high moral standards and the legal restrictions put on its soldiers. It was suggested that the IDF find ways to circumvent this 'problem' and ignore those constraints.⁶¹

The solution appeared with the formulation of a new military doctrine. A working group of high-ranking IDF officers convened to construct this doctrine.⁶² The doctrine was based on the idea that in order to win such a war, the IDF had to force a change in the consciousness of the enemy. One retired, highly decorated general, Dr. Isaac Ben Israel, explained, "The decision [in a conflict] is a mental act and occurs, effectively, in the consciousness of the side that is vanquished, when it reaches the conclusion that a cessation of the fighting is preferable to its continuation."⁶³ Another method in the new doctrine was the strategy of wearing down the enemy by creating leverages of pressure. Leverage, as defined by the IDF, is a procedure of deterrence initiated by the strong side in an asymmetric war, involving diminished power but producing a potent cumulative impact. Thus, hurting civilians became part of the doctrine. How else can we understand the use of economic leverage, which was designed to bring economic pressure to bear on the rebellious side by preventing its people from working in Israel, prohibiting the import of raw materials or the

⁶⁰ See Aluf Ben, "The Government Supported the Prime Minister," *Haaretz*, 29 September, 1996 [Hebrew]. Also, "Netanyahu, 'This is a War on Our Existence'," *Yediot Ahronot*, 29 September, 1996 [Hebrew].

⁶¹ Lieutenant Colonel A., "A-Symmetric War," *Maarakhot*, 371, 2000. See also, Lieutenant Colonel Ido, "Low Intensity Conflict, Basic Characteristics," *Maarakhot*, 380-1, 2001; Colonel Efi Idan and Captain Maya Peker-Rinat, "The Limitation of the Use of Force in the Territories during the Agreement Period," *Maarakhot*, 172, 2000 [all in Hebrew].

⁶² Among the participants were Major General Uzi Dayan, then the GOC Central Command, who was very close to Barak and had been tipped by Barak as his successor; Ya'alon, the DMI; Yitzhak Eitan, the commander of the Judea and Samaria Division, who would succeed Dayan as GOC Central Command, and others.

⁶³ Dr. Isaac Ben Israel, "Technology and Decision, Thoughts on the IDF Following Kosovo," *Maarakhot*, July 2000 [Hebrew].

export of merchandise, blocking the transfer of National Insurance Institute payments and of VAT to the workers in the territories and their employers, preventing trips abroad, and so on? Indeed, the new military doctrine was based on new cultural assumptions that characterised the uncivil society: not only the identity politics that create a clear demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ along ethnic, national, or religious lines, but also the objectivising of the other and its instrumental dehumanisation. All that was left for the army was to wait for the right time to examine the efficiency of these new methods.⁶⁴

The vast majority of the Israelis belonged neither to the civil society nor to the uncivil one. They simply stood at the centre and their political opinions tended to change according to various circumstances and events. This vast majority decided in May 1999 to give another chance to peace. Ehud Barak was elected prime minister, however, Barak, who, while chief of staff, equated the Oslo Agreement to a “Swiss cheese” full of “security loopholes”⁶⁵ and was among those who abstained in the vote on Oslo 2, did not intend to return to the Oslo process. He was pretentious enough to believe that he could reach a final agreement. He tried in Camp David in July 2000 but failed. The failure of Camp David was less severe than the meaning attached to it in Israel, and in this respect, Barak deserves full credit for that interpretation. Barak not only blamed Arafat for the failure, but also coined the mantra that “there is no one to talk to.”⁶⁶ The spin held that the failure of the talks was evidence that the Palestinian side was not interested in peace, that it was impossible to arrive at an agreement, that there was no peace partner and that Arafat went to Camp David just to lay the groundwork for preparing his people for a violent confrontation with Israel. Barak probably wanted to justify his failure, and maybe he himself went to Oslo just to lay the groundwork for preparing the Israelis for a violent solution to relations with the Palestinians. In any case, from an institutional point of view, his words had far-reaching influence. After all, Barak liked to present himself as the successor to Rabin (to the dismay of Rabin’s family), and as the leader of the Israeli civil society. In declaring the lack of a partner, Barak broke at once with the longstanding Labour

⁶⁴ The IDF doctrine of low-intensity conflict was evident in the IDF bulletins. See also Haggai Golan, Shaul Shay (eds.), “Low Intensity Conflict. Tel Aviv”: *Maarashot*, (2004) [Hebrew]; and Or Galzaer “The Mission: To Win the Intifada,” *Maariv*, 8 July, 2002 [Hebrew]: 64-5.

⁶⁵ Yoram Peri, *There is No One to Talk To* (Tel Aviv: Chaim Herzog Institute, Tel Aviv University, 2005) [Hebrew]: 64-5.

⁶⁶ Yechezkel Rachamim (ed.), “*There is No One to Talk To*,” 2005, <http://www.tau.ac.il/institutes/herzog/talkto-eng.pdf>, accessed 30 October 2017.

Party position—mostly of declarations, but which were sometimes even accompanied by deeds—that peace deserves a chance, and that compromise is the only solution to the conflict.

With the tailwind Barak got from the uncivil society, the fluctuate public that had supported the Oslo process seven years before now bought Barak's argumentation. They blamed the Palestinians with the failure of the talks and raised the idea that Israel must teach the Palestinians a lesson. All that was needed for an outbreak of violence was a Palestinian mistake. This mistake was soon to come, with the help of the Ariel Sharon, the opposition leader and one of the main representatives of the uncivil society, who decided that Israel's sovereignty had to be demonstrated at this very delicate moment by a provocative visit (together with one hundred companions who accompanied him) to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, the site that is sacred to both Jews and Muslims.⁶⁷

When spontaneous demonstrations and disturbances started, the Palestinians had to deal with the Israeli army, which was well prepared for a new kind of war, was eager to test its new strategy, which was based on the uncivil society's cultural premises. The army, however, was not alone in its perception of reality. From the beginning of the Palestinian disturbances, the settlers exerted pressure on the leadership to firmly suppress them. They were the main victims of the Palestinian violence, but there was more to it. Many of them saw reality in religious terms. The Palestinian violence was a chance not only to give the kiss of death to the Oslo option, but also to promote the idea of Greater Israel by annexing all of the occupied territories and maybe even by transferring the Palestinians who are there. "Win the Oslo War," their journals urged: "In war as in war," "let the IDF win."⁶⁸ As the terrorist attacks multiplied, the pressure from the settlers for taking a hard stance against the Palestinians mounted.⁶⁹

One of the indications that demonstrated the army's being influenced by the uncivil society's basic values appeared through the way the army dealt with the Palestinians demonstrations. The army reacted drastically. The introduction of belligerent modalities into the arena of clashes with

⁶⁷ The site has been controlled by Israel since the 1967 occupation, but it is the Muslim Waqf who is responsible for the management of the site. In order to keep the status quo, the Israeli government has enforced a controversial ban on prayer there by non-Muslim visitors since 1967.

⁶⁸ Report on the demonstration, *Hatzofe*, 16 October, 2000; "The IDF is in a Cage," *Hatzofe*, 24 November, 2000. [Both in Hebrew]

⁶⁹ "Thousands Shouted: 'Let the Army Win'," *Hatzofe*, 23 November, 2000. [Hebrew]

the Palestinians took on various forms—most strikingly, the use of firearms to suppress mass demonstrations. In a press conference held on November 15, 2000, Colonel Daniel Reisner, from the IDF's international law department, provided illuminating data about the disturbances in the Territories. To date, he said, there had been 1,351 shooting attacks on Israeli targets and 3,734 attacks without the use of firearms.⁷⁰ So it is clear, even from the IDF's statistics, that 73 percent of the violent events in the initial phase of the Intifada did not involve shooting by the Palestinians. Nevertheless, these events produced most of the Palestinian dead and wounded. In the first three months of the Intifada, until the end of December 2000, 272 Palestinians were shot and killed by soldiers and 10,603 were wounded.⁷¹ The casualty rate on the Israeli side was far lower: 37 Israelis were killed—18 civilians and 19 members of the security forces. Inside Israel, only four civilians were killed by Palestinians.⁷²

The figures showed clearly that Arafat did not plan a war against Israel as the spokespersons of the militaristic-religious society persistently claimed. Otherwise, the number of Israeli casualties would have been far higher. After all, the settlers were spread out thinly throughout the area, and in the first period of the Intifada they drove freely on the roads. If Arafat's men wanted to hurt them, they could easily find a way to do so, as they did later on. The figures however also showed the influence of the settlers and the uncivil society upon reality in a way that reflect that the idea that stands behind new wars; unlike the conventional wars of the past, the question here is not to solve problems by winning a war, but to reconstruct the dividing line between the combatant sides, and to emphasise the cultural differences between them, based on ethnic, ethno-national or religious lines, divisions which were blurred in the Israeli case in the Oslo era.

Gradually, the IDF turned the conflict situation into a real war. A new war which included strict punitive measures against civilians, including arbitrary killings and arrests, humiliations, collective punishments, destruction of infrastructure, demolition of houses, untagged massive shootings, as well as 'targeted assassinations' that brought death to many

⁷⁰ Press Briefing by Colonel Daniel Reisner, Head of the International Law Branch of the IDF Legal Division, Jerusalem, November 15, 2000 available at <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2000/Pages/Press%20Briefing%20by%20Colonel%20Daniel%20Reisner-%20Head%20of.aspx>, accessed 30 October 2017.

⁷¹ B'tzelem data: <http://www.btselem.org/statistics> accessed 30 October 2017. The Palestinian Red Crescent reports 264 casualties during this period. Some of them, though a small part, were killed by Palestinians.

⁷² <http://www.btselem.org/hebrew/node/42968>, accessed 30 October 2017.

innocent civilians who were unlucky enough to be near the wanted persons. While, formally, its main purpose was to suppress the uprising, from an institutional perspective, the massive human rights violations, often against those who were not involved in fighting, served as a means to avoid any possible peace with the Palestinians, the price of which would be two states with an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Territories.

Far from making the army an instrument to resolve the conflict, the IDF served as a means to exacerbate it. After almost every Palestinian attack, the IDF responded with far greater force, thus creating the incentive for the next act of violence in a seemingly endless cycle of devastation and death. The war lasted about five years, and the new wars that followed had the same characteristics and brought again to civilian casualties as we presented the figures at the beginning of this manuscript. Unlike the typical conventional, Clausewitzian wars that had clear goals which so many times were achieved through victory, the purposes of the new wars are less likely to be clearly defined. Usually, the new wars are marked neither by a desire to conquer enemy territory nor by the goal of appropriating the adversary's material resources. Instead, the goal is to mark and remark ethnic, national, and religious boundaries, to substantiate relations on the basis of superiority and inferiority through war, and to reconstruct the boundaries between the two sides even through violent means. No wonder most of the Israeli public fully supported these military operations and new wars, even though, these wars bring to nothing in terms of the need to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As for the recurring questions about the causes of the war and the war's defined goals, these were never clearly and directly raised. In fact, neither the political nor the military leadership had to provide answers to them, it is the Israeli uncivil society that gives the answer.

Conclusions

The distinction between the civil society and the uncivil society, which has its roots in the Enlightenment philosophy appears as two opposing social and political representations throughout European history. I tried to demonstrate how such cleavage is relevant to post hegemonic Israel. Moreover, to exemplify the way the Israeli division between the civil and the uncivil, the lack of a strong, genuine civil society in Israel, and the existence of a unified, highly organised, militant uncivil society, were the reasons for the failure to achieve peace with the Palestinians and avoid war. It had an influence on the failure of the Oslo Agreements and on the emergence of a new kind of conflict called 'new wars.'

The Israeli case exemplifies the importance of society, both civil and uncivil, in national and even international politics. It demonstrates not only the weakness of the modernist project in its liberal version but also how this feebleness invites objections that challenge the universal values of the Enlightenment and emphasises mainly that which separates people from one another, and bring to conflicts based on ethnic, national, or religious perceptions of reality. In fact, we tried to show how new wars in the global, post-Cold War era of reflexive modernisation are meant to disseminate the new idea that ethnic, ethno-national, and religious differences are not to be minimised along the banner of modernisation. Their main 'task' is to present these differences between human beings as unbridgeable and irreconcilable. In this regard, new wars are meant not to solve problems but to contain and even eternalise them. Interestingly, behind this idea stands not only states' elites, political leaders or army generals, but society at large, or at least substantial segments of it.

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CHAPTER NINE

RECOGNISING (IN)JUSTICE: POLICIES AND IDENTITIES IN BEER SHEVA

OREN YIFTACHEL

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF RAVIT GOLDBABER
AND ROY NURIEL

What we ask from you is simple: just observe the law; if you do this, everybody will benefit: you will have well planned, serviced and recognised towns, and we will safeguard the last tracts of vacant land for the Jewish People around the world, and particularly for those who stayed for the time being in the ex-Soviet Union, for a possible day of crisis.

—Ze'ev Boym, *Minister for Housing*, Beer Sheva, 14 June 2006

The context is the unresolved land and planning disputes between the Bedouin Arabs surrounding the city of Beer Sheva and the Israeli state. The minister asks the indigenous Bedouin in no uncertain terms to leave their ancestors' land, where they reside in 'unrecognized' (and in the eyes of most Israeli planners 'illegal') villages and towns, and relocate into modernized, legal, and well-serviced localities. Beyond the colonialist disregard of indigenous rights embedded in the minister's vision, he unwittingly exposed a dilemma about recognition—widely accepted as 'positive' in discussions about spatial justice. His comments invoked a type of recognition which works against, not for, group rights and social justice. At the same time, he extended privileged recognition to potential Jewish immigrants. This differentiation provides a puzzling aspect to our thinking about urban justice and group rights rarely addressed by planning theorists. Should we, can we, 'open up' the Pandora box of recognition?

This chapter explores the relations between recognition and justice. We analyse the treatment of various immigrant and indigenous groups by state and urban authorities, and highlight the manner in which various types of recognition guide urban policy. Our central argument takes issue with the

mainstream view of recognition as a necessarily positive element in the pursuit of urban justice. Instead, we view it as a multi-faceted socio-political process, ranging between positive affirmation, marginalising indifference and exclusive hostility, with a multitude of possibilities in between these poles. We argue that the 'gradients' of recognition are linked to significant changes in the urban fabric. Not only are they clearly associated with socioeconomic (class) stratification, but also with phenomena we identify as new 'urban colonialism,' 'creeping urban apartheid', and the formation of 'gray' (informal) spaces. We thus seek to advance the discussion on spatial justice, by 'opening up' the rubric of 'recognition'. We maintain that a more sophisticated and critical understanding of this concept is needed, and that recognition, or lack of, may enhance or harm social and spatial justice. Recognition should thus be viewed as a continuum, and governing bodies should be aware of the damaging possibilities of marginalising indifference or exclusive hostility, as much as the positive possibilities of affirmative recognition.

Following a theoretical discussion, a conceptual scheme is used to analyze the impact of planning on various groups in the Beer Sheva region. We trace the formulation of differential policy: affirmative recognition is extended to 'Russian' immigrants (denoting Russian-speakers hailing from the former USSR); 'marginalising indifference' is prevalent in the policies towards *mizrahim* (Jews arriving from the Middle East and their descendants); and hostile recognition is evident vis-à-vis most Arabs in the region. The claims of Palestinian refugees are totally absent from the planning discourse, while potential Jewish migrants, as noted in the minister's statement, cast a distant but ever-present shadow over the allocation of space in the region.

This chapter aims to rethink social justice under conditions of variegated recognition. We briefly suggest below the 'right to the city'¹ as a possible guiding principle for combining recognition and spatial justice, while avoiding the colonial pitfalls of planning for different types of recognition. This requires politicisation and specialisation of the abstract concept, and critical engagement with mainstream liberal literature on urban justice.

¹ The paper is based on a research project conducted in Beer Sheva during 2007-2008. We are grateful for the great assistance received from the BGU MA students for urban planning, and from the planning department of the Beer Sheva City Council. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Id., "Philosophy of the City and Planning Ideology," *Writings on Cities* (London: Blackwell, 1996), 97-101; Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford, 2003).

Planning, Justice and Difference

Until the 1970s the profession of planning was described as the redeemer of the industrial city by offering new social moral and professional zeal.² During the 1970s, the attention was drawn to the structural links between planning, economic structure, development capital, and neglected social needs.³ This critical analysis was the basis on which an urban justice literature began to emerge, in an attempt to rethink the links between space, development, power and planning.⁴ During the 1980s and 1990s, new claims for a just city began to appear. In the main, three related and partially overlapping perspectives informed these challenges: identity, feminism, and postmodernism.⁵ Other studies highlighted the close links between ethno-nationalism, religion, the state, and the making of cities and regions.⁶ This is particularly so in 'ethnocratic' regimes, which work to enhance the position of a dominant ethnic group, while actively marginalising minorities and peripheral ethno-classes.⁷ Other studies have

² Gordon Cherry, *Cities and Plans* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988); John Friedmann, *Prospects for Cities* (New York: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Berkeley: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

³ Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question* (London: Arnold, 1978); Cliff Hague, *The Development of Planning Thought* (London: Hutchinson, 1984); Patrick Troy, ed., *Equity in the City* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981); Blair Badcock, *Unfairly Structured Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); Peter Marcuse, "Housing Policy and the Myth of the Benevolent State," *Social Policy*, January/February (1978): 21-6.

⁴ David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (London: Arnold, 1973); Castells, *The Urban Question*.

⁵ Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990); Leonie Sandercock, *Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century* (New York: Continuum Press, 2003); Jane Jacobs, *Edge of Empire* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁶ Scott Bollens, *Urban Peace-Building in Divided Societies* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Id., *Cities, Nationalism, and Democratization* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2007); Oren Yiftachel, "State Policies, Land Control and an Ethnic Minority: the Arabs in the Galilee, Israel," *Society and Space*, 9 (1991): 329-62; Ghazi Falah, "Israelisation of Palestine Human Geography," *Progress in Human Geography*, 13 (1989): 535-50; Huw Thomas, "Race, Public Policy and Planning in Britain," *Planning Perspectives*, 10 (1995): 125-48.

⁷ Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Alexandre Kedar, "On the Legal Geography of Ethnocratic Settler States: Notes Towards a Research Agenda", in *Law and Geography Current Legal Issues*, eds. Jane Holder and Carolyn Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 401-42.

shown the centrality of race to urban structure, segregation and hence to notions of corrective justice and improved terms of collective coexistence.⁸ The main consequence of this discussion was the growing introduction of new categories and entities into the vocabulary and imagination of the 'just city' concept, most notably 'recognition,' 'diversity,' 'difference' and 'multiculturalism.'⁹

Recognition and Redistribution

Nancy Fraser's now classic essay¹⁰ reconceptualised much of the above discussion, by arguing that claims for justice can be organised on two major structural axes—distribution and recognition, which operate in constant interaction, but are not reducible to one another. Within each axis, she added, approaches to justice range between 'affirmative' and 'transformative' measures. Affirmative measures denote relatively cosmetic steps with a temporary effect on injustices, which tend to reproduce in the long-run the unequal capitalist/nationalist and male dominated settings. Transformative measures, on the other hand, have more profound effects, by challenging the social systems that produce the hierarchical order of classes, genders, 'races' and ethnic entities. Fraser's intervention and the debates that ensued¹¹ further entrenched recognition as a major category in the pursuit of social and urban justice.¹²

Fraser's work included a profound critique of mainstream liberalism and of the increasingly popular procedural approaches to social justice.¹³ Furthermore, she addressed the returning to structuralism, following a period in which Western theoretical debates were dominated by

⁸ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2006); Huw Thomas, "Race Equality and Planning," *The Planner* 79/3 (1993): 17-21; Leonie Sandercock, "Voices from the Borderlands: A Mediation of a Metaphor," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 14 (1995): 77-88.

⁹ Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25-73; Bell Hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1995); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: a Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Nancy Fraser, "Recognition or Redistribution? A Critical Reading of Iris Young's Justice and the Politics of Difference," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 3/2 (1995): 166-80.

¹¹ Iris M. Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹² Sandercock, *Mongrel Cities*.

¹³ Fraser, "Recognition or Redistribution?"

postmodernism and post-structuralism¹⁴ who focused on micro investigations of the communicative interaction of planners and their working environments and inspired by the Habermasian 'communicative action' as the key to just and effective deliberative planning, at the expense of more structural, material or critical approaches.¹⁵

As noted by Fainstein most of the theorists agreed that recognition of diversity must be included in any consideration of a just city.¹⁶ Yet, and this is our main theoretical point, it appears as if recognition was adopted somewhat uncritically. For most Western scholars, recognition became a catch-all phrase for an act of including minority or weakened groups, allowing them a voice in the policy process. Recognition was to be accepted as the liberal or civil right to be heard, to be counted and represented. Beyond a general support of inclusion and participation, we wish to advance three main lines of critique to this approach. First, recognition as a right presupposes a benign state and political setting and an operating constitutional democracy, where rights can be secured through an independent judiciary. As observed by Fainstein who draws on Nussbaum,¹⁷ rights alone are not enough, and should be supplemented by capabilities in order to progress towards a just city. Second, the emphasis and operationalisation of liberal recognition is chiefly procedural; that is, focusing on participation and inclusion, but paying little attention to the material, economic and concrete power aspects of planning recognition. There have been numerous accounts of this 'thin' type of recognition, that

¹⁴ Edward Soja, "Heterotopologies: A Remembrance of Other Spaces in the Citadel-LA," in *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, eds. Sophie Watson and Katharine Gibson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), 13-34; Michael Dear and Steven Flusty "Postmodern Urbanism," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 88/1 (1998): 50-72; Michael Dear and Steven Flusty, eds., *The Spaces of Postmodernity: Readings in Human Geography* (London: Blackwell, 2002); Margo Huxley and Oren Yiftachel, "New Paradigm of Old Myopia? Unsettling the Communicative Turn in Planning Theory," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 19/4 (2000): 333-42.

¹⁵ John Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Patsy Healey, *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies* (London: Macmillan, 1997); Judith Innes, "Planning Theory's Emerging Paradigm: Communicative Action and Interactive Practice," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 14/3 (1995): 183-91.

¹⁶ Susan Fainstein, *The Just City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Beyond the Social Contract: Capabilities and Global Justice* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

often neglects and is therefore blind to material inequalities and oppressions.¹⁸

Third, and most importantly, liberal multicultural recognition tends to overlook the possibility that the marking of distinct groups may also harbor a range of negative consequences, beyond the neglect implied by the previous point. As shown by various studies dealing with minorities, recognition may lead to a process of othering, and bear distinctively unjust material and political consequences.¹⁹ This negative potential often surfaces in situations of ethnic, national, religious or racial conflict, where dominant groups are keen to reinforce the difference of weakened groups in order to perpetuate their disempowerment.²⁰

Urban Neo-Colonialism

The main point behind the need to re-conceptualise recognition is the growing evidence of emerging urban neo-colonial relations, which put in motion a pervasive process we define as ‘creeping apartheid’ and the widespread emergence of ‘gray’ (informal) space as part of today’s urbanity. Urban colonialism sees dominant elites, whose privilege draws upon their identity, class and location utilize the contemporary city to advance three main dimensions of colonial relations. These dimensions are 1) Expansion (of material or power position) 2) Exploitation (of labor and/or resources), and 3) Segregation (construction of hierarchical and essentialised difference).

To be sure, these dimensions operate today in geopolitical conditions very different from classical European colonialism. Most strikingly, the global European conquest and settlement is now reversed, with a flow of disenfranchised, often status-less immigrants and indigenous peoples into the world’s major cities. The economic power of the urban elites, and the weakness and deep difference of immigrants (whether from rural regions or overseas), create patterns of ethno-class segregation and economic

¹⁸ Peter Marcuse, “Identity, Territoriality and Power,” *Hagar: International Social Science Review* 1/1 (2000): 128-43.

¹⁹ Ranabir Samaddar, *The Politics of Autonomy: Indian Experiences* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005).

²⁰ Richard Howitt, “Recognition, Respect and Reconciliation: Steps towards Decolonisation?,” *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 16/2 (1998): 3-16; Vanessa Watson, “Deep Difference: Diversity, Planning and Ethnics,” *Planning Theory* 5/1 (2006): 31-50.

disparities which often resemble the traditional colonial city.²¹ This urban order is most prevalent in liberalising ethnocratic states, which structurally privilege particular identities, while marginalising minorities through both identity and economic regimes.²²

These colonial-type urban relations are linked to the condition we term 'creeping apartheid' in which groups enjoy vastly differing packages of rights and capabilities under the same urban regime, drawing on their class, identity and place of residence. The order is 'creeping' because it is never declared, and is only partially institutionalised. Profound discrimination and inequality are based on both de-jure and de-facto mechanisms, which are commonly identified as temporary. One of the most conspicuous temporary phenomena is the emergence of 'gray' spaces, composed of informal, often illegal, development and populations. Most typically, indigenous and immigrant minorities, squeezed between the various state and identity regulatory mechanisms, occupy and develop these gray spaces into a major component of today's metropolis, thereby augmenting the entrenchment of 'creeping apartheid.'²³ Hence, despite its putative temporariness, this exploitive and uneven urban order has been intensifying for decades, and the population of disenfranchised urban residents and workers has grown significantly, often into the millions.²⁴ A

²¹ Nihal Al Sayyad, "Culture, Identity and Urbanism in a Changing World: a Historical Perspective on Colonialism, Nationalism and Globalization," in *Preparing for the Urban Future: Global Pressures and Local Forces*, eds. Michael Cohen, Blair Ruble, Joseph Tulchin and Allison Garland (Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996), 106-33.

²² Hubert Law-Yone and R. Kalus, "The Dynamics of Ethnic Spatial Segregation in Israel," *The Power of Planning: Spaces of Control and Transformations*, ed. Oren Yiftachel (The Hague: Kluwer Academic, 2001): 171-89; Eretz Tzfadia, "New Settlements in Metropolitan Beer Sheva: the Involvement of Settlement NGOs," in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, eds. Yehudah Gradus and Esther Meir-Glitzenstein (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press, 2008): 107-19 [Hebrew]; Ananya Roy, "The 21st Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory," *Regional Studies* 41 (2007): 159-79.

²³ Oren Yiftachel and Haim Yacobi, "Control, Resistance and Informality: Jews and Bedouin-Arabs in the Beer-Sheva Region," in *Urban Informality in the Era of Globalization: A Transnational Perspective*, eds. Nezar Al-Sayyad and Ananya Roy (Boulder: Lexington Books, 2004), 118-36.

²⁴ Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, (London: Verso, 2006); Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71/2 (2005): 147-58.

variety of urban colonial relations are recorded in the non-Western cities²⁵ and mainly in cities of the first world that are focal points of mass immigration and economic growth.²⁶ Most of these studies find that identity and class inequalities are frequently connected and that, consequently, recognition and distribution intertwine in claims of social and spatial justice. Yet, identity and class also present different bases for human organisation, which may undermine one another in the process of political mobilisation yet not reducible to one another.²⁷

Given the above, we claim that the rubric of identity, diversity, difference and the catch-all multiculturalism are often too vague and at times confused in the current urban literature. We offer a conceptual way forward by sketching a continuum of recognition types, with three main 'ideal types'-affirmative, indifferent and hostile. These can assist in a more systematic analysis of the interaction between policy and identity.

Affirmative recognition entails recognition of a group's identity with the associated cultural and material needs and aspirations; allocation of a fair share of power and resources. There are two main sub-types: proportional and privileged recognition, reflecting the group's power and importance in the policy arenas. Affirmative recognition often leads to the constitution of amicable multicultural relations and inter-group integration in the city, although it may cause some tension with marginalised minorities, who may object to the advantageous position of privileged groups.

Indifference means the passive existence of the distinct group in the policy process. It entails non-recognition of the group's specific identity and its associated needs and demands, with official acceptance of its members as formally equal members of the urban community. Indifference leads to implicit and covert types of group domination and discrimination, deriving from the inability of minorities to pinpoint their discrimination in the absence of clear categories about their existence as a group. This often

²⁵ Nihal Perera, "Indiginising the Colonial City: Late 19th-century Colombo and its Landscape," *Urban Studies* 39/9 (2002): 1703-21; Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: between Globalization and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2006).

²⁶ Marcuse, "Identity, Territoriality and Power"; Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Robinson, *Ordinary Cities*; Margo Huxley, "Geographies of governmentality," in *Space, Knowledge, Power: Foucault and Geography*, eds. Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden (London: Ashgate, 2007): 87-109; Watson, "Deep Difference: Diversity, Planning and Ethnicity"; Roy, "The 21st Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory."

prevents from setting legitimate collective goals. Sub-types include benign and marginalising indifference, the first being typical of liberal regimes where the promise of individual mobility tempers group grievances, while the latter typifies illiberal conditions, where group assimilation is coerced without strong commitment to civil rights. The consequences depend on specific geopolitical and economic conditions, although in general, conflict levels are relatively low. The main focus of urban politics revolves around class and place, while identity politics is nudged to the periphery of the policy process.

Hostile recognition means the acknowledgement of group identity in policy-making, with a concurrent framing of its demands in a range of negative images to the dominant perception of a good city. Hostile recognition constructs the group in question as a nuisance or threat. Subtypes vary between implicit and explicit hostility, which in turn fluctuates according to the nature of the groups in question. The consequences of hostile recognition also vary according to the group type, size and setting, but they commonly cause the emergence of ‘gray’ spaces of informal development, and generate a dynamic of antagonism and polarization. Levels of conflict are highest when national or religious minorities, with strong historical claims to the city, are subject to this type of policy.

Notably, the above categories, and those used later in the paper, provide an analytical grid which cannot capture the complexity of the policy-recognition nexus. We suggest here a conceptual map to help discern and organise the complex field, with full awareness that all categories are socially constructed and are never stable or complete. The application of each type of recognition depends on a range of historical and political factors negotiated and determined in a wide range of societal spheres and struggles. They also depend on the variegated nature of group identities, which vary in their depth and future goals, ranging between separation, autonomy, integration or assimilation. Within this context, it is vital to remember that spatial policy is not a mere reflector of political forces imported from the outside, but an important actor itself, which determines much of the way groups are treated in the public arena. While clearly set within an active political sphere, urban policy can assist in changing group position from marginalisation and hostility towards recognition and equality, and vice versa, as depicted in Figure 1.

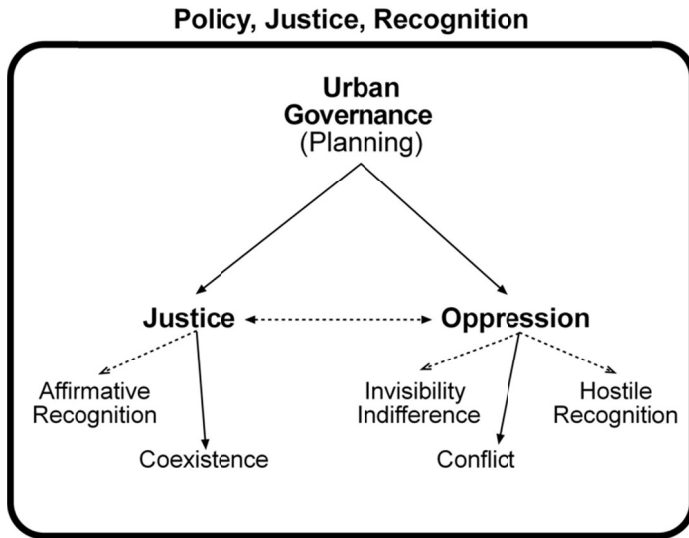


Figure 1

With this conceptual framework in mind, let us proceed to the planning of the Beer Sheva region, and examine the ability of this framework to shed light on the connection between planning, justice and the city.

Planning and Recognition(s) in Beer Sheva

Beer Sheva is the main urban center of the Negev/Naqab region accommodates a population of 186,000 in the city, and some 560,000 in the metropolitan area.²⁸ The modern city was rebuilt by the Ottoman Empire as an urban service and control center for surrounding Bedouin tribes, and continued this function during the British Mandate period, remaining a small and predominantly Arab town.²⁹ During the war in 1948-49, Beer Sheva was captured by Israel, which drove out about eighty percent of its Arab population to Gaza, Egypt, the West Bank and Jordan.

²⁸ BSCC (Beer Sheva City Council), Annual Report, 2006, (Beer Sheva: City Council, 2007).

²⁹ Nimrod Luz, "The Making of Modern Beer Sheva - an Imperial Ottoman Project," in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, eds. Yehudah Gradus and Esther Meir-Glitzenstein (Beer Sheva, Negev Center for Regional Development: Ben-Gurion University Press, 2008), 161-74 [Hebrew].

The 11,000 who remained were awarded Israeli citizenship, but concentrated in a special military controlled zone known as the *siyag* (“limit”) as depicted in Figure 2.

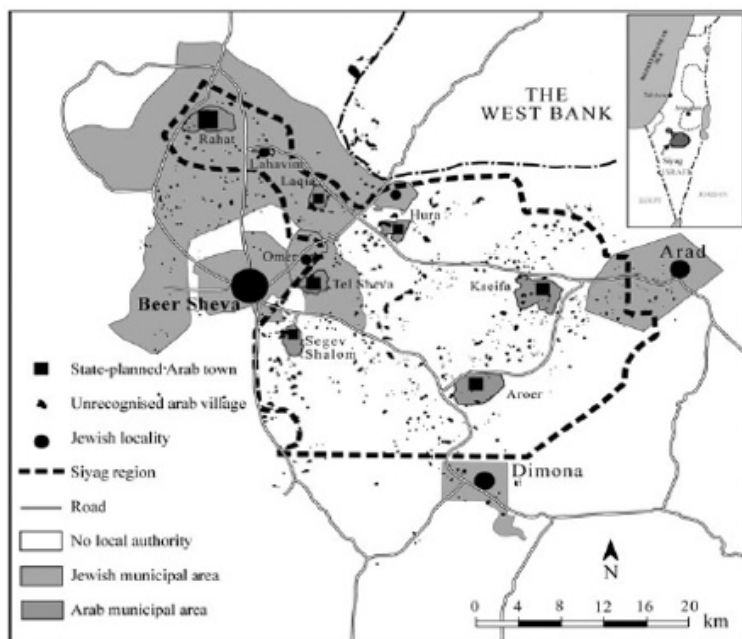


Figure 2

The ensuing decades saw the first wave of concerted Israeli effort to Judaize the previously Arab Naqab, using a combination of deeply ethnocentric land, development, housing, and planning policies. Israel nationalized nearly all Bedouin land (leaving about fifteen percent of the region still under legal dispute), built eight new Jewish towns and some 105 rural Jewish settlements.³⁰ Masses of Jewish refugees and immigrants—mainly *mizrahim* (“Eastern Jews”) fleeing a hostile Arab world—were housed in large public housing estates, portrayed in the state

³⁰ Avinoam Meir, “Negev Bedouins, Globalization and Planning and Metropolitan Beer Sheva,” in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, eds. Yehudah Gradus and Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, 81-106 [Hebrew]; Kedar, “On the Legal Geography of Ethnocentric Settler States: Notes Towards a Research Agenda.”

planning discourses as the national frontier.³¹ In a few short years, however, the frontier, including Beer Sheva, turned into a marginalised periphery, in what was termed the ‘frontiphery’ process.³² Subsequently, the Beer Sheva region became characterised by social and economic under-development, mediocre levels of education and health, and a stigma deriving from its *mizrahi* character.³³ This was most conspicuous in the development towns—Israel’s version of new town policy aimed at housing immigrants and creating new urban communities.

Eight such towns were built in the Beer Sheva region during the implementation of one of Israel’s most ambitious planning projects. The towns housed large numbers of *mizrahim* during the 1950s and 1960s, creating what Gradus and Stern called a southern “regiopolis.”³⁴ Small groups of immigrants continued to arrive during the 1970s and 1980s, mainly from the Soviet Union, South and North America, and France, although they did not significantly alter the region’s *mizrahi* character.

In the 1990s a mass influx of Russian-speaking immigrants arrived from the former Soviet Union (hereafter Russians), and some groups of Ethiopians. The city of Beer Sheva, welcomed the new influx, which facilitated large scale development to accommodate the new housing demand, and a new planning and public discourse of a globalising city.³⁵ This demand used the vast reserves of low value state land, relaxed planning controls, and generous state incentives for large-scale housing developments.³⁶ In 2007 the city population was composed of *mizrahim*

³¹ Law-Yone and R. Kalus, “The Dynamics of Ethnic Spatial Segregation in Israel.”

³² Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

³³ Eitan Cohen, *Beer Sheva—the Fourth City* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2006); Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, “Zionist and Arab-Jewish Identity in the Collective Memory of Iraqi Jews in Israel,” *Alpayim*, 27 (2004): 44-70 [Hebrew].

³⁴ Yehudah Gradus and Eliahu Stern, “Changing Strategies of Development: Toward a Regiopolis in the Negev Desert,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 46 (1980): 410-23.

³⁵ Yehudah Gradus, “The Beer Sheva Metropolis: Polarized Multicultural Urban Space in the Era of Globalization”, in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, eds. Yehuda Gradus and Esther Meir-Glitzenstein (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press, 2008), 81-106 [Hebrew]; Fran Markovitz and Natan Urieli “Consumerism and Global/Local Identity in the Negev: the ‘BIG’ Center and Beer Sheva’s Old City,” in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, 212-28 [Hebrew].

³⁶ Hadas Shadar, “Ideologies in the Planning of Beer Sheva,” in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, 175-99 [Hebrew]; Eretz Tzfadia and Haim Yacobi,

(41%), Russians (31%), *ashkenazim* (8%), Ethiopians (4%) and Arabs (3%), and six other small groups. In the wider metropolitan region, *mizrahim* also constitute the largest group (29%), while Russians (24%) and Bedouin-Arabs (27%) also hold substantial proportions. The other groups are all smaller than four percent.³⁷

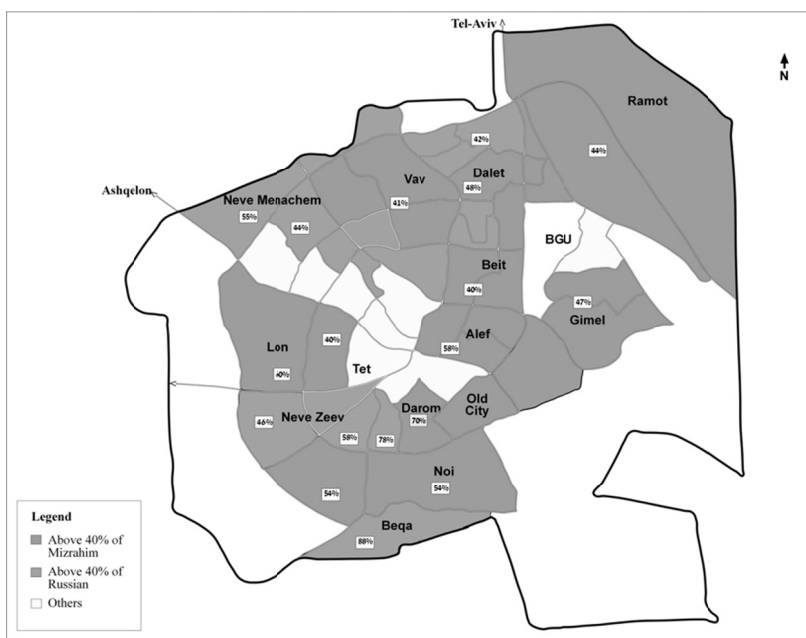


Figure 3

Approach

For this project, we have attempted to analyse the overall impact of spatial policies on the main cultural groups in the Beer Sheva metropolitan region. To this end, we analysed the plans affecting city and region, which include: the 1952 national outline plan (TAMA 1); the 1978 southern

“Identity, Migration, and the City: Russian Immigrants in Contested Urban Space in Israel,” *Urban Geography* 28/5 (2007): 436-55.

³⁷ NCRD (Negev Center for Regional Development), *Distribution of Ethnicities in Beer Sheva city and Metropolis, select data from Israel Bureau of Statistics 2006* (Beer Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development, 2007).

district plan (Plan 4/1); the 1991 national plan (TAMA 31); the 1996 development plan for Beer Sheva (non-statutory); the 1998 metropolitan plan for Beer Sheva region (Plan 4-14); the 2005 national plan (TAMA 35); the 2007 metropolitan plan (Amendment Plan 4-14-23); and supporting urban housing, land and cultural policies of the Beer Sheva City Council. These plans were developed by the ministries of Housing, Interior and Infrastructure, and the Israel Land Authority, and have been only partially successful,³⁸ and Beer Sheva remained a peripheral urban region in terms of its economic, political or cultural standing within Israeli/Palestinian space.

During this period of debate over the region, Israel implemented an urbanisation planning strategy for the region's Bedouin Arabs. This has involved an attempt to concentrate the Bedouins into seven modern towns surrounding, but not part of, Jewish Beer Sheva (see Figure 2). This policy relocated about half the Arabs of the south (some 85,000 in 2007) and mainly those with no land claims, through the lure of modern infrastructure and prospects of modernisation. However, despite some development, the towns became known for their marginality, unemployment, deprivation and crime.³⁹ The remaining Bedouins, estimated at 80-90,000, have steadfastly stayed on their disputed land in some 45 unrecognised (shanty) towns and villages (Figure 2). A protracted land dispute over this 'gray' space has persisted for decades.

The combination of these plans and policies, and the accompanying discourses, regulations, and development initiatives are the subject of our analysis. We focus mainly on local and district plans, and pay special attention to the implications of these plans for the region's main ethnic communities—Russian, *mizrahi* and Arab. We gain further insights by conducting a series of interviews with six key policy makers in the region, as well as eleven in-depth interviews with members of the communities in question.

³⁸ Yehudah Gradus, "Beer-Sheva - Capital of the Negev Desert", in *Planning and Housing in Israel in the Wake of Rapid Changes*, eds. Yehudah Golani, S. Eldor and M. Garon (Jerusalem: The Ministry of the Interior, 1993), 251-65.

³⁹ Oren Yiftachel, "Territory as the Kernel of the Nation: Space, Time and Nationalism in Israel/Palestine," *Geopolitics* 7/3 (2002): 215-48.

Planning and Affirmative Recognition: 'Russian' Immigrants

Planning for immigrants from the former USSR in Beer Sheva has generally been marked by a benign attitude, premised on generous distribution and affirmative recognition, and couched within a long-term expectation of Russian integration into the Israeli-Jewish culture and society. The policy has been promoted jointly by an active state government, and by urban authorities interested in accommodating the immigrants.⁴⁰ The main thrust of the urban policy towards the Russians, as reflected in National Plan No. 31 and the various Beer Sheva development plans, was the provision of rapid housing, first temporary and then permanent.⁴¹ In parallel, the Israeli housing and planning systems thoroughly reorganised themselves and sped up the approval process, released previously protected agricultural land for urban development, and provided generous subsidies and incentives for both immigrants and developers. A level of 65% of home ownership was achieved in 2005, a mere ten to fifteen years after their mass arrival with meager financial or property resources.⁴²

The influx of over 40,000 Russian immigrants to Beer Sheva during the 1990s, and a corresponding period of rapid economic growth, spawned large scale new housing and office construction.⁴³ Initially, the mass arrival caused economic and social concerns, because the population was relatively old, and relied heavily on the city's welfare services. However, within a decade, the economic benefits to the city outweighed the social costs, as the combination of social benefits and human skills propelled large sections within the Russian communities into the city's middle classes.⁴⁴ City planning revisions created three large new neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city—Ramot, Nahal Ashan and Neve Ze'ev/Nahal

⁴⁰ Tzfadia and Yacobi, "Identity, Migration, and the City: Russian Immigrants in Contested Urban Space in Israel."

⁴¹ Gradus, "The Beer Sheva Metropolis: Polarized Multicultural Urban Space in the Era of Globalization."

⁴² Eretz Tzfadia, "'Trapped' Sense of Peripheral Place in Frontier Space", in *Constructing a Sense of Place-Architecture and the Zionist Discourse*, ed. Haim Yacobi (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 119-35.

⁴³ BSCC, Annual Report, 2006.

⁴⁴ Yehudah Gradus and Esther Meir-Glitzstein, "Introduction," in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, 5-13 [Hebrew]; Nelly Elias and Khvorostianov Natalia, "Not on Bread Alone: the Cultural Life of the Beer Sheva Russian Street", in *Beer Sheva: Metropolis in the Making*, 45-68 [Hebrew].

Beka (Figure 3). The latter two are characterised by their high percentage of Russians, and their predominance in shaping local landscape and institutions. With regard to culture, large parts of Beer Sheva's urban landscape have been 'Russified,' with signs, institutions and businesses catering to their growing demand for Russian products (especially food, drinks and sex)⁴⁵, supported, financially assisted and planned by the Beer Sheva authorities. This has also been reflected in Russian political organisation, which formed several local parties, created conspicuous levels of collective Russian political representation in City Hall and appointing Russian professionals.

It is important to frame that Russians are still expected by the majority of Israelis to integrate and eventually assimilate into the mainstream Jewish community. Israel has not adopted an open multicultural approach, and denies the right for separate Russian language education, or for separate legislation or institutions for autonomous governance. Partial Russian autonomy is created 'from below' by communities, markets, and local governments, and this cultural autonomy is thriving due to the population's overall development in accordance with the Zionist state and its Judaisation project termed elsewhere as "the ethnicization of Zionism."⁴⁶

Planning and (Marginalising) Indifference: the *mizrahim*

The backbone of Beer Sheva's population is made up of the *mizrahim* who arrived en-mass to the region during the 1950s and 1960s. The treatment of these migrants by urban authorities can be termed, 'marginalising indifference.' From the outset, the *mizrahim* were the 'stepchild' of Zionism mobilised to join the Jewish national movement after the horrific consequences of the Nazi Holocaust. As Zionist-Palestinian tensions rose, Arab regimes and Islamic societies became increasingly hostile to Middle Eastern Jewry causing mass exodus during the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁴⁷ Most of these Jews arrived in Israel and were housed by the State, first, in temporary camps, and later in mostly peripheral urban centers. Beer Sheva was one of the largest centers to accommodate *mizrahi*

⁴⁵ Ivi.

⁴⁶ Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*; Ian Lustick, "Israel as a Non-Arab State: the Political Implications of Mass Immigration of Non-Jews," *Middle East Journal* 53/3 (1999): 417-33.

⁴⁷ Moshe Behar, "Palestine, Arabized Jews and the Elusive Consequences of Jewish and Arab National Formations," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 13/4 (2007): 1353-71.

immigration, with the city population rising six-fold between 1950 and 1970.

But the type of recognition extended to the *mizrahim* was condescending and marginalising. Their inclusion into the Zionist project was premised on their Judaism, but at the same time on a denial of their Eastern and Arab cultural affiliation. The state attempted to re-build Jewish identity in the vision set by European secular elites. To that end, the masses of *mizrahim*, who became a majority among Israel's Jews in the mid 1950s, had to be westernised, secularised and de-Arabised.⁴⁸ In Beer Sheva, as noted, *mizrahim* quickly made a decisive majority, accounting for over seventy percent of the population. However, the city leadership remained predominantly *ashkenazi*. The *ashkenazi-mizrahi* tension marked much of the local political scene during the first three decades of the State, but no genuine *mizrahi* leadership could prevail at this time.

Over the years, only one *mizrahi* mayor was appointed during the 1970s and was considered as a soft *mizrahi*.⁴⁹ With the influx of Russian immigrants, the *mizrahi* 'threat' was blunted. The two long-serving mayors who followed (one is incumbent), came from the traditional *ashkenazi* elites, preventing city *mizrahi* communities from receiving open, public recognition.

Urban planning initiatives for the *mizrahi* immigrants involved dense, modernist, public housing developments, located in a dozen centrally planned garden city type neighborhoods across the city (Figure 3). During the last two decades, several new, low density, neighborhoods and three suburban satellite towns, have attracted most of Beer Sheva's (small) *ashkenazi* population and those *mizrahim* who moved into the middle classes. A degree of benign ethnic mixing began to occur in these localities, as it did in middle-class neighborhoods within the city limits. Large groups of *mizrahim* still remain in the inner city stigmatised neighborhoods. Their employment was predominantly in labor-intensive industries and low-medium-level public sector, as well as small traders and local businesses. This created a conspicuous overlap between their *mizrahi* ethnicity and working and lower middle-class position.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Yehudah Shenhav, *The Arab Jew: a Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ Meir-Glitzenstein, "Zionist and Arab-Jewish Identity in the Collective Memory of Iraqi Jews in Israel"; Eitan Cohen, *Beer Sheva—the Fourth City* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2006).

⁵⁰ Yossi Yonah and Yitzhaq Saporta, "Land and Housing Policy in Israel: the Discourse of Citizenship and Its Limits", in *Space, Land, Home*, ed. Yehudah Shenhav (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 2003), 129-52.

The organisation of *mizrahi* parties was constantly undermined by the state and city leadership, and portrayed as divisive and harmful to the Israeli state project.⁵¹ The local *mizrahi* majority attempted to form a political block on several occasions during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, but was continuously thwarted by the concerted campaign to delegitimise *mizrahi* divisive mobilisation.⁵²

The lack of political recognition was mirrored in the cultural sphere. *Mizrahi* culture was stigmatised in Israel and by implication in Beer Sheva during Israel's early decades. Most aspects of *mizrahi* identity—family, dress, language, music, dwelling and even religion, were silenced or ridiculed in the public discourse, education system, cinema and popular culture. Levantine became synonymous with primitive, leaving strong *mizrahi* localities like Beer Sheva in deep identity crisis. But this critical self-observation remains on the periphery of the public debate, and the marginalising indifference among the elites by and large continued until the late 1980s. During the last two decades, some change can be traced, termed earlier 'multiculturalism from below'. The more liberal attitudes of recent years have yielded a measure of cultural recognition, revolving around *mizrahi* holidays, music, food and cultural events, although these are more typically assigned to sub-groups (e.g. Moroccan or Yemenite) than to a general *mizrahi* identity. This liberalisation serves to further highlight the lack of political organisation, and *mizrahi* narrative in the urban public sphere.

Planning and Hostile Recognition: Bedouin Arabs

One central aspect of spatial policy in the Beer Sheva metropolitan region has been the hostile recognition extended to the region's Bedouin Arab community. A bitter land conflict has developed with the State, which has continuously denied the Bedouins indigenous land rights, and as a result declared them 'invaders' to their own historic localities. In an effort to force them to relocate, the State has refused to recognise their land claims, and has prevented the supply of most services, including roads, electricity,

⁵¹ Yoav Peled, *Shas: the Challenge of Israeliness* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2001) [Hebrew].

⁵² Eitan Cohen, *Beer Sheva—the Fourth City*; Meir-Glitzenstein, "Zionist and Arab-Jewish Identity in the Collective Memory of Iraqi Jews in Israel."

clinics and planning. House demolition campaigns are launched on a regular basis.⁵³

Levels of poverty, child mortality, and crime are the worst in Israel/Palestine, and create a metropolitan geography of stark ethno-class contrast with the well-serviced adjacent Jewish localities. The Beer Sheva metropolis has come to resemble many Third World cities that comprise a well developed modern urban core, and a range of peripheral informal localities, suffering severe poverty and deprivation. It is here that the process of urban colonialism and 'creeping apartheid' noted above, are most evident. Arab campaigns against deprivation have highlighted both equality and identity, focusing on the right to reasonable material conditions, as well as cultural preservation.⁵⁴ In recent years, religion has played an increasing part in Arab urban campaigns, especially around education and places of worship.

Bedouin Arab representation in urban and regional planning affairs has ranged between non-existent and negligible. Despite being the indigenous inhabitants of the region, and constituting nearly a third of its current population, Bedouin presence in planning bodies has been meager and random. During the last decade, for example, only two Bedouins have sat on the district planning council (each in turn being one amongst thirteen Jews in the council), and not even one Bedouin is represented on the Beer Sheva city council. Other planning bodies such as the Israel Land Authority, Ministry of Housing, Welfare and Education have occasionally included a single Arab member, but always in a position of distinct minority.

The combination of land, cultural, and material deprivations and a lack of representation, has bolstered antagonism towards the state and spurred the Bedouin Arabs to form their own institutions. The Regional Council for the Unrecognised Villages (RCUV) was formed in 1997 to combine the various localities surrounding Beer Sheva and present an alternative planning approach, based on full recognition of indigenous rights and equality. This form of "insurgent planning"⁵⁵ rallied a group of notable NGOs to support the new (unrecognised) council, and caused some change in the public discourse. It is no longer possible to ignore the Bedouins as mere 'invaders' or 'outsiders' to the metropolitan region, and their

⁵³ Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*; Avinoam Meir, "Bedouins, the Israeli state and insurgent planning: Globalization, localization or glocalization?" *Cities*, 22/3 (2005): 201-35.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

demands are heard continuously in the media and in administrative and professional circles.

The authorities have also been forced to recognise nine of the forty-five unrecognised villages, although no infrastructure such as running water, roads or permanent schools, have been allocated to these localities as yet. Insurgent indigenous planning practices and the prevailing attitude of hostile recognition has clashed in recent years to cause spiraling polarisation between Bedouins and authorities, with little progress towards resolving the conflict.⁵⁶

One such issue revolves around the renowned and architecturally significant Beer Sheva mosque, which was built by the Ottomans to serve the region's population. Despite constant Arab demands, the city refuses to open it for Muslim worship, with one powerful councilor of the ruling coalition, Eli Bokker claiming that "the region has dozens of mosques in Bedouin localities and towns, and Beer Sheva is now a Jewish city, with the right to protect this urban character."⁵⁷ As a result, the Mosque has been lying idle for decades, and was in an advanced state of architectural deterioration. Following a recent appeal by several NGOs, the Israeli High Court ruled in favor of opening the mosque for "Arab cultural uses." In light of the latest ruling, and under duress, the city renovated and reopened the building as Center for Muslim Culture. This compromise has not satisfied the Muslim community, but has worked to calm the conflict, which has moved to other controversial issues. Eli Bokker's statement is a reminder of the powerful narratives framing urban colonialism, and the resultant politics of denial, fear and hostile recognition as well as the process we termed 'creeping apartheid'.

Impact and Reflection

The foregoing shows that, indeed, groups are recognised in very different ways by the urban policy process. One clear question that arises from this is what is the long-term impact of such uneven recognition, although its systematic examination must await a different context. Yet, it is not difficult to intuitively associate negative types of recognition with socioeconomic marginalisation and political weakness. This is supported by a cursory look at the socioeconomic standing of urban communities in the Beer Sheva region. We can take, for example, the quality of life index

⁵⁶ Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*.

⁵⁷ *Sheva* (local newspaper), 9 May 2005; a similar statement was made by Bokker in *Kolbi* (another local paper), 8 May 1998.

of localities prepared by the Israel Bureau of Statistics which is based on a combination of socioeconomic characteristics.⁵⁸ In the 2005 survey, the typical Russian neighborhood of Neve Ze'ev received a score of twelve (in a 1-20 range), while a decade earlier it received only a score of eight. Another concentration of Russians, Nahal Ashan, received the score of nine against six a decade earlier. In typical *mizrahi* neighborhoods such as Schuna Gimmel, and Schuna Tet, the scores remained quite the same during the years: eight in 2006 and nine in 1995, and thirteen in both years respectively. The Bedouin Arab localities surrounding Beer Sheva, Tel Sheva and Laqiyya scored three and four, respectively in 2005, and two and three a decade earlier. These scores indicate the significant improvement of localities identified with Russians, as opposed to the stagnation characterising localities with *mizrahi* and Arab majorities. They also highlight notable differences within each cultural group, indicating that other forces are at work in the stratification process. Needless to say, the link between recognition and development requires a more in-depth investigation. This cursory look confirms however the importance of considering the specific type of recognition as a key element in theorising justice and oppression in the city.

Our understanding of spatial justice has indeed been complicated in recent years with the introduction of recognition as a major philosophical axis for justice claims, and by the mobilisation of politics of identity. Recognition claims interact in complex ways with the well-established call for fair distribution of material and political resources and fairness in decision-making processes. The nature of this interaction is further complicated by our main argument in this paper, namely that recognition has to be studied critically, and that it may work for or against, the group in question.

Clearly, the questions raised in this paper present a major challenge to the justice literature, and need to be explored further—theoretically and empirically. The need for this investigation is reinforced in the rapidly changing urban world, where diversity, hierarchy, and identity politics are re-written within a globalising economy, and within new regimes of uneven citizenship. We plan to continue the current exploration both comparatively, between various types of ethnically divided cities, and theoretically, engaging new debates over spatial justice which emerge from changing urban and political environments.

⁵⁸ Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, *Quality of Life Index* 2005 (Jerusalem: CBS, 2006).

A promising, if understudied, way forward may be found in the further development of the Lefebvrian notion of ‘the right to the city.’ As Fainstein⁵⁹ notes, Lefebvre’s work is lacking in specific details on the precise nature and applicability of this right. And this abstraction allows us to inject new meanings to the main features: centrality and difference of Lefebvre’s framework, reflecting a need to extend benign forms of recognition to all groups residing in the city. In such settings, urban colonialism and ‘creeping apartheid’ may be transformed into new forms of urban federalism based on equality, autonomy and redistribution.

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PART II –
TESTIMONIES

LE DIASPORE, I RACCORDI

GIAMPIERO BELLINGERI

Delle collaborazioni con Emanuela, e con la sua “squadra,” non posso certo lamentarmi, nel mio piccolo. Parlerei quasi di alcune minime pieghe, mie, rientranti in un gran ventaglio, e di un perno, o cardine, impiantati a collocare quelle iniziative nell’azione di Emanuela Trevisan, dedicata a incalzare e arricchire le offerte di Ca’ Foscari: si pensi alla invenzione e organizzazione di incontri sui paesi mediterranei. Paesi di volta in volta accostati, più che affrontati o raffrontati, a delineare le coste e gli entroterra (nelle realtà, nelle metafore; ma anche nella consapevolezza di stare sempre parlando in un contesto di “terre fra le terre,” alla lettera), nell’ambito di *Merifor – Mediterraneo, Ricerca e Formazione*.

Appuntamenti periodici, quelli, opportunamente articolati e innestati sul fertile, produttivo, di respiro davvero europeo, Master MIM (ora corso di laurea), collaudato, rilanciato, flessibile, fiero della propria storia, dove una delle colonne portanti era, dalla sua fondazione, e resta tuttora, Emanuela. Dato il prestigio indiscusso di quel Master, in evoluzione costante, rischierei di illudermi, smarrito in una lievitazione immaginaria della qualità di queste mie righe, e di quelle mie vecchie considerazioni, esposte “in classe,” nell’aula “concessa” a suon di turni e istanze logistiche. Scambi di idee con trenta ragazzi, dalle diverse provenienze, iscritti appunto a quell’organico sistema di corsi, modulati, qualificanti, formativi, così per loro, come per i docenti, nonché per un avventizio del par mio, esposto almeno agli echi di nomi e contributi, alle loro voci. Con il guadagno culturale garantito dalla frequentazione di colleghe e colleghi, locali e stranieri, preparati, e amici. Si provi solo a pensare al lavoro logorante, burocratico e non solo, sotteso agli accordi stabiliti tra gli atenei coinvolti (Barcellona, Meknès, Montpellier, Venezia); all’inventiva, plastica, modellizzante, scientifica, aggiornata per metodi e finalità, plasmata sugli apporti assidui dei colleghi delle diverse discipline. Materie intrecciate, a filtrare, mettere a fuoco, proiettare una visione in movimento delle gravi problematiche impellenti, delle lingue, dei linguaggi, degli ambiti, in mezzo ai giovani incamminati verso ulteriori approfondimenti. Si aggiungano i corsi di dialetti arabi, di letterature, di traduzione e critica, con le presentazioni di libri freschi di stampa e caldi, attuali per contenuto

e tema, pubblicati non di rado dagli stessi docenti impegnati nel MIM: lo diremmo un fervore degno di un arsenale dove si forgiavano idee e iniziative, capaci di tenere desta la ragione, animando le discussioni, le maniere di confrontarsi.

Già da questi segni ci è dato di comprendere l'interesse di chi sta scrivendo qui per il pendolo di quei programmi, svolti, a ogni edizione (itinerante, nomadica quanto i pensieri, le ricerche, a scandire le stagioni e i "climi" culturali delle geopolitiche), oscillante fra l'Oceano, l'Atlante, la laguna. È qui, in laguna, che l'importanza educativa da me, modestamente, attribuita, ma confortata dall'unanime riconoscimento accordato al MIM, viene ancora attratta nella sfera più familiare delle nostre quotidiane esistenze, dei partecipanti e delle società da loro rappresentate o interpretate. In queste intonazioni-cedevoli, va ammesso, alle stonature retoriche degli apprezzamenti comunque sentiti-non potrei dimenticarmi di accennare anche a quegli aspetti affettivi scaturiti dagli incontri di studio e in convivio. Nel ricordo bello di serate e inviti a cena, a casa di Emanuela. Così schiva, la Maestra, pacata, e così capace di accogliere, sorridere, fino a ridere di gusto.

Grazie, Emanuela, per le spinte intellettuali, impresse, regalate anche a me. Vorrei interpretarle come cariche di una sottile e avvolgente tensione al raccordo delle tue studiate, amate, sofferte diaspore. Buon proseguimento, Emanuela cara, sulle tracce da te stessa lasciate, a beneficio di coloro che sanno e sentono, con il peso, l'onore e il prestigio di tanta responsabilità.

Giampiero Bellingeri, *Università Ca' Foscari Venezia*

AD UN' AMICA CARISSIMA

ELISA BIANCHI

Carissima Emanuela,

rimane vivo in me come fosse oggi il ricordo del nostro primo incontro. Era la solita Venezia avvolta nella nebbia, forse autunno o forse inverno, faceva freddo ed io mi sentivo un po' spaesata in mezzo a persone da poco conosciute. Si stava svolgendo uno dei primi convegni della SOSTEJE, la *Society for the Study of Ethiopian Jewry*, sotto la tua supervisione, e mi avevi invitato a partecipare perché incominciavo ad appassionarmi all'argomento. Sono stati infatti proprio gli ebrei etiopi ad avvicinarci ormai nell'altro secolo. Mi misi a leggere i tuoi libri, nel tempo ne ho scritti anch'io sull'argomento, e in parallelo a un grande rispetto scientifico da parte mia, si è sviluppata anche la nostra amicizia. La scienza ci ha così avvicinato e anche sul terreno a volte periglioso dell'amicizia hai dimostrato le doti di comprensione, intelligenza, di ascolto che metti nel tuo lavoro.

Le occasioni per vederci in Italia e fuori hanno seguito i nostri interessi di ricerca. Israele, Parigi, Milano o lo Yemen sulle tracce di Joseph Halévy, tanto per ricordare alcuni luoghi, sono stati spazi di scambio culturale ma non solo; accanto a questi luoghi nei miei ricordi ci sono luoghi più intimi, i soggiorni a casa tua a Venezia, da me a Volterra assieme a Monica, a Parigi nelle nostre piccole abitazioni così vicine, incontri avvenuti per amicizia ma che mi hanno sempre aperto nuovi orizzonti perché da te si apprende sempre. Le nostre vite si sono a poco a poco raccontate reciprocamente; io ho tratto conforto da te nei miei momenti difficili e spero anche tu abbia inteso la mia vicinanza nei tuoi momenti di difficoltà. Il conoscerti meglio mi ha fatto capire come tu sia una donna di grande coraggio e che il tuo valore è pari nella vita e nella ricerca. Il tuo lato profondamente umano l'ho scoperto nei sentimenti di amore e dedizione verso i tuoi cari e nell'affetto che nutri verso gli amici comuni, alcuni purtroppo scomparsi, e penso a Ottavia soprattutto. Anche in questo caso l'amicizia era imprescindibile dallo scambio di conoscenze, come se affetto e scienza andassero sempre a pari passo.

Nulla di tutto ciò è cambiato nel tempo presente. Discorrere con te è sempre una gioia. Si tratti di un libro da condividere, di una mostra da visitare, di un viaggio da intraprendere, ogni volta l'orizzonte si allarga un po' di più. Se dovessi indicare una tua qualità, direi la curiosità; curiosità verso tutto ciò che fa parte della vita, non solo verso la scienza in senso alto, ma per i tuoi piatti che prendono spunto dalle più svariate cucine, il gusto per l'artigianato, la tua casa piena di ricordi di viaggi in paesi lontani, oltre l'amore verso la musica e verso l'arte. Ti ammiro per questa tua curiosità che spazia così tanto e in cui si distinguono profondità e il gusto di sapere.

Non credo che avverrà mai nella tua vita, nemmeno in un futuro lontano, che smetterai di guardare il mondo con questa voglia di apprendere e capire, perché tu sei così. Ed è per questo motivo che mi sento orgogliosa di essere tua amica, e spero che il nostro percorso possa continuare su strade vicine.

Elisa Bianchi, *Università Statale di Milano*

L'ALTRO MEDITERRANEO DI EMANUELA

ROSA CAROLI AND ANTONIO TRAMPUS

C'è un altro Mediterraneo, o quanto meno un suo altro volto, nell'orizzonte di Emanuela degli anni Duemila, e questo è il Mediterraneo delle relazioni internazionali. La Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere era ancora unita e crogiolo di originali scambi culturali quando incominciò a prendere forma la possibilità di costruire una laurea magistrale in Relazioni Internazionali Compareate, sulla scia della riforma detta del 3+2 (la legge 30/2000). L'idea era quella di coniugare lo studio delle relazioni internazionali non solo alle discipline giuridiche ed economiche, ma anche a quello delle culture e delle lingue di riferimento, con l'obiettivo di fornire alle giovani generazioni una nuova ottica delle relazioni internazionali come fenomeno culturale da analizzare in una prospettiva comparata e, dunque, di suggerire una rinnovata strategia per la diplomazia e la cooperazione tra diversi Paesi e aree del mondo. Non si trattava di un'idea semplice da realizzare ed occorrevano tutta la progettualità e l'esperienza di menti illuminate e lungimiranti.

Anche in questa occasione, Emanuela confermò sin dal primo momento la volontà di mettere a disposizione dell'ambizioso progetto la propria mente e il proprio cuore, con l'elegante determinazione e l'energia che l'hanno sempre contraddistinta. Dopo la prima e impegnativa fase dell'approvazione degli ordinamenti presso il Ministero e le commissioni CUN tra 2007 e 2008, si gettò a capofitto nella progettazione di iniziative volte a sostenere lo studio delle relazioni intermediterranee, presentando già alla fine del 2009 all'Ateneo un progetto per il reclutamento di un ricercatore su una ricerca dal tema "Storia e analisi politica del *peace camp* israelo-palestinese dagli anni Cinquanta a oggi," per mettere in connessione l'ampia rete di studi ebraici esistente in Europa e in Italia con il nascente percorso delle relazioni internazionali ed in particolare delle relazioni euro-mediterranee che andava formandosi a Ca' Foscari. Ancora, la sua collaborazione con l'ambito delle Relazioni Internazionali Compareate emergeva da un progetto di ricerca interdisciplinare presentato per l'approvazione in Ateneo nel 2010 e soprattutto dalla convergenza tra gli obiettivi formativi del Master MIM in Mediazione Intermediterranea e

quelli delle Relazioni Internazionali Comparete, che sempre a partire dal 2010 portò una gran parte degli studenti provenienti dal Master a completare la loro carriera nella laurea magistrale di Relazioni Internazionali Comparete.

Tra gli insegnamenti che Emanuela ha lasciato ai suoi colleghi e amici vi è certamente quello di non lasciarsi abbattere dalle avversità burocratiche e dalle difficoltà incontrate nella stessa Accademia. E' soprattutto a livello internazionale che sono giunti i maggiori riconoscimenti, anche in termini di finanziamenti, alle proposte che sempre con grande impegno di energie ha concepito nel corso degli anni. Il più significativo e il più prestigioso nell'ambito delle relazioni internazionali è stato indubbiamente il programma EU-MeS *The Euro-Mediterranean Region: Sustainability between people and politics*, radicato nella laurea magistrale di Relazioni Internazionali Comparete e finanziato dalla Commissione Europea a partire dal 2011 come Erasmus LLP. Un grandioso progetto destinato a studenti delle università di Venezia, Poitiers, Montpellier, Barcellona, Londra (SOAS) per la creazione di moduli comuni di insegnamento e per la mobilità internazionale degli studenti, con il coinvolgimento dell'università di Meknès in Marocco. Legati a questo progetto, e come sua prosecuzione, sono stati poi i suoi corsi—sempre apprezzatissimi dagli studenti—di Sociologia dell'emigrazione nel Mediterraneo, i numerosi cicli di conferenze e seminari, i soggiorni all'estero degli studenti di Relazioni Internazionali, in Marocco e in altri paesi dell'Africa Mediterranea.

C'è un altro motivo per cui Ca' Foscari e lo studio delle Relazioni Internazionali al suo interno devono essere grate ad Emanuela ed è la progettazione e la nascita della School of International Relations, altra sfida nella quale si fece coinvolgere contribuendo con il suo equilibrio e le sue qualità di amministratrice quale componente della Giunta e direttrice del master MIM. Voluta fortemente anche come progetto pilota per la creazione di altre Scuole di Ateneo, la *School of International Relations*—istituita a cavallo tra 2010 e 2011—riuscì a dare visibilità a livello nazionale e internazionale alle attività che si andavano organizzando nell'ambito delle relazioni internazionali in un Ateneo che aveva tradizioni di ricerca e didattica di tipo linguistico ed economico ma non nell'ambito delle scienze politiche. I laureati usciti dalla School of International Relations, all'interno della quale Emanuela contribuiva a coordinare le attività della laurea magistrale con quelle del Master MIM, e la ricca serie di iniziative, lectures, conferenze, seminari e convegni promossi negli anni, hanno consentito di diffondere ulteriormente il nome e il prestigio di Ca' Foscari nel mondo. Quando poi nel 2016 la Scuola venne soppressa, la sua attività

frutto anche dell'impegno di Emanuela rimaneva documentata da centinaia di citazioni nella letteratura specializzata e da quasi 4000 *followers* nella pagina ufficiale nei social media.

Anche agli studenti di relazioni internazionali di Ca' Foscari, dunque, Emanuela ha trasmesso la sua capacità di varcare le frontiere nazionali e i confini disciplinari per percorrere le vie di una conoscenza trasversale della complessa realtà del passato e del presente. In un suo saggio su *Antiche e nuove diaspore nel Mediterraneo* apparso nel 2012 in un volume per molti versi emblematico, *Il Mediterraneo attuale tra storia e politica* curato da Ennio Di Nolfo e Matteo Gerlini, Emanuela si soffermava sulle reti familiari e comunitarie che si caratterizzarono all'interno dello spazio mediterraneo, in quanto portatrici di un linguaggio particolare, quello del capitale sociale, "contraddistinto dalla possibilità di reciprocità e solidarietà."¹ E' questo stesso capitale, di reciprocità e di solidarietà unite alla sua profonda cultura, che Emanuela ha affidato alle Relazioni Internazionali a Venezia.

Rosa Caroli and Antonio Trampus, *Università Ca' Foscari Venezia*

¹ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, "Antiche e nuove diaspore nel Mediterraneo: ruoli possibili." In *Il Mediterraneo tra storia e politica*, ed. Ennio Di Nolfo and Matteo Gerlini (Venice: Marsilio, 2012), 38.

LA SERENISSIMA

ELENA CHITI

Per l'ignaro turista come per l'esperto di storia italiana, la Serenissima designa la Repubblica di Venezia. Solo l'esperto di storia cafoscarina sa che, prima di tutto, la Serenissima è lei: Emanuela, così soprannominata da almeno due generazioni di studenti. E a ragione. Quello che colpiva in Emanuela professoressa era, insieme al rigore, la calma signorile, radiosa, mai affettata. Una qualità che, sulle prime, poteva sembrare freddezza, o distacco, ed è invece il frutto di profondità di riflessione e rispetto per l'interlocutore. Ricordo, durante una sessione di esame, un mio compagno di corso affacciarsi dall'ufficio di Emanuela con un gran sorriso. Pensavo avesse preso la lode. "No," mi spiega: "Mi ha buttato fuori, ma vedessi con che garbo!" Quella sera siamo usciti a festeggiare: io e Bianca avevamo passato l'esame, il nostro compagno era stato bocciato con garbo. L'atmosfera era rilassata.

E l'atmosfera è sempre stata rilassata quando, dopo la laurea, abbiamo iniziato a collaborare. Nel 2005-2006 abbiamo coeditato il volume *Mediterraneo e migrazioni oggi*. Natale era alle porte e una collega continuava a inviarmi "la versione definitiva" del suo testo, che dovevo rileggere e correggere quanto prima. Dopo quattro "versioni definitive" la mia pazienza era agli sgoccioli. Non quella di Emanuela, che riuscì a confortarmi dicendo che sicuramente avrebbe presto smesso, visto che è contro natura tendere all'infinito. Poi ci sono stati gli atti del convegno su A. B. Yehoshua. All'epoca già traducevo dall'arabo e il mio ebraico era assai arrugginito. Emanuela mi chiese comunque di correggere le traduzioni da questa lingua. E un paio ne avevano davvero bisogno. L'aggettivo "metonimico" si mutava magicamente in "monotono." Da "città del linciaggio," Ramallah diventava "città della lince." Ruth veniva privata del compagno Shaul e costretta a frequentare tutto quanto il regno dei morti: lo Sheol. Io avevo voglia di urlare, mentre Emanuela m'invitava a guardare il lato positivo: quegli errori li avevo individuati; li avrei corretti; ce l'avremmo fatta.

Avevo imparato. Quando abbiamo collaborato ad altri libri, abbiamo sempre creato il nostro bestiario personale e riso di gusto di fronte a certe

perle. Eppure, pur lavorando a stretto contatto, chiedendole consigli per le mie ricerche e per molto altro, ammirando le sue doti non solo professionali ma umane, per anni ho capito ben poco di Emanuela. Ho rischiato di confondere Serenissima e serenità, di pensare che è ovvio, è naturale che sia calma: chi può scalfire una donna così forte, così determinata? Ho dovuto scoprire le tante piccole ansie di Emanuela, l'ossessione di arrivare in ritardo, che condividiamo, per capire quanta insicurezza possa esserci dietro una donna eccezionale e quanto lavoro per trasformarla in capacità di ascolto e di comprensione. Serenissima si nasce, in parte—l'eleganza di Emanuela non si acquisisce; la calma invece sì—ci si può provare, si possono tenere al guinzaglio le proprie paure. E cerco di farlo anch'io, Emanuela. Ci lavoro. Grazie.

Elena Chiti, *University of Oslo*

SCATTERED MEMORIES: THE ENCOUNTER WITH A CROSSER OF BORDERS AND NETWORKS' PROMOTER

PAOLA GANDOLFI

Venice, 1998

In 1998 I was studying Arabic Language and Literature at Ca' Foscari University and I was preparing my graduation thesis about teaching Arabic to migrant's children schooled in European countries. Many of my colleagues who were studying Arabic as the main Oriental language were also studying Hebrew as a second language. I would have loved to do the same, but as I was working full time I was not able to attend the lectures. So, I had heard about Emanuela Trevisan by some students who were so lucky to attend her courses, but I did not know her personally.

Since I was working on migration issues for my thesis, my professor Eros Baldissera suggested me contacting Emanuela Trevisan, who was apparently working on diasporas and migrations too. My first encounter with Emanuela Trevisan was in her office in Ca' Cappello, and she was immediately very kind and listened to me very seriously and carefully: I went out of her room with contact details of a German professor, Ulrich Mehlem. When I wrote to him, he gave me the contact of a colleague of his in Ghent University who was the key-person for my whole research and thanks to whom I had access to a precious database and to an international network of professors and researchers specialised in the field I was working on. When I discussed my graduation thesis, I was glad to find Emanuela Trevisan in the commission, since I was fully aware of her simple yet generous and extremely precious gesture at the origin of a main part of my research. In addition to that, I was aware I had dared to achieve a research at the intersection of language studies, migrations studies and much more, crossing multiple disciplines and experimenting new approaches. I felt Emanuela Trevisan was somehow herself a *crosser of borders* and she might have understood my choice and my challenge much deeper than others.

At that time, I would have never imagined that I would attend just few months later the very first year of the European Master MIM (Inter-Mediterranean Mediation and Migration) coordinated by herself and by Ottavia Schmidt di Friedberg, and that from that moment on we would share common paths for a long time. I would have not even imagined to become a PhD Student at Ca' Foscari later on and my tutors would be herself in Italy and Mohamed Tozy in Morocco.

My 'nomadic trajectories' due to my studies and researches, already emerged during the first university years, very much enlarged when I was a student at the MIM and have never stopped, even after my PhD research, up to nowadays. Were I to find some reference points in these ongoing fluxes of movements and relationships, I should say Venice and Morocco are the most meaningful ones and Emanuela has somehow always been involved *in-between* them. Venice, the territory where I studied, worked as a researcher, first taught and where I feel at home (also thanks to Emanuela's delicacy in opening her house and letting myself and many others share delicious dinners and many nights in her place). Morocco, the territory of my main first fieldwork on transnational mobility between Morocco and Italy and many other following fieldworks and which became over time a sort of 'second home' to me.

By the sound of things, Emanuela has been a sort of 'transnational presence' and constant 'diasporic reference' during the many years and among the many places of my personal training, especially between Venice and Morocco.

Rabat, 2017

Not long time ago, I was working for a couple of weeks in Rabat. I was attending a seminar called *Ins* concerning the revolution by means of the narrative and the art and the reinvention of the cultural heritages. I was debating the originality of the intersection of fields and approaches of the *Séminaire Ins* with my friend and colleague Fadma Ait Mous, professor at Casablanca University, when she shared with me her thought: she was imagining Emanuela appreciating such an interdisciplinary meeting of researchers, literary men and artists. Fadma met Emanuela at a PhD Summer School in Casablanca in 2006 when we were both PhD students and we were presenting our ongoing researches.

On that occasion, Emanuela was debating her very first notes on her fieldwork on Moroccan Jews in Meknès and Fés. As a teacher of Hebrew Language and Literature she appeared to Fadma and to the other Moroccan students – as she was remembering – as an open-minded person, much moved and motivated in her researches by curiosity and passion, ready to

cross narratives, languages, fields, disciplines with the aim of exploring and comprehending.

During the *Séminaire Ins* and the *Night of the Philosophers* in the National Library of Rabat, Driss Kiskes introduced me to someone as the author of the book *Le Maroc aujourd'hui* (2006) and he was talking about that book as the result of a special and still noteworthy event which was able to uncommonly gather a huge part of the Moroccan researches, artists and social actors in an international symposium in Venice. I was quite astonished to be invited to go back with my memory to this event so far from the present days, nevertheless it was the occasion to me to think I had the chance to achieve that memorable conference thanks to MERIFOR, an association for the Mediterranean studies I took part in. MERIFOR was created by Emanuela Trevisan, Ottavia Schimdt di Friedberg, Giovanni Levi, Elisabetta Bartuli, Giampiero Bellingeri and other colleagues who, for some years, proposed annual international conferences in Venice, with the aim of studying each year a specific country of the Mediterranean from the contemporary point of view, inviting researchers and social/cultural actors from each country to debate around the changing dynamics of their own society. For sure, an innovative and new approach to study the Mediterranean contemporaneity in the first years after 2000.

Besides, during the *Séminaire Ins* in Rabat my attention was attracted by the original commentaries of a woman, Perla Cohen I had never met before. When we began to talk face to face, we found out very quickly Emanuela was a common acquaintance and the enthusiasm and affection with which Perla mentioned Emanuela's name and work deserve attention. As a matter of fact, Emanuela's fieldwork on Moroccan Jews has brought her to this land for some years now and made our relationships and our paths meet quite often.

The following day I was with a very good friend of mine, Jalal, who was talking to me about a well-known filmmaker who had obtained a huge budget to shot her film project about the Jews of Moroccan origin and especially the Jews' ancient cemeteries in Morocco. My mind went back to the days I spent with Emanuela in Meknès, visiting the Jews' cemeteries, the museum, the *mellah*, knocking at the doors of the most ancient houses, trying to talk to the habitants and find out the houses which had been synagogues before.

During my recent stay in Rabat, I spent many hours in the beautiful building where the new NIMAR (The Netherlands Institute in Morocco) is located and where the director Léon Buskens kindly hosted me in order to allow me to concentrate in a quiet place and write some pages of my next book on contemporary migrations and asylum seekers' hospitality in

Europe and in Italy. At NIMAR, I also took part in a conference on the academic cooperation between Morocco and the Netherlands and I realised soon that one of the two rapporteurs was Herman Obdeijn, from Leiden University. Actually he was (together with Paolo de Mas and Jan Jaap de Ruiter), the person (I had never met personally before) I had quoted a lot in my graduation thesis and in my book concerning the teaching of Arabic as language of origin in primary schools in Europe, focusing a part of that on migrant's children in the Netherlands. Herman Obdeijn was exactly a member of that network of researchers I was able to reach in 1998 thanks to Emanuela's very first contact!

While I was sitting in a *terrasse* in Place Petri the following day, I was not even ready to order a coffee that a girl came to greet me very warmly. I was very pleasantly surprised to find Jessica Ferrero, who is teaching Italian in Rabat and to whom I taught Moroccan dialect many years ago at the MIM. She had attended my course as a listener but quite soon she realised that the opportunity of attending the whole MIM coordinated by Emanuela together with Elisabetta Bartuli was unique. She studied within the MIM programme in France, Spain, Italy and she attended her internship in Morocco and from that time – nearly 10 years now – she found a job and love, and she has not left the country anymore.

A couple of days later I was taking part in a performance of theatre in the coffee/theatre *La Renaissance* in the centre of the Moroccan capital and a girl showed her pleasure and happiness to find me there: Clara Polistena was attending the MIM only some months ago and she had just presented in Rabat her research on the economic and social insertion of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco at a cultural event devoted to refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco. Actually, she had begun her research work during her internship in the frame of the Master MIM in Meknès. Besides, the young man who was shooting all the performance was Francesco, another student who attended the MIM and is now working for Heinrich Boll Striftung Foundation in Rabat in a project with asylum seekers.

The transnational network of the Master MIM students confirms the farsighted and innovative idea that Emanuela had and promoted nearly twenty years ago, first with Ottavia Schmidt and then with Elisabetta Bartuli. An idea that became a practice, confirming her original competence in being a *jumper of walls* and a *borders' crosser*.

As far as I am concerned, I was so lucky to take advantage of Emanuela's rare capacity of networking and borders crossing since the very beginning of my academic formation. Here, I have been jumping from 1998 to 2017 to give you a rough idea of the impact and meaning of

Emanuela's rare abilities. Now, just try to imagine how many further examples I might give you if I had the opportunity to go through all the years of common paths I shared with Emanuela up to now. Just consider that reality exceeds your imagination.

Paola Gandolfi, *University of Bergamo*

CONVERSAZIONI E CONVERSIONI

FABRIZIO LELLI

Credo di avere incontrato per la prima volta Emanuela a Firenze, in occasione di una cena durante un convegno internazionale organizzato dalla mia professoressa, Ida Zatelli. Di lei avevo solo sentito parlare e la leggendarietà del personaggio mi incuteva qualche timore. A cena mi ritrovai seduto al suo tavolo e non sapevo da dove cominciare, di che parlare, addirittura se parlare. Fu lei a venirmi in aiuto, raccontandomi con passione della sua ricerca sui racconti di Abraham B. Yehoshua. In quegli anni l'autore non era noto al grande pubblico italiano e non esistevano materiali critici sulla sua produzione narrativa. Fu una conversazione che suscitò in me un profondo interesse per l'opera di uno scrittore che avrei imparato a conoscere negli anni successivi e che oggi ritengo esemplare per spiegare l'evoluzione della letteratura israeliana.

Emanuela fu tra i primi colleghi a invitarmi a presentare ufficialmente i risultati della mia ricerca di dottorato davanti ad una platea di accademici. In quell'occasione ricordo un vivace dialogo in una trattoria veneziana, in cui Emanuela sottolineava i miei modi di dire toscani, trovandoli quanto mai appropriati a definire situazioni per esprimere le quali, a suo avviso, l'italiano standard avrebbe reso necessarie ardue circonlocuzioni. In quello, come negli incontri successivi, ebbi modo di comprendere come i giudizi di Emanuela, estremamente puntuali, colpiscano sempre nel segno.

Più di recente Emanuela mi ha contattato in merito ad una sua ricerca sulle conversioni dal cattolicesimo all'ebraismo. Sapendo della diffusione del fenomeno in Puglia, mi chiese di mediare alcuni incontri a Trani e Brindisi. In un paio di giorni abbiamo percorso nella sua lunghezza la regione adriatica, dal nord Barese fino al tacco d'Italia. Conversando ho avuto nuovamente modo di apprezzare la varietà degli interessi di Emanuela, la sua professionalità mai scissa dalla sua umanità, un raro connubio che ho sempre ammirato in lei.

Colgo l'occasione di questa raccolta per ringraziarla delle sue parole, dei consigli e dei libri di cui generosamente mi ha fatto omaggio e per augurarle una proficua continuazione della sua versatile attività di ricerca.

Fabrizio Lelli, *Università del Salento*

UN LAVORO DI UNA VITA

DAVIDE MANO

Rimangono incisi nella mia memoria due momenti, che coincidono con due scoperte che devo alla professoressa Emanuela Trevisan Semi. L'incontro con la prosa di Shmuel Yosef Agnon e con le poesie di Uri Tzvi Greenberg durante i corsi veneziani di letteratura ebraica moderna. Emanuela mi ha trasmesso la passione per la traduzione in quanto sfida intellettuale. Da lei ho imparato l'umiltà con la quale affrontare qualsiasi lavoro di versione, che non può che rimanere un lavoro in corso, inconcluso.

Lungo tutto una vita.

Davide Mano, *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, Parigi

PER EMANUELA

MARIA GRAZIA MASETTI-ROUAULT

Dopo molti, lunghi anni di una amicizia che resta una delle colonne portanti della cupola della mia memoria, della mia visione della vita e anche della mia identità, è difficile far riemergere la mia prima impressione, quando ho incontrato Emanuela, ricercatrice e professoressa, all'Università Ca' Foscari. E' stato un momento che ha marcato la mia storia, aprendomi delle strade inattese, e che mi hanno portato lontano, tra l'altro a Gerusalemme.

Provenendo dal mio 'borgo selvaggio', avevo scelto Venezia come luogo per studiare la Bibbia perché era già l'Oriente sognato, e poi perché cercavo un insegnamento laico, linguistico, il più possibile lontano della mentalità religiosa, e fondato sulla storia antica. Benché i corsi si tenessero a Ca' Cappello, nel palazzo che era appartenuto a A.H. Layard, l'inventore dell'archeologia della Mesopotamia, mi ricordo bene che inizialmente ero piuttosto indispettita e delusa, scoprendo che, per diverse ragioni, quell'anno—era forse il 1974 o il 1975?—l'insegnamento dell'ebraico biblico non si faceva come mi ero aspettata, e che, inoltre, ero obbligata a seguire un insegnamento sul giudaismo moderno e persino di ebraico moderno. L'incontro con Emanuela Trevisan Semi, il suo atteggiamento, la sua serenità attenta e generosa—all'epoca, non avevo modo di valutare le sue qualità scientifiche e pedagogiche—hanno cambiato la mia diffidenza iniziale in entusiasmo, interesse, desiderio di piacerle, poi di imitarla.

Grazie al suo insegnamento, seguendola, ho cominciato a percorrere dei sentieri intellettuali sconosciuti, a inoltrarmi in terre straniere, sempre con una strana fiducia nel risultato del viaggio e della ricerca: qualcosa di buono e di interessante, in cui riconoscermi. Ricordo con emozione la lettura delle *Grandi correnti della mistica ebraica* di Gershom Scholem, uno dei primi libri che ho acquistato, ancora in vista nella mia biblioteca, le prime traduzioni di testi poetici di autori israeliani, i nostri dialoghi un po' ridicoli, ma sempre allegri, secondo i manuali dell'*ulpan*. Se era senz'altro il suo modo di essere e di pensare che allora ammiravo, ora so che sono state anche la sua grande cultura, la sua dinamica intellettuale, l'originalità delle sue ricerche che mi hanno in qualche modo portata a

sceglirla, senza neanche rendermene troppo conto, come figura di referenza, come modello e poi più tardi anche come amica, quando ho fatto altre scelte per i miei studi, le mie ricerche e la mia carriera, e sono partita da Venezia. Ormai anche io professoressa, specialista della storia del mondo siro-mesopotamico antico, mi sento ancora una sua allieva e spero che non me ne voglia.

Emanuela Trevisan Semi ha insegnato a me e ai suoi studenti, oltre a tutto quello che ha detto, scritto e pubblicato, anche un'altra cosa: il difficile equilibrio da trovare tra un investimento totale delle proprie energie nel lavoro di ricerca, affrontando dei problemi intellettuali seri e strategie di carriera spesso disperate, e dall'altra parte la volontà di vivere bene la propria vita, ascoltando, in modo caparbio, i propri progetti e i propri bisogni, organizzandosi e trovando o costruendo soluzioni adeguate, senza sacrifici inutili, senza rinunciare a niente senza ragione, né per sé né per gli altri. Ma si tratta anche, e nello stesso tempo, di non ignorare quanto i desideri, i sentimenti, gli affetti, insegnano, danno, chiedono e propongono, nella vita come nella ricerca, per la costruzione dell'identità, della memoria e del sapere. In un'epoca in cui il femminismo avanzava a viso spesso velato, non erano molte le fonti da cui apprendere questa saggezza di base, su cui fondarsi per non accontentarsi del facile, del banale o del moralmente corretto. E l'esempio conta, in particolare nel mondo accademico, soprattutto se offerto in modo involontario, spontaneo, non rivendicato né vantato.

Ma Emanuela è per me anche un'amica, una eccellente compagna di discussioni, di dibattiti e poi di viaggi straordinari, capace tanto di mantenere, forse di sopportare, il suo ruolo di guida, pronta a rassicurare e a consigliare, quanto di condividere idee, esperienze, progetti, ma anche problemi e dubbi, cercando insieme vie e modi di avanzare. E' la persona con cui partirei domani, per qualunque direzione e meta, sicura che il percorso proposto ne varrà la pena. E' la persona capace di ascoltare per ore l'esposizione di un'idea ancora confusa su una questione scientifica in un campo che non domina e poi rispondere a tono, ragionevolmente.

Insistere sulla qualità e la ricchezza dell'amicizia che Emanuela Trevisan Semi offre a quanti sono intorno a lei, ai suoi colleghi, ai suoi collaboratori, non è un modo di rinunciare a mettere in evidenza l'eccellenza del suo insegnamento e del suo percorso scientifico, largamente riconosciuto a livello internazionale, così come il successo del suo impegno nella gestione delle politiche universitarie e della ricerca, a Venezia, in Italia e in Europa, per preparare il futuro. E' piuttosto un tentativo di esprimerle tutta la mia ammirazione, di ringraziarla nel modo più sincero e completo possibile, di farle sapere che quanto ha costruito e

sta costruendo lascia una traccia importante e ben visibile nella nostra realtà.

Maria Grazia Masetti-Rouault, *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales/Université Sorbonne*, Parigi

UNA STORIA DI IERI E DI DOMANI

MONICA MINIATI

“Per quanto il cammino sembri deviare dai nostri desideri in modo bizzarro e assurdo, esso finisce per condurci sempre alla nostra meta invisibile.”

—Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (1943).

Non so perché, ma lo so benissimo, se devo essere sincera, quando mi è stato chiesto, con mia grande gioia, di dedicare qualche parola a Emanuela il mio pensiero è andato subito a Stefan Zweig e al suo *Mondo di ieri*, un'opera che annovero tra le letture più importanti e 'formative' della mia vita. Ho letto *Il mondo di ieri* quando avevo quasi trent'anni, un'età un po' tarda, a mio avviso, per conoscere un libro che avrebbe dovuto, e dovrebbe tuttora, specie in questi tempi assai bui, occupare gli scaffali della biblioteca non dico degli adolescenti ma almeno di coloro che hanno raggiunto o hanno varcato la soglia della maggiore età. *Wishful thinking!*

L'ho letto nel 1985. Era gennaio ed erano i miei primi non facili giorni a Gerusalemme. Una borsa di studio mi aveva offerto un soggiorno di cinque mesi in Israele. Ero felice di poter finalmente vivere per qualche tempo in un paese per il quale avevo sempre nutrito un enorme interesse ma, come spesso accade, all'inizio l'entusiasmo si era accompagnato a un certo smarrimento, all'ansia di non essere all'altezza di un'esperienza voluta con forza e, soprattutto, a uno sguardo nostalgico e amaro su ciò che, seppure per un breve periodo, avevo lasciato in Italia.

Zweig mi tenne compagnia nella solitudine della residenza universitaria sul Monte Scopus. Più che compagnia, Zweig mi spinse a riflettere su quella che continuava a essere la mia meta nonostante il cammino fino a quel momento avesse deviato in un modo non certo “bizzarro e assurdo” ma assai doloroso. Una sua osservazione in particolare mi colpì nel vivo del problema che allora mi tormentava. “I grandi uomini sono sempre i più buoni”, scriveva Zweig ricordando il giorno in cui aveva conosciuto Auguste Rodin. Ricordo di essermi interrogata su quanto affermava. Rodin, come del resto anche altri geni, come Einstein per esempio, non ebbero, almeno nella loro vita privata un comportamento sempre ineccepibile. Ma ai ‘grandi uomini’ mi sorse

spontaneo sostituire la parola ‘professori’, ‘intellettuali’, uomini e donne. La mia esperienza fino a quel momento era stata abbastanza nefasta, lasciandomi soprattutto ricordi di supponenza e di sguardi ironici e sprezzanti verso chi (come me) commetteva il crimine di manifestare il desiderio di dare seguito agli studi universitari. Ma le parole di Zweig, benché non riscuotessero il mio totale consenso, mi spinsero a continuare a credere, forse per un ingenuo idealismo, che gli intellettuali, quelli veri, dovevano essere persone buone, capaci di coniugare il sapere con la curiosità e l’empatia verso coloro che faticosamente cercano di far sentire la propria voce. Con un determinato e paziente lavoro di scavo un giorno li avrei trovati e me ne sarei circondata. Questa era la mia meta anche se non ne ero stata sempre consapevole.

Nel dicembre 1988 mi trovavo a Venezia. Ero al secondo anno di dottorato all’Istituto Universitario Europeo e mi ero recata in laguna per lavorare all’archivio della comunità ebraica. Non so come, i ricordi non sono più così nitidi, mi avvertirono da Firenze che qualcuno mi aveva cercato e lasciato un numero di telefono per essere contattato. Era Emanuela che mi chiedeva se ero interessata a entrare in un gruppo di ricerca sull’educazione ebraica. Poco tempo dopo ci incontrammo a Ferrara. Poi di nuovo a Venezia per una delle riunioni del gruppo il cui intento era concludere la ricerca con un convegno e la pubblicazione degli atti.

Confesso che allora Emanuela mi intimoriva. Toni sommessi, gesti più che controllati, grande delicatezza nei modi. Confesso anche, io che mi riconosco la capacità di decifrare una persona anche dopo meno di un’ora che sta di fronte a me, di aver avuto difficoltà a farmi un’idea di lei. Sentivo però che c’era qualcosa e questo qualcosa non mi dispiaceva affatto. Da lì ha preso l’abbrivio una conoscenza che negli anni, soprattutto in quelli vissuti a Parigi, si è trasformata in una solida amicizia. L’archeologa, quale non ero, era riuscita a trovare un tesoro. Emanuela non era il primo dei miei tenaci ‘scavi’ conclusi con successo, ma era certamente il più prezioso.

Non voglio cadere nella retorica e nell’agiografia, ma Emanuela era proprio tutto ciò che io pensavo dovesse essere un vero intellettuale. Quanto sapere trasmesso con gioia e leggerezza, quanta curiosità e quanta capacità di ascolto! Le ore che passavo insieme durante i suoi soggiorni nella *Ville Lumière* erano una fonte inesauribile di stimoli a conoscere e a fare. Cinema, letteratura, teatro, musei... ma anche conversazioni che toccavano aspetti più intimi della nostra esistenza, per non parlare anche delle nuove amicizie. E’ il caso di Maria Grazia Masetti Rouault, ex-

allieva di Emanuela a Ca' Foscari, con la quale non tardai a stringere una grande amicizia: un altro 'scavo' di successo di cui sono orgogliosa.

Quante cose ho fatto grazie a Emanuela. Di una in particolare le sono profondamente riconoscente. Forse era il 1999. In un piccolo ristorante parigino, Emanuela mi propose di partecipare a una ricerca sugli ebrei d'Etiopia, i *Falasha*, di cui lei era già una grande esperta. Anche in questo caso il progetto contemplava un Convegno e la pubblicazione degli atti. Il mio compito era ricostruire la biografia di Joseph Halévy, figura immensa nella storia e nello studio dei *Falasha*. Mi sembrava un'impresa impossibile, ma Emanuela non mancava mai di incoraggiarmi. Niente era impossibile per lei se c'era volontà e determinazione.

Il convegno fu fatto e gli atti pubblicati. Ricordo la gioia con cui tracciai il profilo di Joseph Halévy. *Un outsider dans la ville* continua a essere uno degli articoli a me più cari. Emanuela mi aveva offerto l'opportunità di affacciarmi a un nuovo orizzonte e io ero riuscita a coglierla grazie alla sua fiducia e al suo entusiasmo. La nuova ricerca mi permise inoltre di proseguire nei miei 'scavi' di successo: allora ho conosciuto Elisa Bianchi, geografa di talento e persona dotata di una grande sensibilità. Anche di quest'amicizia sono debitrice a Emanuela.

Nel 2005 sono tornata in Italia. Emanuela (ma non solo) mi è stata più vicina che mai. Mi ha invitato più di una volta a Ca' Foscari e mi ha dato lo slancio per ripartire e riabituarmi all'Italia. *Last but not least*, sono vent'anni, o quasi, che ho il privilegio di trascorrere le vacanze a Briols, un piccolo villaggio nella campagna francese dove Emanuela ha una casa accogliente e magica, luogo di incontro di tanti amici accomunati dall'amore per la cultura e dalla gioia di vivere... Altri 'scavi' di successo.

Emanuela è un faro nella mia vita. Mi dispiace per coloro che non godranno più del privilegio di averla come insegnante e collega... ma forse lei avrà più tempo per me!

Monica Miniati, *independent scholar and translator*

ZEH YIHIEH BESEDER,
“IT WILL BE ALRIGHT”

PIERA ROSSETTO



Venice, 2012 © Piera Rossetto

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the editors of the book for enabling me to join in this publication in honour of Emanuela Trevisan Semi on the occasion of her retirement. For personal reasons, I could not contribute to it with a scientific essay, but I am happy to be able to offer this personal piece.

I first met Emanuela at Ca' Foscari University, where I enrolled in 2005 as a Bachelor of Arts student of the LICEM (Languages and Cultures of Eurasia and the Mediterranean) programme, having taken her courses

‘Hebrew Language and Literature’ and ‘History of Judaism’. The reasons I shall always be grateful to Emanuela are far too many to recall, however, the following lines are an attempt at saying something about her impact on me, taking inspiration from a picture of Venice.

I took this photo in November 2012 while flying from Venice to Toulouse. This was at the beginning of my doctoral studies, which I was going to undertake within the framework of a co-tutorship agreement between Ca’ Foscari and the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* in Toulouse. Besides inspiring the very subject of my PhD research (on the Jewish diaspora from Libya) and supervising it, Emanuela was also the initiator of this agreement.

With no scholarship to rely on and scant knowledge of French (the last time I had heard a word of French was more than twenty years before), I still believed that it was a brave suggestion from her part and, perhaps, also a brave decision from mine to agree. Indeed, she was right, although this research *parcours* was challenging and demanding, especially at the beginning.

When I arrived in Toulouse for some time, the only words I could utter were: “*Une baguette tradition, s’il vous plait*” at the bakery shop. The first time I discussed the subject of my research with the French tutor, professor Chantal Bordes Benayoun, she spoke to me in French, and I replied in English. It took me many, many lunch breaks with my French PhD colleagues to discover the secret of mysterious words such: *truc*, *bidule*, *machin*¹.

During those first months, Emanuela came to Toulouse to take part in a conference, and we met. From Venice, she brought me a nice green metal box of *baicoli*, typical Venetian biscuits, “because”, she said, “when somebody is far from home, it is good to receive something familiar!” This sounded, and tasted, really good! I perceived it like her very typical manner (sensitive, gentle and with no need for many words) of encouraging me, telling me: “*Zeh yihieh beseder*” (Hebrew: “It will be alright”).

Indeed, despite all the difficulties and thanks to her support, it went alright. In France, I discovered a thriving cultural milieu; I enjoyed lively academic discussions; and I learnt a lot from the people, the places as well as my encounters. The four years that I spent working on my PhD dissertation were among the most fascinating, albeit stressful and demanding. Emanuela’s intellectual profile was a constant point of reference in the construction of my dissertation, its ‘object’ and its

¹ In French, these words are all synonyms of the word *chose*: “thing”.

‘question’. Her tireless commitment in promoting research, and the contribution that new generations of scholars can bring to it, was an example as well as an encouragement to me.

I shall close these lines again with a personal note. Since June 2017, I have held the full-time position of mother, and this is why I was unable to contribute to the volume other than by this short personal piece. I am sure that Emanuela will understand. Her box of *baicoli* biscuits is now full of the cards that we received, congratulating us on the birth of our son, Martino, wishing him all the best. From my part, I hope that I will be able to accompany him with gentleness and sensitivity and to inspire in him the deep belief that no matter the difficulties we encounter in our lives, *zeh yihieh beseder!*

Piera Rossetto, *independent scholar*

THE VERY SHORT HISTORY OF A WANDERING OTHER

ALVISE VIANELLO

Venice, 1992

There were only three students when I entered the room. The class had already started. I joined your class with two weeks delay; unsatisfied with the study of Arabic, I had just decided to change my major to Hebrew. You were facing the other way and had to turn your neck in order to look at me. I felt scrutinised, and yet comfortable at the same time. You were about the age I am now. I distinctly remember your glance: rather fair-minded, yet almost inscrutable behind your glasses. I felt there was a barrier, as if those glasses represented your personal armour, your protection, a shield that prevented me from really understanding whether me joining the class late was ever a problem. I took my seat while your students continued answering simple questions, just empty sounds then to my completely ignorant ears, “*me’ain ‘atah? ‘Ani mi-Bergamo*” (yes, I still remember the exact question!). At that precise moment, my whole life changed, and undertook a path, which is often still cryptic to me. Somehow, after that day, your life wouldn’t be the same either.

We grew into a relationship, one that today might be considered almost vintage. Not even the effort I am making at this very moment, to hug you close to me with these words could ever succeed in giving it a name. So, let us forego any names for our erratic and ‘*aqedic* relationship. However, please allow me to take you on a brief trip, to the main places, that both aesthetically and geographically, we have discovered, experienced, or simply accepted together.

Oxford, 1996

I had taken your class three times, one per year. I already understood that your path was mine, but you didn’t know that yet. When Glenda Abramson came to Venice, I was seated alongside you in the audience. I knew that was where I was headed next, and you led me there by the hand,

allowing me to initiate a real journey, on both a practical and intellectual level; one that ended just few years ago in Barcelona.

In Oxford, I understood and rediscovered myself. It was the time of passages: the *havdalah*, the *'aqedah*, the wandering Jew. Once again, a period that imbued our entire careers: passages, movements, ceremonies. Your unique way of coupling seasons of life and people to a liturgical and aesthetic milestone gave authentic meaning, a true 'sense' to my studies. Somehow prophetic of your own academic future, you summarised it in your commentary of *Mot ha-zaqen*. The very same copy I read twenty-five years ago, I have in my hand now.

Have you ever noticed how your text is strewn with seeds of the work that you would develop throughout our careers? Yet that text is also an embryo of my own path in research and in life; constant steps forward, without hesitation, walking by your side. It wasn't fate: where your path took a dramatic change, mine did too. In the death of meaning, meaning is given to death. Meaning and death in a constant battle for the other to be recognised in and as themselves; the other in a group of others. The other observed by the other: once again a prophetic title to your constant search for more 'other' within the 'other.'

Whenever you attempted to identify and describe the other, it moved elsewhere. As the wandering Jew was first Karaite, then Beta Israel, then Moroccan, once again wandering, then Israeli, and yet Moroccan, and finally simply defined by its constant alienated state, its being *galut*.

You taught me that you can only grasp the 'other', or its meaning, never both together. When being the 'other' has a meaning, the meaning (*il senso*) in itself dissolves the idea itself of 'being other'. As such, each 'other' while acquiring *senso* would dramatically generate the next other, provoking the death of the previous.

I therefore consider your first translation and commentary as prophetic; since there has been no pause in your own mystical dance between the *senso* and 'death.' It is as if both were tugging at opposite ends of a rope, churning of an ocean of milk within your marvellous intellectual world, just as we contemplated in the magnificent bas-relief together at Angkor Wat.

Jerusalem, 1999

Done. I had finished my BA, I was living in Tel Aviv, working for an Internet start-up, and earning good money. I was done, yet our invisible thread of connection grew increasingly stronger. It was there right before my eyes, at the University Library in Jerusalem, that it took shape as Daniela handed me a box marked "Taamrat Emmanuel". I was still young,

but I could already savour the anthropological aftertaste of our work, and I loved it. The collective other was never going to be enough. There would always be an ‘other’ inside, or behind, or within the other; duly ending up face-to-face, with the human paradigm itself.

Paris, 2000

It was finally born. The birth of the MIM certainly made a profound change to your career, and as was more foreseeable then, to mine too. There, in the living room of that tiny flat, Parisian on the outside, Mediterranean within, our lives once again mingled. Towards the end of my BA I had chosen you as my tutor and came up against the whole academic body: *you weren’t good enough*. You yourself suggested I chose a different professor (“I can help you from the outside if you need it”).

Your reputation would soon undergo a dramatic change, and I would be there to prove just how right I had been! The Master MIM, your professorship, my PhD eight years later; I had started again, and once again, you were by my side.

Atlas Mountains, 2005

“Are you worried?”. I was driving, and we did not really know where we were. Ottavia had left us two years earlier, but her presence was still very intense, particularly in those lands. Your research of the other inside the other, had already taken you to the next step, the absence of the other, and the emptiness that it leaves behind. I knew you were experiencing that emptiness in your life, and I knew that you had already lived it before. I knew that your question was related to our lost path heading to the South, that you just wanted to be heartened, comforted.

“No, Emanuela, I am not worried. There is only one road towards the valley: it must be this one.”

Tetouan, 2008

I was sitting on a stone in a Jewish cemetery, a few steps from the market, yet submerged in a deep, comforting silence. You were walking back and forth with the phone in your hand. I didn’t know what the call was about. I wondered if your face was expressing hatred, sorrow or if you were disconsolate. Once again life was moving forwards, we were traveling with it, and I was happy to be by your side that day.

Nuweiba, 2013

The decision not to look for one more postdoc was hard to take, yet not as hard as telling you. I was tired, but not you. We had just spent a few days

together in Sicily to teach on a master's programme. Sharing the same class with you was a dream come true, a dream we somehow shared. The desert, the sea and Bedouin tea, once again helped us through.

Briols, 2017

Driving along the road to St. Affrique to buy flowers. It is our ritual: the passage towards a time of stillness. Your empty seat by my side is testimony of one more dramatic absence. Yet it is also one of new presence: my babies, your babies. I was looking forward to this new depth in our constant flux of past-future. Even now, when your career is heading towards a new time of quiet, and that mine has definitely evolved into itself; me into myself.

I remember when you asked me for a yoga class, and how you felt the need to underline: no spirituality, just poses and breath. I smiled then, as I smile now. Because we come from the same place, because I found your parents quoted in my grandfather's diary, because we speak five common languages, and yet we feel at home when the sentence comes out in Venetian.

And yes, I feel we are also headed the same way, because I have lived your entire career as an enlightened effort to humanise the other: a laic approach to compassion, a monumental laic, agnostic and spiritual work. In order to write these words, I pored over your articles, all your books. With new spiritual eyes I read titles, indexes, pages, and yet I felt I was listening to chants, poems and lyrics: a unique and marvellous symphony to the laicity of compassion. A humanistic, laic, rational chant to the essence of the other. We can forego naming it, but the term is love. With this shy and unnamed effort, you empowered generations of students, and I myself, simply enjoy the feeling of embodying them all at once. Thank you, Emanuela.

Alvise Vianello, independent scholar

EMANUELA'S BAGS

IDA ZILIO-GRANDI

I first met Emanuela Trevisan Semi in 1981, at the beginning of my Venetian university experience. I had chosen to study Hebrew and Arabic but in the end, having to decide which to take my degree in, I opted for Arabic. Even so, I remember my Hebrew lessons very well. But what particularly comes to mind when I think of Emanuela, apart from the lessons, is how she was always in a rush, and always weighed down by bags and other impedimenta of different shapes and sizes, which she was hurriedly but with difficulty squeezing into the tiny Ca' Cappello lift (I once brought her some flowers which I am afraid were the last straw...). Even now, thinking of her, the first things I see are that bustle of movement and the bags disappearing round the corner, whose handles, or more often shoulder straps, would get tangled up—they still do—with her woollen scarf in winter, her silk stole in summer, soft leather, or frequently cloth, bags, vaguely oriental in colour, with long zips always hanging open, but with all the muddle of fabrics and colours, it was never possible to glimpse inside and see what they ought to have been protecting.

Thinking back on it, what Emanuela had in those bags is obvious enough, the infinite variety of stuff that women so-to-speak *on the move* always carry around with them, plus the books of course, plus—as I now know—any number of bright ideas, along with all the invention, enthusiasm and single-mindedness it would take to bring them to fruition. In homage to the potency of this vision, which surely has something to do with the clarity of youthful memories, but more perhaps to the fact that memory's associations are never really accidental, I would like to offer her a mini Arabist excursion on handbags and other carriers.

In Arabic, handbags and other bags (including shoulder-bags) are generally called *kīs* or *ḥaqībah*.

Kīs is normally classified by lexicographers under the verb *kāsa*, which means to be quick on the uptake, so that bag/*kīs* is, yes, a container of precious things, money, pearls, jewellery, but in so far as it holds what is most important to us, it is intelligence too. According to a story relayed by al-Bukhārī and collected in *Lisān al-ʿArab*, once when Abū Hurayra was repeating a saying of the Prophet's he got carried away and continued with some words of his own, and when asked if the end-part was also the

Prophet's, replied: "No, that came from out of Abū Hurayra's purse (*kīs*): that is, as Ibn Manẓūr explains, it was the fruit of his own intellect. As for *ḥaqībah*, today the most commonly used word for 'suitcase', it was originally the heavy bundle of provisions, utensils and other stuff that a traveller stashed behind his saddle.

According to an aphorism reported again by Ibn Manẓūr, "compassion is the best travel-bundle" (*khayr ḥaqībah*).” And that is how I would describe Emanuela's bags: as the good things she has gathered along the way and keeps with her, including I hope my own fond memory of her, that will keep her company for all her hundred—or rather, her thousand-and-one!—journeys to come.

Ida Zilio-Grandi, *Università Ca' Foscari Venezia*

PART III –

THE CROP

PUBLICATIONS OF EMANUELA TREVISAN SEMI 1970-2018

(EDITED BY DARIO MICCOLI)*

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