ARTICLES

THE QUESTION OF JUDEO-ARABIC

By Ella Shohat

While the ethnic/religious term "Arab-Jew" has at the very least been the object of heated debate and polemics, the linguistic/cultural term "Judeo-Arabic," paradoxically, has been widely accepted as a legitimate object of scholarly inquiry—especially within the realm of Jewish studies. Most languages, including the languages or dialects spoken by Jews, are palimpsestically complex and layered with various linguistic strata. Yet the case of Judeo-Arabic raises complex questions. This complexity is partially traceable to the persistence of the "Arab versus Jew" dichotomy, as well as to the corollary negation of the "Judeo-Muslim" hyphen, which had been crucial for the genealogy of Arabic written and spoken by Jews for millennia. Against the conceptual binary that mandates that "Jew" and "Arab" be antonyms, I argue that the linguistic/cultural question of "Judeo-Arabic" is inseparable from the ethnic/religious concept of the "Arab-Jew." My argument here is premised on my earlier critique of the taboos against joining the word "Jewishness" with the word "Arabness" (a taboo encapsulated in the very term "Arab-Jew") as well as against joining the word "Judeo" with

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the word "Muslim" (encapsulated in the "Judeo-Muslim"). That critique has been central to my scholarly work over the past three decades. Does the good/bad bifurcation between the terms "Arab-Jew" and "Judeo-Arabic" as objects of analysis reflect a different ideational status of the hyphen in the two terms (i.e., linking Jews to Arabs in the case of "the Arab-Jew" while delinking a Jewish language from Arabic in the case of "Judeo-Arabic")? Rather than take for granted "Judeo-Arabic" as a fixed natural language, I argue that the term—like "Arab-Jew"—requires a critical engagement. Both terms are equally entangled in the anxiety provoked by the idea of an Arab cultural genealogy for a Jewish identity.

This essay does not concern itself with the extremely rich, indeed invaluable, scholarship in the related fields of "Judeo-Arabic" and "Jewish languages." Rather, it attempts to examine the implications of these terms, assumptions, and axioms for identity mapping. The essay interrogates the premises and conceptual frameworks associated with the rubric of "Judeo-Arabic language." If Jewish studies scholars have tended to conceive "Judeo-Arabic" within a ghettoizing approach to the history and culture of "the Jews," scholars within Arab studies have treated it with skepticism. Arab studies scholars ask, in effect, whether Judeo-Arabic even has any actual existence apart from its source language—Arabic. Rather than divide these two zones of inquiry, I hope to bring them into dialogue through addressing some of the specificities of Arabic written and spoken by Jews. In doing so, I cast doubt on the view of "Judeo-Arabic" as always-already belonging to the separate realm of "Jewish languages," which is itself arguably a newly invented and in some ways problematic category. At times, scholarly discussions within Jewish studies have acknowledged the difficulty that the "Jewish languages" rubric poses for linguistics scholars. Often, however, these projects have gone beyond invoking this category as a sociolinguistic classification to embracing "the uniquely Jewish" character of an increasingly expanding number of "Jewish languages of the Diaspora."[1] Both the qualitative and quantitative procedures assume Jewish linguistic uniqueness, implicitly homologizing the idea of a unified national expression. This essay, in contrast, highlights multiple relations, addressing "Jewish languages" generally and "Judeo-Arabic" more specifically as linked not merely to other "Jewish languages," but also to any number of related languages and similar dialects within the various cultural geographies from which they emerged. I address the

case of "Judeo-Arabic" simultaneously in relation to the notions of "Jewish languages" (*safot yehudiyot* in Hebrew) and of "Arabic dialects" (*al-lahjat al-'arabiyya* in Arabic). This essay deploys these concepts, as it were, "under erasure," mobilizing them while also deconstructing them—analyzing both notions of "Jewish languages" and of "Judeo-Arabic" as sliding signifiers.

"Judeo-Arabic": A Genealogy of an Idea

We may begin by inquiring into the indigenous name for "Judeo-Arabic" in the putative "Judeo-Arabic language." Should our understanding of the term "Judeo-Arabic" as a self-identified name begin with the emergence of a "natural language" dating back to the Arabic-speaking Jews in pre-Islamic Arabia, and subsequently with the spread of Islam that led to the so-called "Arabization of the Jews"? Or should that beginning be traced back to the emergence of the post-Haskala academic field of Jewish studies in the West? This question is fundamental, for it explores whether the term "Judeo-Arabic" was internal or external to the community itself. It also could have implications for narrating such genealogies and for articulating them between the "internal" and the "external" in the wake of Jewish nationalism and its linguistic corollary—modern Hebrew. Was the name "Judeo-Arabic" used by its writing/speaking subjects over millennia to differentiate their dialect/language in relation to their neighboring dialects/languages? Or did the term only appear as an identification marker to catalogue linguistic communities as an object of study within the field of Jewish studies? Furthermore, to what extent is the very name "Judeo-Arabic" reflective of conceptual paradigms that developed only in the wake of post-Haskala Judaic studies and of Jewish nationalism? How do we account for the variety of expressions used to designate the Arabic(s) of Jews, especially when the currently fixed and seemingly stable term "Judeo-Arabic" neighbors with other related terms, such as "Jewish-Baghadi idiom" and "Arabic language," some of which are referenced as such in published Arabic texts in Hebrew script?

As a field of scholarly inquiry, "Judeo-Arabic" has formed a vital arena within Judaic studies, especially since the nineteenth-century "discovery" of the Cairo Geniza documents (written in Arabic, along with Hebrew and Aramaic, and mostly in Hebrew script) as a site for archival exploration of a past textual world. Shelomo Dov Goiten's series on "The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza," for

example, has been foundational in both content and method for constructing a history of Jewish society in the Arab-Muslim Middle Ages.[2] With the removal and scattering of the Egyptian Geniza, a millennial corpus of Jewish-Arab documents, stretching from the Indian Ocean across the Mediterranean Sea and to the Atlantic Ocean, dramatically intersected with modernity. In the space of Jewish studies, collaboration between the British colonial administration and post-Haskala Judaism, in the wake of Jacob Saphir's 1865 visit to the repository of Ben 'Ezra synagogue in Fustat, and Solomon Schechter's "discovery," permitted and secured the transfer of the bulk of the Geniza to Cambridge University Library.[3] The textual dislocation of the Arab-Jewish documents, in this sense, anticipated the physical/demographic dispersal of Arab-Jews themselves in the wake of the partition of Palestine, the establishment of Israel, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since the departure of Jews from Arab countries, "Judeo-Arabic" has also become a site of ethnolinguistic research into "uniquely Jewish" modes of speaking. Yet an inevitable sense of a "lost world"—or what might be called a "last-of-the-Mohicans"[4] syndrome—has often relegated "Judeo-Arabic language" to a vanishing universe. This relegation encompasses not merely the historical medieval textual world within Muslim spaces, but also the more recently departed post-1948 Arab/Muslim geographies. The conceptual displacement of Arab-Jews, however, must also be traced to the Englightenment, together with its corollary of colonial modernity—historical turns that projected Arab-Jews and their language and culture into a chasm within Orientalist discourse. In particular, one can consider the gradual split between "the Jew" and "the Arab," two groups that had earlier been sheltered together under the biological, anthropological, philological, and linguistic umbrella of "Semitic people and languages."[5] With the Enlightenment, the Haskala, and (later) Zionism, scholars began to project the Orientalist schema exclusively toward "the other" Semitic figure (i.e., "the Arab"). Since then, I argue, the Arab-Jew has occupied an ambivalent position within the split.[6] Premised on Orientalist axioms (including, in a different way, upon the figure of the *ostjuden*), Zionist modernization of the Hebrew language itself generated a certain de-Semitization in terms of syntax (i.e., Eliezer Ben-Yehuda) and accent (i.e., Ze'ev Jabotinsky).[7] While the resurrected Hebrew was Europeanized, Arabic (even when called Judeo-Arabic) as a "Diaspora language" was deemed moribund along with the death of "the

desert generation." The "Judeo-Arabic language" has subsequently become salvageable only as a lost object of scholarly investigation. At the same time, Judeo-Arabic came to be posited as a distinct language apart from Arabic, awaiting, as it were, its honorary incorporation into a sui-generis Jewishness associated with a dynamic Euro-Jewish nationalist revival of Hebrew and its corollary of the academic preservation of "Jewish languages."

In this sense it is difficult to speak of "Judeo-Arabic" without entering the minefield of Jewish nationalism as a metanarrative that involves: (1) the emergence of a historically relatively new category called "Jewish languages," an idea premised on a quarantining modality whereby disparate languages/dialects come into existence only by being symbolically severed from their contextual linguistic family, and addressed through and in relation mainly to one another as long-lost Diasporic relatives; and (2) the linked emergence of a relatively new linguistic sub-category called "Judeo-Arabic" that was not, to my knowledge, commonly used among the Jewish speakers/writers of Arabic, even when written in Hebrew script. In liturgical texts published in Israel after their arrival, Arab-Jews continued to define their Arabic in Hebrew letters as "Arabic language." For example, a 1952 prayer book, *Sefer Birkot Shamayim*, which was composed and edited by Baghdad's Chief Hakham 'Ezra Dangour and republished in Israel, typically mixed Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. The first page states in Hebrew that it includes laws "in the Arabic language according to the tradition of the Jews of Babylon and its branches." The second page tells in Hebrew the history of the book's printing in Livorno (Italy) and Baghdad during different periods and by diverse publishers, concluding with: "now we are bringing it to the printer again to comply with the request of many of our brothers the newcomers."[8] The last page also contains an "*i'lan muhimm*" (Arabic for important announcement) that informs the readers about the publisher's other liturgical books in Arabic (assumed here is the Arabic language in Hebrew script), and advertises the printing expertise for diverse purposes at reasonable prices—all in a mixture of Arabic and Hebrew. What would be defined today in Jewish studies circles as typical "Judeo-Arabic language," then, is defined by its indigenous speakers/writers/publishers simply as "Arabic language."

The term "Judeo-Arabic" has gradually been abstracted from Arabic through a grid that emphasizes "uniquely Jewish languages" spoken during

"2,000 years of wandering." Thus with the return to Israel not only is a lost homeland reclaimed but also a linguistic home rebuilt. The very definition of "Judeo-Arabic" is caught in what could be called anti-*galut* linguistics, even in contexts where the metanarrative concerns the close study of "the *gola*'s Jewish languages" but which relegates them to an obsolete museological form. Partially as a result of the efforts by scholars of Judeo-Arabic to incorporate "Judeo-Arabic" into an expanding pantheon of Jewish languages, and assert its equality in importance to Yiddish—and also, to a lesser extent, to Ladino (Judeo-Spanish/Judezmo/Español)[9]—the term "Judeo-Arabic language" circulates in the public sphere largely to indicate a separate Jewish existence vis-à-vis the Arab-Muslim world. "Judeo-Arabic" is acknowledged, paradoxically, as a kind of *non-Arabic* Arabic of Jews. In many ways, the question of Judeo-Arabic serves as a trope of identity, allegorizing, on a linguistic register, fraught itineraries of belonging.

The idea of "Judeo-Arabic" has thus occupied an ambivalent site, at once belonging to the world of Jews, now associated with "the West," and to the world of Arabs, now associated with the "East" and the enemy of the Jews. This polarizing framework stretches into the bureaucratic reaches of academic institutions. The Fulbright Program's official list of languages for applicants, for example, posits Arabic and Judeo-Arabic as separate language categories. At what point, one wonders, did the splitting off of Judeo-Arabic from Arabic become concretized in an official, US governmental institution like Fulbright?[10] It is noteworthy that out of the rich panoply of Arabic idioms, out of all of Arabic's regional, ethnic, and religious speech variations and dialects, only one version—"Judeo-Arabic"—is regarded as an isolatable language. The list of research languages does not include other dialects, so-called "ethnolects" of Arabic, neither within specific countries — such as dialects based on religion (e.g., Chaldean-Christian in Iraq), geography (e.g., Tafilalt in Morocco), and ethnicity (e.g., Berber/Shelha/Tamazight-inflected Arabic in Algeria) — nor broader regional dialects such as Khaliji, Mashriqi, and Maghribi Arabic. In this sense, only "Judeo-Arabic" has been subjected to a form of linguistic ghettoization, secluded from its linguistic family and dialectal neighbors. If the Hebrew orthography of (Judeo) Arabic, moreover, is the criteria for a distinct language classification, then we would need to rethink such definitions, especially since: (1) not all languages have a script; (2) a language's script may change over the course of history; and (3) script forms only one dimension of a language (a subject to which I will return).

Zionist discourse treated the return of Jews to Israel as a progressive move into a reterritorialized space and a safe passing into dynamic historical time—for Hegel, we recall, Jews were "outside of history" because they lacked a state. At the same time, Zionist discourse regarded the rupture from their diasporic exile as an escape from a condemned space frozen in "allochronic time."[11] In the case of Middle Eastern Jews, both return and rupture formed two aspects of the same equation—both of which implied the marginalization of any Judeo-Islamic cultural formation. The attitude that melds suspicion of the "Arab" within "the Arab-Jew" with a vested interest in the "Jew" of that very same "Arab-Jew," engenders aporias in hegemonic scholarship, resulting in a kind of methodological schizophrenia. Disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and linguistics have severed the "Jew" from the "Arab," as though they were constitutively separate and autonomous entities despite what could be regarded as more than a millennium of Judeo-Islamic syncretism. They have also done precisely the opposite, fixing the same Jews in Arab lands, regarding them as essentially tainted and damaged by their histories in non-Western spaces. This fissured approach removed Sephardim/Mizrahim from their historical Arab and/or Muslim civilizational space, yet that repressed history and space returned as an explanatory principle for their cultural backwardness and social pathologies.[12]

While the figure of "the Arab-Jew" has been associated with a menacing, undisciplined, and out-of-bounds discourse, "Judeo-Arabic" has been less anxiogenic, partly because in Jewish studies "Judeo-Arabic" has been conceived as a "Jewish language," seen as reassuringly analogous to Yiddish and Ladino/Judeo-Español. Whereas the very concept of the "Arab-Jew" is viewed, if only by implication, as antagonistic to the nationalist paradigm associated with Zionism, "Judeo-Arabic" is assumed as integrated within the metanarrative of a scattered yet single "Jewish nation." This fissured conceptualization has ironically removed the home dialect/language of Jews from the very subjects who have spoken/written that language—the Arab-Jews themselves. Within the realm of "Jewish languages," the notion of "Judeo-Arabic language" does not only signify "the rich heritage of Jews of Arab lands," but also functions as an actantial slot—an index of absence and negation (i.e., a language that is *not* Arabic and whose speakers are *not* Arabs but Jews). Thus the very premise of "Judeo-Arabic" enacts a kind of severance. It removes the cultural production of Jews in Arabic(s)—not

only historically but also linguistically and philosophically—from an Arab/Muslim civilizational space, even when that repressed syncretic history returns as an explanatory principle for its speakers' linguistic/cultural practices. Detached from the paradigm of "Arabic vernacular," the notion of "Judeo-Arabic" thus enters the global cartography of "Jewish languages," participating in the symbolic gathering of "the Diaspora" languages from "the four corners of the globe."

What, then, is Judeo-Arabic? Did it ever exist as a distinct language? Is it distinct because of its Hebrew script, characteristic also of texts written by Jews in a number of other languages? Conversely, can its Hebrew script be simply ignored or dismissed so as to subsume it completely into Arabic? Setting aside the case of Hebrew, considered to be "the sacred language" and "the true Jewish language" within the originary metanarrative, is there any ontologically separate Jewish language? How is "Judeo-Arabic" situated in relation to both Arabic and Hebrew as the key languages that inform its symbolic identity? Is Judeo-Arabic a syncretic language, a kind of creole? It would seem not, since a creole assumes a hybridization of two very different languages—for example an African (e.g., Yoruba) or Indigenous-American language (e.g., Tupi-Guarani) encountering and mixing with a European language in the colonial "contact zone"[13] of the Americas. These stressful encounters engendered the various creoles such as Haitian Creole (melding African languages with French), Papiamento (mingling African languages with Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese), and so forth. In contrast to Yiddish, where Hebrew vocabulary and expressions were grafted onto a very different language system of German, Jewish-Arabic idioms, even if regarded as a separate Judeo-Arabic language isolatable from Arabic, nonetheless grew from the same common linguistic ("Semitic") trunk. The common pattern of words deriving from triple-letter roots of Semitic languages, for example, facilitated the constant transformation common to all versions of Arabic including those used by Jews.[14] Hebrew and also Aramaic, associated with all "Jewish languages" as their common denominator, operate on a linguistic continuum with Arabic, unlike the relations between Hebrew and German in Yiddish. Thus even within the conceptual space of "Jewish languages," Judeo-Arabic and Arabic would have to be seen as metaphorically "cousins"—or even "siblings"—lacking the dramatic conflicts and complete incommensurablities of different language families. The Aramaic

present in "Jewish languages," furthermore, is not unique only to Jewish linguistic history. For example, Aramaic entered the general Iraqi dialect, as in the common particle of existence of *aku* (there is/are), whose genealogy is attributed to the southeastern Babylonian Aramaic spoken in central Mesopotamia.[15] In fact, Aramaic dialects continue to exist in the present day in various parts of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey. They are spoken and written largely by Christian-Arabs.[16]

While the hyphen in "Judeo-Arabic" could equally indicate a joining or a splitting, the drift of how it tends to be deployed accentuates a split. Mapping "Judeo-Arabic" as a distinct "Jewish language" ontologically apart from Arabic has the effect of distancing the Jewish speakers of Arabic from Arabic. The splitting of "Judeo-Arabic" from Arabic, in other words, echoes a nationalist idea of Jewish singularity. Yet, from another perspective, one cannot view Jewish-Arabic idioms as unique and separate when *all* Arabic dialects possess their own specificities based on region, ethnicity, and religion. Thus a key methodological question is one of the soundness of a particular comparison: "Judeo-Arabic" compared to what? Here Bakhtinian translinguistics can shed some light on the question by calling attention to the role of differentiation within and between languages through polyglossia (many "natural" languages)—i.e., the coexistence of multiple "natural" languages—and heteroglossia (social many-languagedness) — i.e., the conflictual presence of a multiplicity of social languages and discourses within single languages. Mikhail Bakhtin criticized two myths about language: the myth of a language that presumes to be the only valid language, and the myth of the language that claims to be unified. A translinguistic analysis, in this sense, allows us to see languages not in terms of exclusion, isolation, and either/or thinking—but rather in terms of differentiated commonalities, shared differences, and family resemblances.[17]

While all languages, including the languages/dialects spoken by Jews, form the site of heteroglossia and polyglossia (including within single languages, as in Aramaic within Hebrew or Farsi and Turkish within Arabic), the case of "Judeo-Arabic" seems especially entangled in conflictual definitions and axioms. Arabic's polyglossia exists cross-regionally and even within contemporary states, impacting and intersecting with the polyglossia of all the diverse forms of Arabic deployed by Jews. From a transnational perspective, the spoken "Judeo-Arabic" of Iraq, despite some common features,

differs from the "Judeo-Arabic" of Morocco. Even within single countries like Iraq, Jews deployed various dialects. The Jewish dialect of Baghdad and Mosul differed from that of the town of 'Ana, where Jews spoke basically the same dialect as the Muslims, with the exception of some Hebrew and Aramaic phrases largely used for specific Jewish concepts and practices. The minor/major linguistic positionality among Jewish speakers within one country also shifts as they move across borders. While the dialect of 'Ana's Jewish speakers had been closer to the dominant Iraqi dialect, and thus "major," it had been "minor" among most Jews in Iraq. With the dislocation to Israel, the "major" dialect of Iraq became audibly "minor" among Iraqi speakers in Israel.

I am here concerned less with mutual incomprehension between dialects than with communication *across* dialects and with multiplicities *within* languages. Arabic, as we know, does not form a unified linguistic site. Indeed, its pluralities have been the subject of much scholarly inquiry. Even apart from the question of differing classical and demotic forms, Arabic is the polyphonic host to multiple accents as well as regional and ethnic dialects. There have been valuable studies of this kind of plurality in relation to "Judeo-Arabic language." However, apart from the tendency toward a rather isolationist prism, the very rubric "Judeo-Arabic" has the effect of sliding over this heteroglossic side of Arabic itself. It implies that the "Jewish" characteristics stand apart in a special locus, when in fact these could equally well be seen as typical of Arabic generally. Like Arabic in general, Jewish forms of Arabic were varied and heteroglossic. Thus the plurality of Jewish-Arabic idioms, within a region or a country, is integral to the plurality of Arabic itself—hence "Arabics," in the plural. To put it differently, Jews often spoke a variety of Arabic dialects, but also, in certain times and places, there was no distinction at all between the Arabic spoken by Jews and that of their non-Jewish neighbors. In this sense, we can regard Arabic in general, and Jewish-Arabic idioms more specifically, as what Bakhtin called "situated utterances," as historicized, conjunctural, and constantly shifting media of communication.[18] The case of Jewish-Arabic idioms provides a vivid instance of Bakhtin's insight that languages exist and take form at the borders of languages, in their interface and mutual hybridization. All languages, in this sense, are translanguages, interacting with other languages.

The scholarship on Judeo-Arabic language has tended to focus on written texts, especially on medieval documents.[19] For over a millennium, Arab-Jewish thinkers wrote in Arabic, including to comment on the Hebrew language, often mediating between the two textual worlds. Sa'adia Ben Yoseph Gaon (also known as Sa'id Ibn Yussef al-Fayumi, Fayyum/Baghdad, 882-942 AD), for example, translated the Torah into Arabic, along with his *tafsir* (Arabic for exegesis), thus reflecting what is commonly referred to as "the Arabization of Jews" and even to a certain extent what could be viewed as the Islamicization of Judaism in Mesopotamia.[20] (Similarly, one might also speak of mutual theological co-implications, since Judaism and Christianity also impacted Islam from its very beginning). Within a kind of comparative philology of Arabic and Hebrew, Sa'adia Gaon examined Hebrew through Arabic, highlighting the links between their "rooted" vocabularies (especially in his *Kutub al-Lugha* or *Books of Language*).[21] And this early version of etymology studies and what later came to be called "comparative linguistics," was further elaborated in Sephardi texts of al-Andalus and beyond.[22] Over the centuries, the diverse translations of the Bible did not necessarily take the *fusha* form, but rather that of the local Arabic dialects written in Hebrew script. Referred to by the Arabic word *sharh* (explanation), these translations made the Torah accessible to those unschooled in Hebrew, facilitating the teaching of the Bible.[23]

A millennium later, Hakham Yoseph Hayyim (Baghdad, 1834-1909 AD) continued the tradition of writing Arabic-in-Hebrew-letters, selecting it as his medium for *Qanun al-Nisa'* (*The Law of Women*).[24] Directed largely toward women, this Arabic text in Hebrew letters was composed in a context where Jewish men, and to a lesser degree Jewish women, were traditionally trained to read Hebrew script, regardless of their actual knowledge of the Hebrew language. Indeed, Babylonian/Iraqi prayer books (which have continued to be printed in Israel) have often featured three languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, all rendered in Hebrew script—with the Arabic expressed in the "major" Jewish-Iraqi dialect used for ritual instructions.[25] Assuming Arabic as the language for mediating Jewish practices, *Qanun al-Nisa'* mobilized largely the local vernacular as its main vehicle. Along with women who could read the text, those with little education in Arabic and Hebrew alphabets could comprehend it aurally when the text was read aloud. Although scholars have classified the language of *Qanun al-Nisa'* as

Judeo-Arabic par excellence, the author designated it as "*lafdh 'arabi*" (idiomatic Arabic) that "the Baghdadis speak among themselves" and which is "comprehensible for women throughout the countries of Arabistan and Hindustan."[26] The Hebrew translation by the Iraqi-Jewish Ben-Tzion Salman Musafi, similarly, declares itself as a translation "from the Arabic language to the sacred language."[27] Seen as a locus classicus of Judeo-Arabic, *Qanun al-Nisa'*, then, describes its language as Arabic, a definition which points to the necessity of rethinking the axioms of contemporary designations.

In fact, such textual instances also demonstrate that the diverse Arabic idioms deployed by Arab-Jews possess complex relations between the written and the spoken, not because of the presumed tensions between Jews and the surrounding Arab culture, but rather because of the generally complex relations between written Arabic and its multiple dialects, resulting in a complex spectrum of forms of address. Here I will discuss "Judeo-Arabic" less in terms of its status as a medieval written language than in terms of the function of living Jewish-Arabic vernaculars—as spoken, written, and performed as part of folklore, popular music, film, and even political protest. I am interested also in the residues of Arabics in Hebrew literature, especially when the Arabic-speaking diegetic world of the novel is mediated, filtered and masked by the Hebrew text. At the same time, I will stress the imaginary, phantasmatic dimension of "Judeo-Arabic" as both rejected and desired in the wake of linguistic dislocation from the Arabic-speaking world. Despite a history of rupture and discontinuity, the Arabics spoken and written by Jews remain intimately linked, even across the Israeli/Arab border, to a living and variegated aggregation of Arabics. In this sense, my purpose is to transnationalize the comparative discussion of "Judeo-Arabic" in order, hopefully, to avoid the pitfalls of the reification of differences and the erasure of commonalities, or for that matter, the converse reification of commonalities and the erasure of differences.[28] Instead of the nationalist and pan-ethnic exceptionalism that tends to generate a bipolar comparison, I examine "Judeo-Arabic" within a relational comparative approach that highlights a dialogical perspective on cultural formations partially out-of-sync with nation-state borders. As religiously inflected dialects of Arabic, Jewish-Arabic idioms encode Jewish cultural practices, while also carrying the traces of multiple languages linked to regional histories, including, but not exclusively, Hebrew. Jewish versions of Arabic, like the diverse Arabics

of their own region, are multiple, and reveal the historical layers of various languages. "Judeo-Arabic," I therefore suggest, is a slippery signifier that must be understood relationally, in its multiple situations and contexts.

From Babel, But to Which Language?

Mesopotamia is Biblically associated with the tower of Babel and the mythic origins of one language when God's punishment resulted in the confusion (*bilbul* in Hebrew and *balbala* in Arabic) of tongues: the babble of mutually incomprehensible languages. Here I will address Iraq less as the site of the confounding of languages than as the veritable cornucopia of tongues. As in the rest of the Arab world, educated Jews in Iraq could read and write *fusha* or literary Arabic, including Qur'anic Arabic. Arabic written in Hebrew script—whether literary or colloquial Arabic—was largely reserved for intracommunal purposes that included religious, cultural, educational, and financial matters. In cases where a Jewish dialect differed from its religious/ethnic neighbors, Jews exhibited some versatility. Their spoken Arabic was diglossic, giving them the ability to communicate in the standard Muslim dialect, depending on their degree of interaction with Muslims. The distinctions of the three main Arabic dialects or speech-modes in Baghdad that were marked by religion—Muslim, Christian, and Jewish—existed against the backdrop of an assumed common matrix. While some Baghdadi-Jews were utterly fluent in the Muslim dialect, others mixed the two, speaking "broken" versions of that dialect (just as later some spoke broken Hebrew in Israel). Eli Amir's Hebrew novel *Mafriah ha-Yonim* (*The Dove Flyer*) set in the Baghdad of the late 1940s stages dialogues between Muslim and Jewish characters. Some of the latter address the Muslims in the Jewish dialect and some mix the two.[29] The Muslim characters often address the Jews in the dominant dialect. The novel assumes the proximity of the Jewish and the Muslim speech-modes, portraying a situation of communication across the dialectal differences. Nor were the communities physically or culturally ghettoized, existing in hermetic isolation. Both upper/middle-class and poorer areas had residents of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The dense alleys of Baghdad's older Jewish neighborhoods, such as Tatran and Farajallah, had Muslim residents as well—some of whom were fluent in the Jewish dialect. The proximity of neighbors suggests that Baghdad's Muslims, Christians, and Jews—even when they were not fluent in each

other's speech-mode and even when they were non-literate in Arabic—were for the most part, as often occurs within intra-linguistic situations, basically intelligible to each other.

Some studies of Baghdad's Jewish vernacular have treated it as completely unintelligible to non-Jews. Within this bifurcating grid, the Baghdadi-Jewish vernacular is thoroughly different in nature and distinct in origin from the Muslim dialect. Researching the speech of the Iraqi-Jews who arrived to Israel, Haim Blanc distinguished the Jewish *qiltu* from the Muslim *gilit* dialect, acknowledging a regional North/South influence but emphasizing distinct origins that led to the religious communal division in Baghdad.[30] The Baghdadi religious difference, however, could also be read through an alternative prism and within a relationality that would highlight not simply the gulf splitting Jewish and Muslim speech but rather the linguistic overlappings across and between religious communities. The Jewish-Baghdadi dialect could be renarrated as a variation of the Muslawi dialect (i.e., the Northern dialect from around the city/region of Mosul), spoken, even if with some nuances, by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. In this sense, a Muslim from Mosul spoke a dialect closer to the Jewish-Baghdadi than to the Muslim-Baghdadi dialect. In terms of pronunciation, meanwhile, the Jewish-Iraqi dialect generally, like the Muslawi dialect, is closer to the *fusha* pronunciation than that of the Baghdadi-Muslim and Southern Iraqi, despite its status as the dominant dialect. For example, in the Jewish-Baghdadi speech-mode, as generally in the Muslawi dialect, the letter *qaf* is pronounced as *qaf*, and not as the hard *gim*; and the letter *kaf* as *kaf* and not as *cha*. But the *ra* is pronounced as *ghayn*, in contrast to *fusha* and the dominant Muslim dialect, yet in conformity with the Muslawi dialect of Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Certain words, in the Jewish-Baghdadi and Muslawi dialects, would be pronounced differently (e.g., *ana* for I, as in *fusha*, but in contrast to the dominant dialect of *ani*, with stress on the first syllable) while the musicality, as a whole, differs. In sum, the scholarly emphasis on the religious-ethnolect differentiation (especially of "the Jewish" vis-à-vis "the Muslim") within one city could also be rearticulated so as to highlight regional commonalities across ethno/religious communities and without erasing certain specificities often having to do with religious vocabulary. Understanding Iraq's complexity requires treating its diverse communities as negotiating multiple tongues that have been shaped by related and inter-

secting linguistic histories, especially of Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic, but also of Persian, Turkish, and to an extent Kurdish. Furthermore, that ethno-religious dimension, however significant, forms only one component for a multi-axis analysis that has to take on region, class, and gender to address the interlocution of the Arabics of Jews in relation to the Arabics of Muslims.

Despite idiomatic differences, in the context of Baghdad for example, Jewish code-switching allowed them to move in and out of the Jewish and the Muslim dialects depending on the context, necessity, and ability of the speaker. Baghdadi-Jews, furthermore, pronounced some words and expressions in the Muslim dialect, or in a mixture of the two dialects. Much could be said about the various distinctions in pronunciation, vocabulary, and accent between the diverse dialects, but these differences within a city or a country hardly prevented neighboring Jews, Muslims, and Christians from mutual comprehension. Broader regional differences, however, did prevent Jews of the Maghrib and Jews of the Mashriq, for example, from easily comprehending each other. In Israel, within the Babel of languages of the 1950s and 1960s, Arab-Jews from very different countries could communicate on a basic level, but the communication required greater straining of the ears and tongues than communication with their former Muslim neighbors. The differences within the Arabics spoken by Jews, then, mirror and echo the differences within Muslim forms of Arabic in the Mashriq and the Maghrib. Iraqi and Moroccan Jews, especially those lacking knowledge of *fusha*, did not share a mutually intelligible language called "Judeo-Arabic." Iraqi-Jews (speakers of what is commonly referred to in the Mashriq as *'ammiyya*) and Moroccan-Jews (speakers of what is commonly referred to in the Maghrib as *darija*), like Iraqi-Muslims and Moroccan-Muslims, had to twist their pronunciation in order to communicate. These mutually unintelligible variants of Arabic clearly suggest that Jewish-Iraqi and Jewish-Moroccan vernaculars were far closer to Muslim-Iraqi and Muslim-Moroccan vernaculars, respectively, than to the vernaculars of their coreligionists in other regions of the Arab world.

In cities such as Baghdad and Basra, linguistic interaction took many forms: Jews who spoke both the Jewish and Muslim dialects; Muslims living in close proximity to Jews who could switch to the Jewish dialect; Jewish singers who sang in the Muslim dialect; and less often, Muslim singers who sang in the Jewish dialect. All these examples reflect the minor/major lin-

guistic dynamics. Even internal Jewish-Baghdadi interlocution was hardly a "pure" vernacular affair, as Jewish speakers would invoke the Muslim-Baghdadi dialect, whether through the pronunciation of certain words to underline a point, or through relaying a proverb commonly expressed in the Muslim speech-mode. This penchant did not fully cease in Israel. In everyday speech and staged events, speakers and performers would sometimes switch to the Muslim-Baghdadi dialect, at times along with literary Arabic and Hebrew. This Iraqi mélange is evident in the cultural events organized by the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center in Or Yehuda, Israel, even in its Jewish-vernacular oriented series on the wedding tradition, which included a humorous sketch on matchmaking (*dlala*), written and performed by Salman Abdalla and Yishaq Battat. With their participation in modern Arab nationalism, Jewish writers increasingly used *fusha* in their essays, books, and memoirs. Yet the texts sometimes deployed local vernaculars to offer the flavor of a dialogue, as in the memoir *Qissat hayati fi wadi al-rafidayn* (*The Story of My Life in Mesopotamia*) by poet, journalist, and editor Anwar Sha'ul, or as in Samir Naqqash's novels (written in Arabic in Israel), which invoked the polyphony of Iraqi dialects and accents, for example in his *Nabuat Rajil Majnoon fi Madina Mal'una (Prophecies of a Madman in a Cursed City)*.[31] Even Hebrew novels about Iraq by authors such as Sami Michael, Shimon Ballas, and Eli Amir convey this multiplicity and the displaying of mutual intelligibility.

One could therefore argue that Jews communicated in the Arabic dialect of their region, but with certain Jewish inflections. The difference was sometimes just a minor matter of vocabulary. With the exception of specific Hebrew and Aramaic words linked to religion, the Beiruti Arabic spoken by Jews, for example, did not differ from that of their neighbors; their speech-mode indicated their class position more than their religion. But at other times, as in the case of Baghdad, the difference was a matter of pronunciation, musicality, vocabulary, and expressions. For example, the word for yesterday in the Jewish vernacular is *bohi* whereas in the Muslim it is *ilbarha* or *mbarha*. In the Baghdadi-Jewish dialect, plurals might not always correspond to *fusha*'s grammatical norms, especially in the case of broken plurals (*jami' taksir*) that do not follow the masculine/feminine plural pattern (of the suffix *un* or *at*). Instead, some plurals follow the non-broken plural rule, often in the feminine plural (*at*). For example, *kutub* (books),

the grammatically broken plural for *kitab* (book) in Arabic, becomes, in the Jewish-Baghdadi dialect, the "incorrect" *ktabat*. One does find Hebrew and Aramaic borrowings in the Iraqi-Jewish dialect, which are not shared by the Muslim dialects of Iraq, including the Muslawi. For example, the word *meswa* derives from the Hebrew *mitzvah* (charitable act) but pronounced in the Arabic as *wa*, since the Hebrew letter *v*, which does not exist in Arabic, is transformed into *w*. Similarly, *mila* (stress on the first syllable) to designate circumcision and the *bris* celebration, derives from the Hebrew notion of *brit mila* (stress on the last syllable), the Biblical "covenant of the word," or the "covenant of circumcision."

The Jewish-Iraqi vocabulary, however, was simultaneously distinct and shared within the spectrum of Iraq's diverse dialects, all of them inflected by reminders and traces of other languages. Iraqi dialects shared specific words (e.g., *teki*, or *techi* for mulberry, instead of the conventional Arabic, *tut;* and *bizuna*, or *bazun*, rather than the common *fusha* word for cat, *qita*). As in the general Iraqi-Arabic, the Jewish dialect also contains Persian and Turkish words such as *charpaia* for bed, *takhta* for stool, *khosh* for good, from Persian;[32] and *balki* for perhaps, *siz* for the negation suffix, from Turkish (rendered for example in the mixing of the Arabic word *adab*, or manners, and the Turkish *siz* generating the common Iraqi expression *adabsiz*, or ill-mannered). Reflecting Iraq's Indian Ocean links, the culinary vocabulary is also inflected by Hindi and Marathi words such as *amb* and *amba* for mango, used in Iraqi dialect for a mango-pickle called *'amba*. Or, the Iraqi *kichri,* which refers to a dish of rice and red lentils, derives from the Hindi *kuchari*. English words, meanwhile, reflect yet another historical stratum of the inflection of Iraq's Arabic, present in the Jewish dialect as well, e.g. the word *ketli* for kettle; *glass* for glass or cup; and *butle* for bottle—the last two are pronounced with a heavy *l*. The dialect is also fashionably graced by French words like *bouclé* for curls, and *blouse* for blouse. This small sample only begins to illuminate the rich palimpsest of the Iraqi dialect in general including its Jewish-Iraqi variant more specifically.

What is generally classified in the context of Jewish studies as "Judeo Arabic" and as a case of a "Jewish language," significantly, was referenced within Jewish-Baghdadi dialect itself as *haki mal yihud* (the speech of the Jews) in contrast to the neighboring dialect, *haki mal aslam* (the speech of the Muslims). The distinction assumed Arabic as a lingua franca with

variations. Interestingly, it was, to my knowledge, seldom referred to as *haki yihudi* (stress on the *h* as in the Arabic pronunciation, "Jewish speech"), or, on the other side of the religious divide, to *haki meselmi* (Muslim speech).[33] These vernaculars were named according to the religious identity of its speaking subjects rather than according to a religious essence. (The word *haki* in the Jewish-Baghdadi and the general northern Muslawi dialects is pronounced, as in classical Arabic, with the letter *kaf*—in contrast to the dominant Iraqi dialect of *hachi*, typical also of Arabic dialects in the Gulf region.) Rather than being unique, the Judeo-Baghdadi dialect forms part of a linguistic continuum, a specific mélange of elements having to do with the palimpsestic complexities of the region.

What explains the investment in placing Jewish-Arabic vernaculars solely under one umbrella called "Jewishness"? In a certain way, one could cast doubt not only on the concept of "Judeo-Arabic" as a language, but even on the notion of a dialect of Arabic shared among Jews. And when addressing the Arabic written in Hebrew script, especially when the text in question is not written in *fusha* Arabic, the diversity of Arabic suggests that in some ways it is more precise to address the concept of "Judeo-Arabic" as a matter of Arabic idioms variously deployed by Arab-Jews, especially when the content concerns specifically religious matters. Even in their written form, Judeo-Arabic texts mirror the diversity within Arabic itself.[34] Written across various registers, including classical *fusha* and the diverse vernaculars, the Arabic texts written by Jews reflect "high," "low," and in-between Arabic, as well as regionally inflected Arabic. While nationalist discourses emphasize exceptionalist uniqueness, I would argue that *uniqueness*, paradoxically, is not *unique*. We can better view uniqueness as a range of specificities, sometimes shared across the board, which must be examined within a cross-border relational perspective. The problem lies in the casting of Jewish specificities as basically a variation on a Jewish theme, without seeing the counterpart of Jewish specificities as a variation on an Arabic theme. My purpose, therefore, is to highlight the porous boundaries and the elasticity and fluidity of interlocution across the so-called "religious divide." Discerning distinctions between the normative Arabic of a region and specific Jewish inflections need not preclude discerning overlappings through the accommodating prism of differentiated commonalities.

We find a good example of this kind of fluidity in the crossover movement between dialects in the realm of Iraqi music. In contrast to the *fusha* of literature, popular music lyrics deploy colloquial Arabic. Jews, like other religious and ethnic communities, participated in a vital way in the creation and dissemination of Iraqi music, contributing to the *maqam* genre as well as to the popular musical form called *pasta*. Musicians like Saleh and Daoud al-Kuwaity were among the founders of the Iraqi Radio Orchestra. Saleh al-Kuwaity composed the well-known Iraqi song, "Fog al-Nakhel" (Above the Palm Trees), pronounced in the dominant Muslim dialect of Iraq. Sung by multiple generations of Iraqis (and by Arabs of diverse backgrounds), "Fog al-Nakhel" has come to virtually symbolize Iraq across diverse borders.[35] Iraqi-Jews tended to use the Muslim vernacular when writing *pasta* lyrics, with the result that Jews, including those otherwise lacking Arabic literacy, would sing in the normative dialect. Additionally, apart from singing traditional Jewish-Iraqi songs, Jews would commonly sing local songs in the dominant dialect—such as "Tal'a min Bayt Abuha" or the lullaby "Dililol." Furthermore, with the emergence of cinema and radio, Jewish-Iraqis listened to Egyptian music, such as Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab and Umm Kulthum songs, a few of which were inspired by Iraqi music—especially by Saleh al-Kuwaity.[36] In Iraq, apart from traditional *piyyutim* chanted during religious ceremonies, some popular songs on quotidian matters were performed in the Judeo-Baghdadi vernacular.

At times, Muslim-Baghdadi singers performed in the Jewish dialect. For example, one traditional song of unknown authorship consists of the groom's mother expressing ironic praise to the bride's mother. The song, performed on henna nights by a hired group of women called *deqaqat*, was sung in the Jewish-Baghdadi dialect:

'Afaki, 'afaki, (Bravo to you, Bravo to you)
'ala el-fand el-'emeltenu (for the trick you've played)
ana t'abtu, wa-ana shqetu (I tired myself and labored)
'ala el-hadher akhethtenu (And you took him ready made)
'afaki, 'afaki (Bravo to you, Bravo to you)[37]

During the 1920s and 1930s, Rashid al-Qundarchi, a Muslim-Iraqi singer who had many Jewish friends, used to perform a repertoire that included the

'Afaki song at Jewish weddings.[38] He also sang the recorded radio version in which the *chalghi* players were all Jewish musicians.[39] Yusuf Omar, also of Muslim background, sang another version of the *'Afaki* song in the 1940s. In his recorded version, Omar at times inadvertently switched back to the Muslim-Baghdadi pronunciation, singing *shgetu* instead of *shqetu*. Just as Baghdadi-Jews would sometimes slip into the customary Jewish pronunciation of lyrics, some of the Muslims singers would slide in the other direction. Given the minor/major status of the dialects, this fluid code-switching between the two groups was on one level asymmetrical. Yet on another level, it highlights the rather porous boundaries between the so-called "Jewish dialect" and "the Muslim dialect" of Baghdad. This fluidity thus necessitates reimagining the exchange between Jews and Muslims (and other communities) as a case of syncretic speech interlocution.

Code-switching was common, especially for various "minorities," but the ability to code-switch fluently depended on a variety of factors, such as physical proximity, intensity of interactions, and education. A Baghdadi-Jew, especially in educated circles, might switch to the Muslim dialect by incorporating idioms to demonstrate, for instance, his or her full integration into the dominant society. Similarly, educated and wealthier Iraqis—of all religious/ethnic backgrounds—would mix English and French words into their speech as a display of cultural capital. As is often the case, "minorities"—whether Jews or Christians in Baghdad or Basra, or the regionally and ethnically diverse Iraqis of the north—tended to be more fluent in the "major" dialect. While the various communities spoke Arabic, their differences could more or less be discerned by speech-mode, dialects, accents, and also by the languages of disparate communities. Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmen, and Kurds in Baghdad spoke their respective languages at home but Arabic outside, while Muslims (Sunnis and Shi'a), Jews, and Chaldean-Christians spoke Arabic in their specific vernacular, which also reflected various social axes of stratification. Within this multiplicity, the Judeo-Baghdadi dialect constituted only one variant among others. Baghdadi dialects were mutually intelligible. Furthermore, since the dominant *gilit* dialect formed a kind of a lingua franca within public spaces, it was not only the Jewish *qiltu* dialect that was "minoritized," but also a host of other idioms—including minoritized Muslim idioms.

In their memoirs, some Jewish-Iraqi writers simultaneously emphasize the distinctness of the dialect and reveal the mutual imbrication of dialects.

Written in French, Naim Kattan's *Adieu, Babylone: Mémoires d'un juif d'Irak* portrays 1940s Baghdad as a site of coexistence, especially among young intellectuals of varied ethnicities and religions.[40] According to Kattan, they viewed themselves foremost as Iraqis, concerned with the future of their country. The memoir begins with the issue of language, and its colloquial spectrum. In Baghdad, the author asserts: "All of us—Jews, Christians, or Muslims—spoke Arabic. We had been neighbors for centuries. Our accents, certain words, were our distinguishing marks."[41] At the same time, he depicts the Jewish dialect's comic effect in official spaces, and remarks that "the presence of a single Muslim in a group was enough for his dialect to be imposed."[42] Kattan recalls one of those evenings at the Yasine Cafe that was "marked by an unusual note," to wit the decision of his Jewish friend Nessim to speak "in the Jewish dialect."[43] In the mixed presence of Muslims, Chaldeans, Armenians, and two Jews, Nessim's intentional switching into the "minor" dialect shocks the young Kattan. When Nessim directly addresses Kattan in their Judeo-Baghdadi dialect, Kattan does not respond to the call, ignoring or refusing the gesture:

> I chose a middle course. My words were neither those of the Jews nor the Muslims. I spoke in literary Arabic, the Arabic of the Koran. Then in a supercilious tone and with contained anger, Nessim corrected me: "You mean . . ." and he translated into perfect Jewish dialect. He compressed his lips in a gesture of hatred. He exaggerated our accent. I could see in his look a mixture of sorrow and commiseration. I was betraying him. I was ashamed to utter in the presence of the words of intimacy, of home, of friendship.... I could not reject our common language without humiliating myself. It was no longer a the language of friendship, but of the clan. I listened to myself and the Jewish words stood out in all their strangeness, coldly naked. My sentences were frozen.... The Muslims with good grace paid no special attention to the new language that was stating its unaccustomed presence. Generally they looked at us without seeing us. Now, mysteriously, they recognized our features. They were noting a new color in the panoply.[44]

While Nessim carries out a kind of a linguistic "outing," Kattan displays a certain shame in the Judeo-Baghdadi dialect. Kattan ends up asserting *fusha* as a kind of a "middle road" option of not choosing between the Muslim and the Jewish vernaculars. The passage reveals the tension between "major" and "minor" dialects within Baghdadi intellectual space.

It demonstrates Kattan's self-consciousness about the Jewish dialect in the company of non-Jews.[45] Thus, in line with the modernity metanarrative, Kattan's memoir views the Jewish dialect as the language of the particular, "of the clan," in contrast with the more universal language "of the Iraqi nation." It is worth noting that while Kattan uses the French word *dialecte* (dialect) to refer to the actual spoken vernacular, he uses the word *langue* (language) figuratively to emphasize a shared idiom among speakers—whether Arabic in general or a specific dialect.[46] Yet implicit in this scene is also the class position and cultural capital of educated Jews fluent in both the local Muslim dialect and *fusha*.

Published in Canada in 1975, Kattan's memoir pays homage to Iraqi culture while also staging a Jewish liberatory narrative—a kind of cultural *bildungsroman*. Although Jews were the best students of Arabic, he suggests, their identity was nonetheless seen as tainted. The Muslims, he writes:

> felt more Iraqi than the others.... It was no use to say "this is our land and we have been here for twenty-five centuries." "We had been there first." This evening though, was unique. Nessim assumed this tainted identity.... We were Jews and we weren't ashamed...by the end of the evening we had won the game. For the first time the Muslims were listening to us with respect. We were worthy of our dialect.... The masks had fallen. We stood there in our luminous and fragile difference and it was neither a sign of humiliation nor a symbol of ridicule. In a pure Jewish dialect we made our plans for the future of Iraqi culture. We did not take shelter behind the veil of an artificial equality.... Our faces were uncovered, recognized at last.[47]

Kattan narrates Nessim's speech act, retroactively, as a kind of liberatory Jewish-Iraqi gesture. Nessim makes the Jewish dialect—the marker of Jewish identity in Baghdad—audible and thus visible. His pushing of the Baghdadi vernacular boundaries within the intellectual public sphere inspires their non-Jewish friends themselves to begin to use phrases of the Jewish dialect. Kattan depicts sympathetically the friends' efforts to switch, describing it as borrowing "some of our familiar expressions" and stammering over "words they had heard so often but never allowed themselves to cross their lips."[48] As the evening progressed, "Jewish words came more frequently to these foreign mouths," and by the end of the evening their friends "were

being introduced to the Jewish dialect, with much awkwardness as comedy in the serious matter that it was."[49] In this reversal moment, the Jewish dialect ceases to be the butt-of-the-joke, and the non-Jews' efforts to speak it offer Kattan a cathartic relief. By performing a Baghdadi-Jewish identity outside of Jewish homes and neighborhoods, Nessim actively instigates a blurring of the boundary between major and minor Iraqi speech zones. The intellectual's shame in his home idiom is soon replaced by its acceptance, and with it the larger group's incorporation of the Jewish vernacular into the conversation—displaying in Kattan's words "such obvious good will."[50] Here, allegorically, the *haki mal yihud* enters the official symbolic space of the Iraqi nation.

In line with most memoirs (whether in Arabic, Hebrew, French, or English) written by Jewish-Iraqi men of this generation, *Adieu, Babylone* is embedded in the larger metanarrative of modernization. The text is caught between the younger intellectual's shame of the "particular" Jewish marker and a desire for the "universal" Arab. Yet the older authorial self, now outside of Iraq, seems to emphasize Jewish difference in favor of a new (implied) universalism—that of Jewishness. Its otherness within an Arab context comes to allegorize, already at the beginning of the memoir, a sense of inevitable out-of-placeness within Arab geography—hence the title, *Farewell, Babylon*. The memoir (especially in the section on the Alliance school's trip to the ruins of Babylon) alludes to the indigeneity of Jews in Mesopotamia. However, it also implies that the moment of Jewish participation in Arab/Iraq's nationalism was a youthful misperception. While Arabic is the lingua franca, the memoir also portrays Jewishness through the figurative Jewish language as in excess of Arab/Muslim normativity. While the younger Kattan is ashamed of the home idiom and of Judeo-Baghdadi particularity, viewed as tribal, the older Kattan offers a kind of a mea culpa vis-à-vis his Jewish identity—all the while asserting it as a legitimate part of Iraq, the very same Iraq he ends up leaving. Thus the memoir bids farewell not only to Arabic but also to the Jewish-Baghdadi vernacular. Written in his non-native French, the memoir—which defines the author's identity in the subtitle as "a Jew from Iraq" (*Mémoires d'un juif d'Irak*) and not as "an Iraqi-Jew"—highlights the older Kattan's partial distance toward Iraqi-Arabness as a space of national belonging. The "farewell" of the title, significantly, is addressed to Babylon, not simply to Iraq—suggesting a lost

pre-Islamic indigeneity, an oceanic voyage and a route of exile, ironically, from what Jewish tradition sees as "The Exile" par excellence: the waters of Babylon. At the same time, the memoir, which begins with a kind of battle over vernacular interlocution, stages the simultaneous inequality and flexibility of Baghdad's vernaculars, as well as the variegated negotiations of Arabic in the public sphere.

The Persistence of Arabic(s) in Hebrew

A common phenomenon within Arab spaces is the code-switching of speakers moving in and out of dialects, depending on the interlocutors and interlocution. Incorporating a Muslim accent or pronunciation when deemed relevant, even among Jews themselves, continued among Iraqi-Jews in Israel, Britain, and Canada. Speakers of the Jewish-Baghdadi dialect, when telling a story, a joke, or a folktale, or simply reciting words and proverbs, would at times switch to the *gilit* dialect, associated with the dominant Muslim dialect of Iraq. Dialect was more directly related to the everyday, and therefore, more accessible than *fusha* Arabic. An Iraqi folktale trickster figure, Tantal, appeared in stories and even in testimonies of Iraqis of diverse communities, some of whom vividly recount the *jinni*'s demonic deeds. In fact, Tantal's name continued to be evoked after the arrival in Israel, in the transit camps (*ma'abarot*) where some swore that they glimpsed him slinking around the tents. It could be said that Tantal made *'aliyah* to Israel.[51] The figure stands as an example of a shared folk mythology, an intercommunal and transnational figure who moved not only across the supposedly distinct cultures of Jews and Muslims but also across partitioned national borders. Although linguistic realities are subject to the mandates of geopolitics, cultural flow is not reducible to political lines on the map.

In the realm of literature, when Arab-Jews transitioned to writing in Hebrew in Israel, they continued to carry over an Arabic-speaking universe, even relaying expressions taken from Arabic. One such writer is 'Ezra Haddad, a school principal, publisher, journalist, writer, and translator (Arabic, English, Hebrew, French, German, Turkish, and Persian).[52] In 1945, Haddad translated from Hebrew into Arabic the well-known book by the medieval Sephardic traveler, *The Voyages of Benjamin of Tudela*, and later translated from Persian into Hebrew parts of *Rub'iyyat 'Umar al-Khayyam*. He com-

posed *Alpha Beta*, a modern Hebrew language primer for Arabic-speakers, along with *Chapters from the Bible in Narrative Style*, an abridged version of Biblical stories in Arabic—both of which were taught in Jewish schools in Iraq.[53] With his move to Israel, Haddad shifted into writing in Hebrew. Haddad authored *Milestones in the History of Jews in Babylon: Iraq from the Babylonian Captivity, 597 BC to the Mass Exodus to the State of Israel, 1951 AD*.[54] He also published several pseudo-ethnographic stories, wherein he wrote about the life of Iraqi-Jews both in Iraq and after their arrival to Israel, changing some names, but capturing their experience of transition. Although written in Hebrew, these short stories attempt to generate a certain linguistic realism by invoking the Arabic of both Iraq and the transit camps of the 1950s. As generally occurs in exilic or immigrant literature written in a language other than that spoken by the characters, Haddad's stories reflect a tension between the authorial language (i.e., Hebrew) and the diegetic language of the characters (i.e., Arabic).

Haddad's short story "Abu Dawud Mamshikh Lihyot" (Abu Dawud Continues to Live), for example, is written in Hebrew but depicts a world that largely speaks Arabic in Israel. The text assumes Baghdadi colloquial Arabic, in Jewish and at times Muslim dialects, as the normative speech mode, with mostly quotation marks around the Arabic words and parenthetical asides for the Hebrew translation. While making the dialogue seemingly clumsy, the text also makes it more "faithful" to Iraqi-Arabic, conveying a sense of its aural flavor. For example, the protagonist, Abu Dawud, complains about the tasteless coffee: "They serve you some little cup of some boiled liquid, and this they call coffee...fakery, oh boy.'"[55] While the first part of the sentence is expressed in Hebrew, the second is in Arabic (*qashmara, ya walad*). The word, *qashmara,* translated to the Hebrew within parentheses (*la'ag*)—an expression that suggests here something false, highlighting the shocking transition from the intimate quotidian Baghdadi past to the alienating harshness of the development town. Abu Dawud invites the younger man to his place: "There you will receive '*qawha*' and not coffee . . . true *qahwa* and 'you will know God is true.'" While the Hebrew word *qafe* refers to tasteless liquid, the Arabic *qahwa* evokes the emotive space of home. The clash between the two worlds is allegorized through the tensions between Hebrew and Arabic. While Hebrew describes the new unrelenting reality on the ground, the Arabic encodes a meta-commentary appraising that reality.

The Arabic word for "falsity" reflects the point of view of an Iraqi in Israel, whereby Arabic, even within the Hebrew story, carries the implied cultural "norms of the text."[56] Haddad's "Abu Dawud Continues to Live" deploys Arabic to convey simultaneously a sense of authenticity and criticism.

In various instances, Arabic words and phrases have the effect of subjectivizing the Iraqi-Jews, a literary device that gains significance in the context of their objectification within the hegemonic Hebrew language. The text often invokes Arabic in conjunction with the protagonist recalling his life in Iraq. The Arabic of the Hebrew text accentuates the embeddedness of Iraqi-Jews in Arabic culture, as in the following Arabic expressions, shared by Muslims and Jews: *yakhrib baythum* (may their house/home be destroyed); *ta'rif allah haq* (you will know God is true); *hukum allah 'ala al-'ayn wa-'ala al-ra's* (God's judgment on the eye and the head); *iradat allah* (God willing); and *rahat al-ayyam wa-rah 'umri wiyyahum* (gone are the days, and with them my life).[57] The Arabic-within-the-Hebrew mediates the pained experience of the recently displaced Iraqi-Jews. The story constantly shuttles between Hebrew and Arabic within a bifurcated narrative that homologizes a split existence—one in Iraq and one in Israel. The dialogue conveys the difficulty of untying the Hebrew tongue from Arabic especially when the characters are addressing the move from Iraq to Israel. In this world of cultural and linguistic transition, the transit camp functions as a chronotope for Iraqis' suspended life, existing between unbridgeable times and spaces. The diegetic world of the protagonist is mirrored in the author's heteroglossic text. In this sense, Haddad writes, quite literally, "in-between" the two languages. The intersection of Hebrew and Arabic in the text comes to allegorize both the rupture and a certain cross-border continuation. While the rupture is mediated through modern Hebrew, the continuation is mediated through Arabic. A sense of continuity despite rupture is conveyed through the presence of Arabic in the Hebrew text, which could be viewed as extending the traditional practice of writing Arabic in Hebrew script. The departure from traditional Hebrew paradoxically leads the Arabic translator of the Torah, Haddad, to generate what could be considered a new mode of "Judeo-Arabic"—i.e., writing vernacular Arabic in Hebrew script performed now within the textual space of modern Hebrew. If the Arabic of Arab-Jews manifested the traces of Biblical/traditional Hebrew, contemporary Hebrew manifests the traces of vernacular Arabic, including Iraqi, Egyptian, Yemeni, Moroccan, and Palestinian dialects.

The challenging question of the relationship between Hebrew and Arabic in literature impacted the reception of this literature. For decades, Hebrew novels by Arab-Jewish writers were described as not really bona fide Hebrew literature, as merely "Arabic in translation." In contrast, my purpose here is to highlight precisely the in-betweenness of Hebrew and Arabic, including in its Jewish-Arabic vernacular variants. This intense mixing of languages characteristic of Haddad's stories was gradually abandoned by younger Arab-Jewish writers in Israel in favor of the dominant modern Hebrew. In their fiction, the Iraqi-Israeli writers Sami Michael and Shimon Ballas completely shifted from Arabic to writing fiction in Hebrew, and in contrast to their predecessor Haddad, Arabic was only occasionally used explicitly in Hebrew throughout their texts. Over the years, diverse authors have moved away from the earlier device of the translation-via-parenthesis. Eli Amir's *The Dove Flyer*, for example, deploys Iraqi-Arabic either with direct or indirect translation, through additional explanation in Hebrew. When not explicitly deployed, Arabic traces nonetheless can be detected in their novels, forming, I would argue, a submerged presence in their prose. Some of the phrases in Michael's novels do not exactly exist in Hebrew, yet reading/hearing the Arabic in the Hebrew conveys another linguistic stratum. One line from the novel *Victoria*, set in the Baghdad of the first half of the twentieth century, reads: "*'Aziza, dai, at okhelet lo et ha-lev*" (roughly translating into "'Aziza, stop. You're eating his heart").[58] This Hebrew sentence derives from the common Arabic expression, and implicitly evokes Jewish-Baghdadi vernacular: "*'Aziza, bas, qa-taklenu el-qalbu.*" Echoing a common daily phrase used to complain about someone complaining, the novel's phrase forms a remainder of the Iraqi dialect within Hebrew. The residual presence of Arabic generally and of the Iraqi-Jewish and Muslim dialects more specifically generate dissonance between the explicit Hebrew and the implicit Arabic. In such instances, the Hebrew "betrays" or "outs" the very same linguistic universe it masks—the Baghdadi vernacular.

Thus one finds the traces of Arabic-Iraqi languagedness in Hebrew, especially when the novel's diegetic world involves Iraq itself and Iraqis in Israel. In contrast to Haddad's back-and-forth between Hebrew and Arabic, Michael and Ballas's Hebrew "stands in" for Arabic. Along with the Jewish and Muslim Iraqi dialects, at times other Arabic dialects are invoked in Hebrew, for example, the Palestinian dialect in Michael's *Hasut* (*Refuge*),

or the Palestinian and the Egyptian dialects in *Shavim ve-Shavim Yoter* (*All Men are Equal—But Some are More*).[59] In other cases, *fusha* is invoked especially within the space of reflexive novels, as in the formal speeches given by the intellectual protagonist of Ballas's *ve-Hu Aher* (*And He Is an Other*), or in the texts written by the protagonist of Michael's *Mayim Noshkim le-Mayim (Water Kissing Water),* which revolves around a writer who used to write in Arabic but who despairs of ever successfully transitioning into Hebrew.[60] In contrast to Samir Naqqash, who refused to transition into writing in Hebrew, and who continued in Israel to depict in Arabic the world of Iraqi-Jews and their various ethnic/religious neighbors, the older generation of writers—Haddad, Michael, and Ballas—did transition into Hebrew. Yet their texts have not escaped the "ghosts" of Arabic. In their novels' linguistic masquerade, Arabic haunts the Hebrew text. In some ways, one could regard such Hebrew fictional practice as a new mode of "Judeo-Arabic," in the sense that the texts are written in Hebrew yet are permeated by Arabic through an entire spectrum of devices such as parentheses, quotation marks, transliteration, and allusion.

Diverse Arabic vernaculars have continued to live in Israel not only in everyday speech, music, folktales, and religious practices but also in sociopolitical expression. In the 1950s and 1960s, Arab-Jews sang praise and protest songs in Arabic dialects, performed in political spaces as well as in gatherings and festivities. The satirical song, "Ash Suwet Ben Gurion?" (What Have You Done Ben Gurion?), in the Judeo-Baghdadi dialect, concerns the *ma'abara*'s abysmal situation, and poses a rhetorical question addressed to Ben Gurion, but also stresses a strong regret about leaving Iraq. The repeated verse refers to the *tasqit,* the act of giving up Iraqi citizenship, as self-delusional:

> *Tiyaghat el-soda wa-la kan jabetna* (Accursed airplane, better had it not brought us) /
> *Kan ghkabna hmagha wa-la kan wusalna* (Better we had ridden a donkey and hadn't arrived) /
> *Ash suwet Ben Gurion?* (What have you done Ben Gurion?) /
> *Hejajt kel el-kon* (You perturbed the whole universe) /
> *'Ala el-di'aya jina wu-seqatna* (Because of the propaganda we came and gave up our citizenship) /

dakhlet bina duda wu-keletna gharna (A bug drove us nuts and we all rushed headlong) /
Ash suwet Ben Gurion? ...
Wu-ash ma qalolna hitch ma sedaqna! (And as much as they warned us we just didn't believe it!)
Ash suwet Ben Gurion? ...[61]

This hugely popular song had several verses and diverse versions, all bitterly ironic, which address, in the major Jewish-Iraqi dialect, the new realities in Israel. Expressing their views in Arabic continued in Israel due to the fact that many could not (yet) speak Hebrew. However, it also accentuated the feeling of belonging to a Judeo-Iraqi space—an identity persisting even after their arrival in a Hebrew-Israeli space.

In the realm of music, Jewish-Iraqi musicians continued to compose *maqam* and *pasta* in Israel, writing lyrics in the major Jewish-Iraqi dialect. Some songs, like the praise song "Bint el-Moshab" (The Moshav's Daughter) and "Hiyya 'Iraqiyya!" (She's an Iraqi!), assume Israel's new realities. Other songs continue the traditional commentary on quotidian tensions, as in the farcical lyrics of "Abdalek Lulu," sung from the point of view of the husband addressing his spendthrift wife. Iraqi music, performed by such singers as Milu Hamama, Filfel Gourgy, Najat, and Iman (Susanne Shaharabani), has helped shape an unperturbed musical home-away-from-home for the displaced Iraqi-Jews, in Israel, Britain, Canada, and the United States. On one level, the very taboo around Arabness in the wake of the Arab-Israeli conflict has led to a gradual abandoning of Arabic(s), especially given the history of discipline-and-punish of Arabic in Israel, including the Arabic idioms spoken by Jews. Yet at the same time, Arabic has not fully disappeared, continuing to exist within communal spaces. And in fact, today one can even speak of a kind of a return of the linguistic repressed.

The Return of the Linguistic Repressed

The question of rupture and return persists, even decades after the departure from Arab/Muslim spaces. A few sequences from Inigo Gilmore's documentary *The Last Jew of Babylon* (Al Jazeera, 2005) illuminate the situation in the wake of the 2003 Israeli rescue operation of the few remaining Jews in Baghdad, after both the major 1950s exodus and the post-1967 departure.

The film follows a vibrant elderly man, 'Ezra Levi, whose family departed to Israel in 1950-51, although Levi stayed in Baghdad, surrounded by many friends. We see him first in Baghdad, in his large house, and later, after his move to Israel in 2005, to a small apartment. Throughout the film, 'Ezra communicates in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. His linguistic interactions are fraught with the clashing Arabic and Hebrew ideological universes. 'Ezra visits a classroom in Israel, where he speaks about the life he left behind in a heavily Iraqi-accented traditional/Biblical Hebrew, the language taught in Iraq for millennia. 'Ezra's father was a Hebrew teacher. The gap between his traditional Hebrew and the pupils' modern Hebrew is paralleled by the discursive tensions between 'Ezra, who praises Iraq, and the pupils, who exoticize the Diaspora remainder, "the Babylonian Jew." In another sequence, 'Ezra meets his younger sister, who insists that she does not know Arabic. While the issue of the taboo surrounding Arabic (including its Jewish variants) and Arabness generally is too often presented as a thing of the past in Israel, the following dialogue reveals an internalized linguistic policing that is quite current:

> Levi (Arabic): *Ashlon kefek*? (How are you?)
> Levi's sister (Hebrew): *Metsuyan*! (Excellent!)
> Levi (Arabic): *Hke bil-'arabi*! (Speak Arabic!)
> Levi's sister (Hebrew and Arabic): Lama, *Ana lo yoda'at kolkakh.*
> (Why I don't really know)
> Levi (Arabic): *Ahsan*...(Better)
> Levi's brother-in-law (Hebrew): *'Aravi*...
> Levi (English): Arabic.
> Levi's brother in law (Hebrew): 'Arabish, *'Arabush.*
> Levi (Hebrew): *Lema'an*...(in order to...) [Levi shifts into
> English]: because everone knowns we are Arab[s].
> Levi's sister (tugging on the lapel of her brother's jacket)
> Levi (raises his voice in English and Arabic): We are Arab[s]. *Yalla.*[62]

Levi's assertion of Arabness makes his sister visibly uncomfortable, to the point that she pulls nervously on his lapel and sighs. Her gently censorious gesture places Levi in the position of the naïf reprimanded for expressing inappropriate enthusiasm. At the end of the dialogue, Levi exclaims in English:

"We are Arabs!" He thus negates his sister's denial of Arabic, including of their Judeo-Baghdadi home dialect, a denial ironically pronounced in her heavily Iraqi-accented Hebrew.

All the tensions around language and belonging are allegorically condensed in this encounter. In contrast with the sister, who is ashamed to speak Arabic, and with his brother-in-law, who utters a racist slur against Arabs (i.e., the Hebrew term *'arabush*), Levi is at ease with his Muslim friends in Iraq and with Palestinians in Israel. Later in the film, Levi ends up speaking Arabic with the Palestinians he meets in places like Jaffa. Their dialogue mingles accents and vocabularies, in accordance with the habitual attempt among Arabic speakers of different regions to "meet" on mutually intelligible linguistic ground. The anxiety, shame, and internalization of the taboo around Arabness is staged, as it were, between two members of the same family, one who remained in Iraq and proudly asserts his Arabness and his Arabic, and another who moved to Israel, embarrassed by the same language and identity. Her Hebrew, meanwhile, betrays a heavy Iraqi accent, and a "slip" suggests that she knows more Arabic than she lets on; she uses the Arabic first-person singular *ana*, and not the Hebrew *ani* (stress on the last syllable). At different points, the consciousness of the camera, with its capacity to turn the private into a public sphere, makes speaking Arabic a charged enunciation. The sister may speak Arabic in a private space, but avoids performing it in the public sphere, in the presence of the camera.

Despite what could be seen as a self-colonized denial of Arabic, Arab-Jews/Mizrahim have not completely stopped using their versions of colloquial Arabic in their homes, neighborhoods, synagogues, or parties. The second generation of Iraqi-Israeli singers, for example, continues to perform in the dominant Muslim dialect of Baghdad. Despite being raised in Israel, where the *qiltu* dialect was normative, singers such as Yaakov Nashawi, Yaakov El-Alali, Yossef Bagdadi, Aziz Jalal, and Nissim Maghboura perform in the dominant Muslim-Iraqi dialect to Iraqi-Jewish audiences who join in the collective singing. Aziz Jalal, for example, sings Iraqi songs famously performed by Nazem al-Ghazali, a Muslim-Iraqi who was married to the well-known Jewish-Iraqi singer, Salima Pasha Murad—who stayed in Iraq and converted to Islam. In his rendition of al-Ghazali's "*gulli ya hilu mnayn allah jabak*" (tell me, oh beautiful one, from where God has brought you), Jalal pronounces the lyrics in the dominant Iraqi *gilit* dialect. Performed

for Iraqi-Jewish-Israeli audiences, by singers who have never lived in Iraq and grew up with no actual contact with Muslim-Iraqis, such music evokes a context that would, otherwise, be seen as completely forgotten. In such Iraqi-Jewish collective spaces, music comes to enact a sense of cultural continuity despite the fragmentation triggered by the overnight rupture from the cultural geography of Arabic. A vernacular return to the Muslim-Iraqi dialect invokes the memory of the Muslim-Iraqi neighbors, now across the enemy border. The *gilit* dialect's presence brings with it the remembered sensations of Baghdad's streets, recalling Arabic as a living language in the public sphere. The sonic embodiment of the absent Muslim also has the effect of inviting the past neighbors to the *hafla*. In such get-togethers Judeo-Baghdadi-Arabic, which has been increasingly mixed with Hebrew (in Israel), or with English (in Britain, the United States, and Canada), makes an imaginary return to its vernacular Iraqi geography.

In contrast to the salvage grid premised on a coherent Judeo-Arabic language to be captured in its putatively pure and authentic form, then, one could instead adopt a different paradigm that would illuminate Jewish-Arabic idioms, even in their contemporary diasporic broken and fragmented performance, as new modes of linguistic syncretism. Currently, the younger generations of Arab-Jews/Mizrahim, both inside and outside of Israel, express considerable anxiety about the possible disappearance of their home mother-tongue, or of their grandparents' Arabic. The current period has witnessed an almost frenzied attempt, evident in multiple sites and spaces, to revive the various home Arabic dialects. A second and third generation of Jews of Iraqi, Moroccan, or Tunisian backgrounds, even though they never lived in the Arab world, are singing in Arabic dialects, including in its Jewish variations. Partially due to the anxiety provoked by the imminent disappearance of the older generation that actually lived in the Arab world, there has been a remarkable resurgence among the younger generation of performance in Arabic dialects. In music as well as in theater and cinema, capturing the Arabics spoken by Jews becomes a kind of affective return to Arab spaces in the wake of historical rupture. The 2014 Nissim Dayan adaptation of *The Dove Flyer* brought to the screen the Hebrew novel's diegetic Jewish-Baghdadi dialect (and some Muslim-Baghdadi), thus unmasking the Hebrew-standing-in-for-Arabic in literature. On the screen, the Hebrew subtitles mediate the audible Arabic for the non-speakers

of the dialect. Similarly, the recent attempts to create digital dictionaries of Judeo-Iraqi or Judeo-Moroccan dialects, where participants debate the expressions and proverbs, also form part of this affective return. While there is no shared politics around Israel and Palestine—the views cover the entire spectrum—there is a clear effort at re-membering. The cultural politics around Arabic and its Jewish speakers has been itself embedded in the Israeli/Arab conflict, but the act of re-membrance necessarily recalls millennia of Jews' Arabness, although the Arab cultural geography is no longer of and for Jews.

This cultural return to Arabic gains significance when seen against the past traumatic rupture. Several decades after the dislocation, the Arabics of Arab-Jews need to be addressed in relation to a broader transnational comparative study of very diverse histories of linguistic interaction. It would seem that a paradigmatic immigrant narrative of shame and abandonment of the mother tongue would be relevant to the crossing of various Arabic speakers into Israel. This is clear in the frequent self-rejection of home-languages on the part of immigrants' children—for example of Yiddish by Ashkenazi-Americans, or of Arabic by Arab-Americans in the United States. At the same time, the cross-border movement of Arab-Jews was far from a straightforward immigration history. It took place in the context of colonial partition. Elsewhere I have argued that no single term—*'olim*, immigrants, exiled, refugees, etc.—captures the complex nature of the displacement of Arab-Jews, especially due to the much-debated issue of agency, i.e., whether or not Arab-Jews actually wanted to depart.[63] Thus the discussion of the negotiation of Arabic and Hebrew in Israel depends on the definition of this cross-border movement. In any event, the linguistic arrival of Yiddish as well as of various dialects of Arabic to Israel was not met and experienced in the same way. Furthermore, while for the Zionists Yiddish was the "Diaspora language" to be replaced by modern Hebrew, for Sephardim/Arab-Jews/Mizrahim in Israel Yiddish was associated with the language of Ashkenazi hegemony.[64] In the United States, the immigrant shame about Yiddish differed from its status in Israel, where it was associated with the class and ethnic power of the Ashkenazim. In the context of the US "melting pot," one can speak of parallel immigrant shame concerning both Yiddish and Arabic. However, in the context of the Israeli-Arab war zone, Yiddish and Arabic (including the more legitimate notion of "Judeo-Arabic") fall

on opposite sides of the national divide. Against this historical backdrop, any return to Arabic is entangled in the official and internalized taboo.

While Judeo-Arabic has been classified as an "endangered language" (a subject to which I will return), the various Arabic dialects spoken by Jews continue to participate in ambient linguistic syncretism—including in the form of worldwide currents that impact all languages/dialects. For example, the hybridization of languages and musical styles in world music, where Arabic mixes with Spanish (e.g., Hanin's Lebanese/Cuban musical collaboration) has also characterized Mizrahi music with its mixing of Arabic and Hebrew. Diverse Arab musicians have been at the forefront of musical hybridization. Since the 1960s, the Iraqi musician Ilham al-Madfa'i, for example, merged traditional Iraqi music with other forms of contemporary music such as rock, pop, jazz, and salsa. Around the same period, the Algerian-French Jew Enrico Macias melded Andalusian-Arabic music with French, Spanish, and other Mediterranean musical traditions.[65] This general trend toward syncretic forms has been taking place also within Israel/Palestine and the Arab world. Mizrahi music displays affinities and parallels with Egyptian, Greek and Turkish pop music, for example. The Mizrahi return to the older generation's Arabic music is sometimes performed through fusion, as in the case of Dudo Tassa, the grandson of Daoud al-Kuwaity, who literally returns to his grandfather's music in his 2011 album, "Dudu Tassa and the Kuwaitis." Updating the Kuwaity brothers well-known songs, the rock musician Tassa incorporates the traditional instruments of the *kamanj* and *oud* (played by Yair Dalal) together with the electric guitar. Having had to learn to sing in Arabic, Tassa performs in the original Muslim-Baghdadi *gilit* dialect, often with an audible Hebrew-Israeli accent and sliding at times into the Jewish-Baghdadi pronunciation. On the track, his mother, Carmela, also sings the Al-Kuwaity brothers' "Fog al-Nakhel," making the return to the mother-tongue also a return of the mother, an inter-generational dialogue documented in Gili Gaon's *Iraq 'n Roll* (2011).[66] Israeli and Palestinian cinemas, both in their documentary and fictional forms, meanwhile, form the site of polyglossia as well as heteroglossia. As a multi-track medium, the cinema allows spectators to engage language in its many dimensions, most obviously through phonetic speech, with all its varied accents and social intonations, but also through written materials on screen (e.g., graffiti) and musical lyrics. And, in fact, many filmmakers have played creatively

with this linguistic multiplicity in a way that would be more difficult in a single-track medium like literature. In the cinema, we encounter Mizrahim speaking various forms of Arabic, Palestinians speaking Hebrew, and Jews speaking Modern Standard Arabic.[67]

The 2003 film *Forget Baghdad*, directed by a non-Jewish Iraqi-Swiss filmmaker, Samir, concerns Jewish-Iraqi writers.[68] It exemplifies the Babel of languages of Babylonian Jewry as shaped within exilic Iraqi culture. Organized around the lives and work of Iraqi-Israeli writers Shimon Ballas, Sami Michael, Samir Naqqash, and Mousa Houri (all former members of the Iraqi Communist Party), *Forget Baghdad* reopens a lost chapter of Middle Eastern history.[69] "What does it mean to be an enemy of your own past?" asks the filmmaker. The film tells a cross-border tale of a religious minority in Iraq becoming an ethnic minority in Israel: Jews in Iraq and Iraqis in Israel. The film also explores the painfully humorous stories of the younger generation represented by the Iraqi-Swiss filmmaker Samir, whose family had to flee Iraq, and by myself—both of us growing up in homes, in Switzerland and Israel respectively, where we had to negotiate two cultural worlds in conflict. *Forget Baghdad* deploys a rich array of archival materials—British, Iraqi, and Israeli newsreels, Hollywood features (*Son of the Sheikh*, *Exodus*, and *True Lies*), Israeli Bourekas comedies (*Sallah Shabati*), and Egyptian musical-comedies (*Fatma*, *Marika wa-Rachelle*) involving Muslim, Jewish, and Christian characters.[70] In this ironic film-essay, Samir orchestrates a veritable dance of ideas and images that extends the boundaries of the documentary form.[71]

The filmic narrative dismantles the post-1948 Arab discourse that gradually elided Arab-Jews from the national and pan-Arab imaginary. The Iraqi-Jewish writers featured in *Forget Baghdad* demonstrate internal differentiation, in what might be called intra-communitarian heteroglossia. They all express themselves in different Arabic speech modes: Sami Michael incorporates the Palestinian dialect; Naqqash is more "faithful" to the Iraqi dialect, moving between the Jewish and Muslim Baghdadi speech mode; Khoury largely speaks the Baghdadi-Jewish dialect; and Ballas uses Modern Standard Arabic, interwoven with some Muslim-Iraqi dialect. Thus we find heteroglossic multi-accentuality even within a small subgroup of speakers—Iraqi Jewish writers in Israel—with the variations partly having to do with dislocation from Baghdad and their exilic habitus of Arabic.

The heteroglossia here also has to do with their implied addressees; with the process of the interviews filmed by a mixed crew that included, apart from Samir, a Palestinian from Nazareth, Ula Tabari (assistant director), a German/Israeli/French Nurit Aviv (co-director of photography), and also Algerian/French/Israeli Philippe Bellaiche (co-director of photography), among others. In the context of transnational Arabic encounters, there is nothing unusual about code-switching and negotiating a mutually intelligible linguistic meeting-ground.[72]

The endeavor to revive and sustain Jewish-Arabic culture has recently become an arena of exploration for non-Jewish Arabs. The burgeoning diasporization of Iraqis—who have had to escape Iraq for political, ethnic, or religious reasons—has had the ironic side effect of facilitating an historically unprecedented encounter between the various diasporas, both on the Internet and in cities such as London, Amsterdam, Toronto, and New York. Another documentary film, *On the Banks of the Tigris* (to be released in 2015) directed by Majid Shokor, narrates the hidden Jewish history of Iraqi music. It follows the long-standing cultural affinities between Muslims and Jews in Iraq, affinities that have persisted through various diasporas. Reflecting on the inter-communal history of Iraqi music, the film celebrates the shared cultural expression while also exposing shared painful memories of war, violence, and dislocation, constantly underscoring their inter-related sense of loss. As a Muslim-Iraqi now residing in Australia but who grew up in Iraq after the departure of the Jews, Shokor discovers that what under Saddam Hussein was labeled "traditional music" (*min al-turath)* was actually written and composed by Jewish-Iraqi musicians such as Saleh and Daoud al-Kuwaity. After what was for him an eye-opening revelation, Shokor decided to go to Israel in search of the actual musicians, inspired by a 1938 photo of an Iraqi Radio Broadcast that includes five Jewish-Iraqi instrumentalists. He visits the city of Ramat Gan, in Israel usually dubbed "Ramat Baghdad," in search of Iraqi music and musicians, joining a session of *chalghi*, where he and the Iraqi-Jews sing in Arabic together. That encounter in Ramat Gan gains full significance against the complex web of taboo memories and ongoing but repressed affinities between "the Arab" and "the Jew," suggesting an implied transcendence of national and religious boundaries. Decades after the departure, the reconnection and the shared musical and cultural pleasures also cast doubt on the *gilit* versus *qiltu* dialects as somehow signifying secluded universes.

Such contemporary examples of Iraqi Muslim/Jewish interaction help us rearticulate the issue of "Judeo-Arabic" as not merely one of internal Jewish plurality but also as one in which Jewish idioms in Arabic ultimately form a variation on an Arabic theme. All Arabics, including in their Jewish inflections, are embedded in multiple dialects and speech modes, manifesting specificities having to do with class, gender, religion, and region. Indeed, it is precisely this vernacular proximity that allows a young Iraqi-Muslim to communicate with Iraqi-Jews in Ramat Gan. Not coincidentally, then, one would be hard-pressed to find the term "Judeo-Arabic language" in memoirs and novels by non-Jewish Arab writers when recalling a Jewish neighbor, schoolmate, friend, or an accidental encounter with an Arab-Jew. Even in instances where such speech differences would have been relevant, they tend to remain unmarked. Memoirs (such as *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* by the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* by the Egyptian Leila Ahmed, and *In Search of Fatima* by the Palestinian Ghada Karmi), as well as novels (such as *The Gate of the Sun* by the Lebanese Elias Khoury, *The Tobacco Keeper* by the Iraqi Ali Bader, and *Ya Maryam* by the Iraqi Sinan Antoon) tend to naturalize the presence of the Arab-Jew in Arab spaces by treating language interaction as a taken-for-granted "non-event."[73] These various examples illuminate the ways in which the diverse Arabics spoken by Jews, despite a history of traumatic rupture, continue to be vividly re-membered and live on within a multidirectional flow of narratives.[74] The role of language in the realm of music, folklore, literature, and cinema, I suggest, testifies to the porous boundaries within a diversified Arab world generally, and specifically between Jewish and Muslim dialects and cultures of the same area. By writing in a Hebrew inflected by Jewish-Baghdadi dialect, Jewish-Iraqi writers in Israel have resisted the pressures to sever Jewishness from Arabness. Unlike the critics who have deemed the Hebrew of this literature "flawed" and "inadequate," one could read the texts as syncretic spaces reflecting intersecting worlds in transition. And rather than replicate the discourse of Arabic/Hebrew as inimical universes, the texts linguistically and culturally weave them together.

In a letter to the *New York Times* in response to Ian Lustick's call for a one-state solution in Israel/Palestine, a representative of J Street dismissed as absurd the idea that Jews/Israelis from Arab countries would consider

themselves Arabs and would want to maintain an Arab identity: "They managed to preserve their Jewish identity for 2,000 years in exile. Why would they give it up now?"[75] But this is a misguided question, which might be better formulated as: Within Arab/Muslim spaces, Jews maintained their Arab-Jewish or Jewish-Arab identity for millennia. Why would the move to Israel oblige them to give it up now? Despite decades of cultural suppression, the younger Mizrahi generation is creating novel forms of syncretism, demonstrating that not only Arabic and Hebrew but also the various Jewish-Arabic vernaculars are very much in a state of flux. Within a broad cultural-discursive-mediatic spectrum that includes literary texts, popular songs, films, performances, and everyday speech, the Arabic and Hebrew fusion, I have been suggesting, still persists. In the age of transnational communication technologies, Jewish-Arabic speech modes are disseminated orally across various regions and borders. In contrast to the virtually no-exit situation of Arab-Jews and their children in the wake of the dislocation, today Mizrahis can engage in digital dialogue about Arab-Jewish culture, communicating through various languages including Hebrew, Arabic, French, and more commonly English. Some recent documentaries stage literal communication across borders via Skype, taking place between Arab-Jews in Israel and their Muslim interlocutors in Iraq (Duki Dror's 2003 *Shadow in Baghdad*), or in Morocco (Kamal Hachkar's 2013 *Tinghir Jérusalem: Les* échos *du Mellah*). Such filmic instances eloquently reveal the oral/aural sphere to be a significant site of interaction and interlocution. To see Jewish-Arabic speech modes as forms of "utterance"—which includes both written and oral forms of language—opens the way for an emphasis on the spoken and the vernacular as opposed to merely the literary and the erudite. In this sense, the study of a living Jewish-Arabic vernacular, however broken and fragmented, has the potential to go against the grain of studies that privilege only the literary language; instead, it addresses popular speech genres as more likely sites of present-day Jewish-Arabic orality, especially within digital spaces. Such critical studies would require a transnational lens that would not tether the Arabic dialects spoken by Jews to an inaccessible pre-displacement time but would link that past to its present-day reincarnations and reiterations, including in its impact on contemporary Mizrahi Hebrew, and on the French and English of diasporic Arab-Jews.

Beyond the "Jewish Language" / "Arabic Dialects" Divide

The Hebrew script has come to signify the raison d'être of the notion of "Jewish languages," enacting a kind of a unifying thread for the numerous tongues spoken by Jews across the globe. Like diverse languages/dialects written by Jews, the Arabic written by Jews usually utilized Hebrew script, although the type of the letters varied. The question is whether script should be regarded as the primordial definer of a language and linguistic identity. From the perspective of Arabic language studies, the Hebrew script might be viewed as merely another orthographic medium that does not annul the Arabic character even of Jewish texts, and thus must be defined as one variety of Arabic. For the proponents of "Jewish languages," meanwhile, the script betokens Jewish content and participation in an essential Jewish culture. Although the specificities of Jewish writings in Arabic must be taken into account (as the scholars of Judeo-Arabic have indeed succeeded in doing), at the same time these specificities must be examined within a non-isolationist approach. A flexible analytical grid would have to at least equally highlight the neighborings and sharings between Jewish and "non-Jewish" linguistic/cultural arenas. While the Hebrew script of many Jewish dialects/languages marks their key distinction vis-à-vis their various dominant languages (German, Spanish, Arabic, etc.), a transnational comparative approach paradoxically reveals variegated Jewish cultures that dynamically echo the geographies within which these languages/dialects emerged. Positing analogies outside of the "Jewish languages" sphere may help illuminate other dimensions of the argument for a relational reading method.

Writing one language in the script of another is hardly unique to "Jewish languages," as demonstrated by other cases within Middle Eastern languages. Karshuni (or Garshuni) exemplifies the practice of writing Arabic in the Syriac alphabet (an Aramaic variant) used among some Christian-Arabs in the regions of Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. In the case of Turkish, as we know, Kemalism traded Ottoman Arabic for the Latin alphabet, affecting a new symbolic orientation but without altering its Turkic language affiliation. In the modern era, some Jewish speakers of Spanish moved from the Hebrew to the Latin script. Although written in Arabic script, Farsi and Urdu, meanwhile, cannot be reduced to an "Arabic essence." And although their orthography does link them to a Muslim-Arab cultural space it would be

rather anomalous to categorize Farsi and Urdu as "Arab languages," or for that matter as "Muslim languages." Within Jewish studies, in conjunction with the discourse of "Jewish languages," an analogous discourse of "Muslim languages" and "Christian languages" has emerged.[76] In Arabic, in contrast, the term *lughat al-muslimin al-ukhra* (the other languages of the Muslims) more commonly circulates to refer to languages other than Arabic used by Muslims—a definition that does not categorize the languages themselves as "Muslim." The fact that various languages borrow Arabic script and vocabulary despite belonging to different language families suggests that broad homogenizing coreligionist rubrics have to be deployed conjuncturally and under erasure. Within a relational and transnational approach, in this sense, Farsi's Arabic script and vocabulary, and for that matter Arabic's Farsi vocabulary, are no less relevant for the discussion of "Judeo-Arabic" and "Judeo-Persian." Rather than merely discuss the Hebrew commonalities between the Arabic and the Persian deployed by Jews, in other words, one could also discuss their links via another route, that of their regional linguistic affinities, especially the commonalities between Farsi and Arabic.

Orthography is itself in flux and hybrid, reflecting a historically palimpsestic identity. Ideas expressed in one language but inscribed in a script of another language often create a gap that has been remedied through modifications to the letters. In Farsi, which adopted the Arabic script, additional letters were designed to accommodate the sounds unavailable in Arabic and its alphabet, such as *p* and *ch*. In the Arabic-in-Hebrew script, additional consonant dots were at times borrowed from the Arabic alphabet to accommodate phonemes non-existent in the Hebrew alphabet. The Hebrew script of "Jewish languages" and "Judeo-Arabic," furthermore, varied over geographies and histories, including the *ktav Rashi*, *ktav meruba'*, or *ktav ashuri*. Within recent history, the intersection between Hebrew and Arabic has yielded new forms of syncretism. In the wake of the Israeli/Arab conflict, Syrian-Jews, for example, experienced a diminished Hebrew education that gradually came to be associated with "the Zionist enemy." In the 1990s, as Jewish-Syrian refugees were arriving in the United States, their excellent proficiency in Arabic eclipsed their aptitude in reading Biblical Hebrew. To accommodate a multilingual diasporic community, Syrian/Lebanese synagogues in Brooklyn have distributed brochures of the *Parashat ha-Shavu'a* (the weekly Torah portion) in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. Some

sections in the Arabic, however, contain Hebrew words, expressions, and citations written in the Arabic alphabet to facilitate the participation of these Arabic speakers. This practice of writing Hebrew in another script is hardly unusual, as seen in the example of Latin script in some American Hagadas. How should we then regard this case of writing Hebrew in the Arabic alphabet, i.e., the reversal of the characteristically Judeo-Arabic textual practice? Surely, this reversal tells us something significant about the history of a specific community at a specific historical moment. Yet despite its importance, script reflects only one dimension of identity. These diverse instances—the Arabic script for Farsi, the Assyrian/Aramaic script for Arabic, and the Arabic script for Hebrew—clearly suggest the need for a more flexible, relational, and transnational alternative to fixed and essentialist religious-ethno-nationalist framing of linguistic demarcations. While distinct in relation to the region's dominant language, the Hebrew script of a "Jewish language," then, has to be understood as one element within a complex linguistic and cultural matrix, rather than the exclusive definer of "Jewish Diasporic" belonging.

As we have seen, a common comparison posits the relation between Judeo-Arabic and Arabic as analogous to that between Yiddish and German. The intra-Ashkenazi debate about whether Yiddish constitutes a dialect of German has long been resolved in favor of defining Yiddish as a separate language. This debate, with its own specific European history, was not without repercussions for non-Ashkenazi Jews, however, in that it gradually impacted the emergence of parallel definitions for the languages/dialects spoken/written by Jews, and the concomitant broader category of "Jewish languages." Yet, the phrase "Jewish language" (*lugha yahudiyya* in Arabic) was not, to my knowledge, circulating among Jewish speakers of Arabic—hence the bafflement in Arabic language circles about the notion of a separate Jewish language called "Judeo-Arabic."[77] In contrast to the name "Yiddish," literally "Jewish," there seems to be no exact equivalent name in Jewish-Arabic idioms to designate a common Jewish language.[78] And, in any event, the ascription of "Jewish" to a dialect, speech, or pronunciation could only be understood contextually, as existing in relation to its ambient linguistic environment. Within Arabic, the adjective *yahudi* or *yahudiyya* for a dialect or a pronunciation makes sense only conjuncturally within the elastic multiplicity of Arabic generally and within any local variant

of Arabic more specifically; it would signify a variety within a continuum. Even a literal translation into Arabic of the term "Judeo-Arabic," *'arabiyya yahudiyya*, would not conventionally designate a language but a person, a female Jewish-Arab. Therefore, in Arabic, including in its diverse dialects, the equivalent phrase to "Judeo-Arabic," *'arabiyya yahudiyya*, would function only as a social designation of the Jewish identity of an Arab or Arabic speaker. However, it is a very different matter to deploy the rubric "Judeo-Arabic" to signify an ontologically independent language.[79] Thus the question of Judeo-Arabic is not merely an issue of the linguistic pluralities within Jewish modes of Arabic but also of the manufactured severance of these modes from Arabic and their metamorphosis into a newly delimited linguistic entity. Furthermore, the Jewish thought and culture signified by the Hebrew script (of Arabic) itself was shaped in dialogue with the Muslim world. Neither Arabic nor Hebrew, in other words, forms an alien civilizational entity that "happens" to exist in the same Jewish-Arabic text, but rather they are constituted with, through, and in relation to each other.

The Hebrew phrase for "Judeo-Arabic language," *safa 'aravit-yehudit* (or *yehudit-'arvit*), was, again to my knowledge, also not commonly used by the speakers themselves. And although at times the phrase can be found in Hebrew texts written by Arab-Jews, it would require further research to determine exactly when it became a supposedly stable index of an isolatable language. The term "*'aravit-yehudit*" has seemingly become more and more widespread in conjunction with the now axiomatic notion of "Jewish languages" not only in scholarly work but also in popular circles. Yiddish has served as the guiding paradigm for the ranking and measurement of the variety of "Jewish languages"; even its multiple regional variants are compared with the variants within other "Jewish languages." In the context of Jewish institutions dominated by Ashkenazi-Jews in Israel and the West, Yiddish's split from the German was gradually extrapolated to apply to a newly designated linguistic cartography—"the languages of the Diaspora." In addition to Geniza studies, then, the Zionist project of the physical "ingathering of Diaspora Jews" gradually gained its corollary of symbolically ingathering "the languages of the Jews" within one linguistic terrain—"Jewish languages." By analogy to Yiddish, a novel conceptual paradigm emerged, where diverse dialects or speech-modes were declared independent from Arabic, Spanish, Persian, etc., and now grafted onto the

"Jewish language" family. In tandem with the broader intellectual frameworks, the artificial split from Arabic has "elevated" Judeo-Arabic to a legitimate "Jewish" object of inquiry. The idea of a "Judeo-Arabic language," it could be argued, has been in many ways a top-down concept defined institutionally and on some levels adopted retroactively. And within this nationalist conceptual framework, scholars who came from the Arab world and/or whose native tongue was Arabic, have tended to similarly adopt, or uncritically assume, this linguistic metanarrative.[80] In this contested national allegory, some Arab-Jews themselves have gradually shed the traditional variety of names for their local Arabic idioms and learned to rename their mother tongue "*'aravit-yehudit*" ("Judeo-Arabic.")[81]

Despite its Diasporic focus, the notion of "Jewish languages" paradoxically brings with it a certain nationalist paradigm inseparable from the Zionist "ingathering-of-the-exiles" project. Within a Eurocentric epistemology, the language-family continuum of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic is often overshadowed in favor of a comparison with a different language system, Germanic, which incorporated vocabulary and expressions from the "Semitic family of languages". This comparative framework has the effect of circumventing the millennial Jewish and Muslim philosophical dialogue and the Hebrew/Arabic grammatical investigations as formulated by Jews mainly in Arabic (both in Arabic and Hebrew scripts). The notion of "Judeo-Arabic" is thus doubly entangled in Ashkenazi-European modernity, since: (1) it seems to be first defined as an isolatable language by the post-Haskala field of Judaic studies; and (2) it is now studied in relation to, and by analogy with, Yiddish within a nationalist metanarrative of "Jewish Diasporic" languages. Isolating "Judeo-Arabic" as a language severed from Arabic becomes especially consequential in the wake of the actual dislocation from Arab spaces. The historically new geopolitical linguistic animosity signified by "Hebrew" and "Arabic" has often led to conceptually evacuating the non-Jewish cultural context within which Jewish-Arabic linguistic syncretism was constituted. The seismic shift of Arabic Jewish speaking-subjects away from Arab geographies has engendered the by-now taken for granted fault lines within knowledge production.

Some compare the discrimination against "Judeo-Arabic" in Israel to the parallel fate of Yiddish, with both seen as disdained languages of the Diaspora. And there are some analogies between Yiddish and Arabic.

Both were marginalized, although not to the same degree or for the same reasons. But there are also major differences. Within the Zionist project, the rebellion against the culture of the *galut*, the *shtetl*, the *ostjuden*, and so forth was very much a family affair, the product of an inter-generational Oedipal rebellion within a kind of a Freudian *familienroman*.[82] Zionism's relation to Arabic (including to "Judeo-Arabic"), in contrast, resembled more a relationship between two very different Jewish families, one of which became empowered in Israel (and within Jewish spaces in the West), while the other became vulnerable and beleaguered, always on the defensive. The Orientalist attitude toward Arabic has entailed, at best, the exoticization of "the other Jews" and their "Judeo-Arabic language." In Israel, Arabic has always been under the sign of suspicion. Israel has also been the place of the most intense taboo on the Arabic expression of Jews, which points to a paradox. If indeed "Judeo-Arabic" constitutes a separate and legitimate "Jewish language," why would Iraqi, Moroccan, or Egyptian Jews in a Jewish state have been made to be ashamed and socially penalized for speaking it? (No one told Arab-Jews to "stop speaking *Judeo*-Arabic"; they simply exclaimed—"stop speaking *Arabic*!")[83]

While Zionists, within an intra-Ashkenazi ideological "war of languages," chose to cut themselves off from their mother tongue Yiddish and impose modern Hebrew on other Ashkenazi-Jews, Arab-Jews had no equivalent indigenous Hebrew-versus-(Judeo)Arabic schism.[84] Arab-Jews, to my knowledge, made no claim about (Judeo)Arabic that paralleled Max Weinreich's popularized formulation about the status of Yiddish vis-à-vis German: "a language is a dialect with an army and a navy." Even in the cases of successful colonial education in French and English in North Africa and the Middle East, Arabic was not fully eradicated among Arab-Jews. Rather than an either Arabic/or no-Arabic binarism, the linguistic hybridity in the wake of colonial and postcolonial displacements could better illuminate the complex cultural affiliations of Arab-Jews. (And for that matter, the vernaculars of Berber/Shluhi-Jews in Morocco or of Kurdish-Jews in Iraq, who may or may have not spoken Arabic, would have to be discussed not merely as another negation of "the Arabic language of Jews," but rather in close analogy and continuity with their Muslim-Berber and Muslim-Kurdish neighbors who have also manifested ambiguous attitudes toward Arabic.) A process of renaming and linguistic reaffiliation that already began among

the Yishuv's Sephardim/Arab-Jews was intensified with the post-1948 dislocation of Arab-Jews to Israel. Upon their arrival in Israel, Arab-Jews were shorn of Arabic in a symbolically violent process. For the most part, Arab-Jews/Mizrahim had initially little agency in the rejection of Arabic, but in a context where their language was also the enemy's language they ended up partly internalizing the schism. Arab-Jews/Mizrahim themselves gradually began adding the prefix "Judeo" to "Arabic," which implied the reassuring narrative that "our" Arabic is not like "theirs"; it is in essence Jewish.[85] Any comparative study of languages spoken by Jews, therefore, cannot begin with their putatively equal history vis-à-vis Zionism's "negation of the Exile," and must engage colonial history and Eurocentric epistemologies.

Given this history, the feeling of loss toward Arabic cannot be dismissed simply as a case of "melancholia," "nostalgia," and the anguished remembrance of things past. Words like "melancholia" and "nostalgia" subjectivize the issue, and in so doing erase a double agency: first, that of hegemonic state institutions in actively suppressing Arabic; and second, that of Arab-Jews themselves desiring to re-member. More importantly, however, not all nostalgias are the same. Within the context of taboo memories, especially when enforced by a state-apparatus, nostalgia for one's kidnapped culture is an act of defiance, one rooted less in narcissism than in a cross-border imaginative vision. For Arab-Jews, the lived relation to Arabic in Israel was more like a trauma, one that had to do not only with Ashkenazi-dominated state power but also with a broader colonial relationship between Europe and non-Europe. With the advent of Orientalist studies and especially in the wake of colonial domination, Arabic was portrayed as backward, inferior, and underdeveloped.[86] Within Zionist discourse, furthermore, the haunting closeness to Arabic has led to efforts to disassociate the two "Oriental" or "Semitic" languages, as explicitly articulated in Ze'ev Jabotinsky's *The Hebrew Accent*.[87] In the early days of Israel, Arabic was also inferiorized vis-à-vis other Middle Eastern languages such as Turkish or Farsi since, unlike Arabic, Turkish and Farsi were not initially anxiously viewed as the languages of "the enemy." In *Forget Baghdad*, the novelist Naqqash recalls being ordered to get off a bus near the Lod airport, considered a suspect because he was reading a book in Arabic. To speak Arabic or even the putative Judeo-Arabic in Israel was to be seen as participating in the culture of the enemy. The act of reclaiming the "Arab-Jew" (including Jewish dialects of Arabic), has

not been a simple question of some kind of romantic, exotic rumination over something lost; it has been, rather, an act of return to something that had arbitrarily been taken away if not by force at least by powerful forms of pressure.[88] At the same time, this dismissal often echoes a common response, especially in the Hebrew and English contexts, to Mizrahi critics, who are often dismissed as "complainers," "whiners," and "crybabies," thus delegitimizing their feelings of loss, and by implication the aspiration to recover their languages/dialects. Thus anti-*galut* linguistic sentiments have been applied unevenly in Israel and in the West.

This institutional and discursive history of Arabic(s) and the status of "Judeo-Arabic" both in Israel and the West stand in sharp contrast to the inter-generational and intra-ethnic conflict between Yiddish/Diaspora Jews and modern Hebrew/Zionist founding fathers. While Yiddish has been the site of affectionate *shtetl* memory, it is also indissociable from German, a language inextricably tied to anti-Semitism. Thus a (semi-coerced) rejection of the various forms of Arabic on the part of some Sephardi/Mizrahi/Arab-Jews, has coexisted with a deep affection and longing for Arabic (and for that matter for other Middle Eastern languages, including Farsi, which since the Iranian revolution has been directly caught in the war zone). Against this backdrop, for Arabic to exist as the legitimate language of Jews, it has had to be redefined as "Judeo-Arabic" in the public sphere. With the redemptive prefix "Judeo," or *yehudit*, the Arabic of Jews entered a new "language" paradigm, "elevated" into a status that corresponded to a new national belonging. The "Judeo" prefix has thus signified a split from Arabic; its hyphen signaled integration within the allegorical Jewish family. With this invented ontology, "Judeo-Arabic" was afforded prestige and funding within cultural, educational, and academic institutions, even if always lagging behind Yiddish.[89]

While Arabic was a millennial matrix of creativity in the Arab-Jewish world, the most legitimate place of Arabic in the Israeli system is, symptomatically, in the military. Regarding their Arabic language/cultural knowledge as vitally important, the early generation of Sephardi leaders, before and after the establishment of Israel, made considerable efforts to negotiate peace and reach compromise with the Palestinians, but were utterly marginalized.[90] Instead, Arabic became the approved language for Arab-Jews only when mobilized in the service of the state by translators,

interpreters, newscasters, spies, or as servicemen in the intelligence units or teachers in "Arab-Israeli" schools. Within an Orientalist and militarized zone Arab-Jews could be of help to the specialists, the Arabists. The military gradually became the place where Arabic has really flourished, where now the younger Arab-Jews/Mizrahim have a chance to study their past family language.[91] Language and power, as we know, are intimately connected, and all political struggles also pass through language. Indeed, the military Arabic of Arab-Jews/Mizrahim has also led to their ambiguous status within Arab spaces, and hence within the field of Arab studies. The very concept of "Judeo-Arabic" is thus caught in the crossfire of competing nationalist discourses. As a signifier of a separate language, it has the function of a symbolic de-Arabization, regarded positively within "Jewish studies" and negatively in "Arab studies."

Paradoxes of Salvage Linguistics: Between Jewish Studies and Arab Studies

The resurrection of Hebrew as a modern national language has had as its implicit corollary—the substitution and ultimate elimination of the "Diaspora languages." Judeo-Arabic today is considered an "endangered language," and figures on UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in danger.[92] What, then, is exactly this linguistic object that is declared endangered? Even if we conceive of "Judeo-Arabic" as Arabic dialects spoken by Jews, rather than as a language, it is still meaningful to engage the notion of "disappearance." Is/are Judeo-Arabic/s dying with its/their last speakers, members of a dying linguistic tribe? Can one speak of "salvage linguistics" as one speaks of "salvage anthropology"? By which criteria is "Judeo-Arabic" alive, dead, or somewhere in-between? And finally, if it is/they are extinct, does its/their recovery belong exclusively to either "the Jewish languages" or "Arabic dialects" scholarly projects? Although the attempt to recuperate threatened language/dialects should not be dismissed as a futile exercise in nostalgia, it should also be examined in terms of its relation to the ideological apparatus that denuded speakers of their mother tongues. The recovery project is itself caught in the contradictions embedded in the ambiguous language status and fraught conceptual belonging of "Judeo-Arabic." The sense of longing for the past mother-tongue has been expressed in various ways, from individual

returns to the language spoken at home to institutional acts of preservation. In the case of Iraqi-Jews, apart from the above-mentioned songs written in Israel in both the Jewish and Muslim Baghdadi dialects, various Internet sites engage in discussion over the home Iraqi-Arabic. We find evidence of linguistic-cultural stirrings, in the case of Iraqi-Jews for instance: Talia Issacs' proposal to found a group that will speak and revive the "Iraqi Judeo-Arabic" in Montreal,[93] and Eli Timan's archiving initiative of the Jewish-Iraqi dialect within the "endangered languages project" in London.[94]

On one level, the resurrection of threatened languages/dialects need not be seen as completely chimerical. All over the Americas, native languages are being revived, as linguists scrutinize the speech of a remnant of aging indigenous speakers in order to recuperate the language for young people. In the Amazon, Tupi-Guarani, which was the lingua franca in Brazil up to the eighteenth century, is making a comeback. In Long Island, New York, the Native-Americans, the Shinnecock and the Unkechaug, are battling to resurrect their respective Algonquian languages, centuries after their "disappearance," under the assumption that language and culture are inextricably linked.[95] Yet, in comparison with indigenous-American languages, the challenge of recuperating Jewish forms of Arabic is in a sense much less complicated, since their "disappearance" is not of the same kind or gravity. While indeed the Jewish generation that actually spoke Arabic at home and in the streets of Arab cities and towns is disappearing, the regional dialects spoken by Iraqis, Moroccans, or Tunisians, remain vibrant in the countries of origin. Even if these regional dialects may not completely match some Jewish speech-modes, the matrix from which Jewish-Arabic idioms emerged—i.e., Arabic itself and the regional dialects with which it is affiliated—is not dying at all. Apart from the facts that: (1) not all Arab-Jews spoke a distinct dialect from their non-Jewish neighbors; and (2) the Judeo-Arabic textual world of Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic is available and even living in synagogues and Sephardic yeshivas—a physical and digital linkage with the non-Jewish Moroccan, Iraqi, or Yemeni speakers could facilitate a linguistic return. Only within the nationalist projection of "Judeo-Arabic" as an isolatable language from Arabic, that is a priori separate from its contemporary non-Jewish speakers, would the disappearance of the older Arab-Jews mean a complete linguistic death sentence. The "endangered language" discourse,

then, slides too easily from the disappearing speaking-subjects—Arabic-speaking Jews—to the presumed complete disappearing of their language.

Implicit in the notion of "extinct" is the elision of the continuing strength of diverse neighboring dialects, and the general sharing between Jewish and non-Jewish vernaculars. In this sense, the salvage paradigm has something of the absurd—it proposes to recover a language/dialects, but does not recognize its/their overlap with contemporary living language/dialects. When one demarcates a "Jewish language" as "endangered," then, one must first pose a question about the ontology of such a language; and second, about whether the recovery project reproduces the very same conceptual binarism that produced the disappearance of "the language" in the first place. In tandem with the formal categorization of "Judeo-Arabic" as a language, a proliferation of new terms to designate the Arabic idioms used by Jews has emerged, including among their native speakers, a symptom not only of the dislocation of a community but also of that community's tongue entering new ideological zones of belonging. The terminology of the debate concerning "Judeo-Arabic," its status, whether as "dialect" or "language," oscillates depending on the "natural language's" paradigms and the institutional agendas. In Hebrew and English "Judeo-Arabic" is often considered a "Jewish language," but in Arabic any reference to a *lahja yahudiyya* (Jewish dialect) would have to be contextual. Apart from the fact that in some places Jews spoke the same Arabic dialects of their non-Jewish neighbors, the notion of *lahja yahudiyya* has to be articulated as a community variant in a specific village, city, region, etc. In the wake of Arab-Jewish dislocation, the same Arabic dialect from the same village/city/region is now defined in multiple ways, as in the case of the Arabic of Iraqi/Baghdadi-Jews: "Judeo-Iraqi Arabic," "Iraqi Judeo-Arabic," "Baghdadi-Jewish dialect," "Iraqi-Jewish language" and so forth. The very multiplicity of designations, while in some ways inevitable given diasporization, also suggests that the term "Judeo-Arabic" does not completely capture the regional specificity of the Arabic vernaculars deployed by Jews. In Eli Timan's archiving project, for example, it is therefore invariably referred to as "Jewish Iraqi language," "Jewish Iraqi dialect," and "Jewish Iraqi spoken language documentation."[96] On the archival "ground" of the recovery project, in other words, the same category that undergirds the project, "Judeo-Arabic language," has to be abandoned, suspended, bracketed, or modified, for the sake of a precise

classification of an Arabic vernacular, designated now within the semantics of Arabic discourse according to a specific region of origin.

Thus, the same ideological apparatus that invented and divided "Judeo-Arabic" from Arabic persists, informing the philosophical tenets of the recovery project itself. The overarching term "Judeo-Arabic language" does demarcate a certain institutional affiliation with a Jewish studies recuperation project. Yet, apart from suitably highlighting the identity of its Jewish users, along with their civilizational creativity, "Judeo-Arabic" as a signifier of an essentially separate language is, in some ways, a kind of phantom. And this is not because Jews did not "really" speak Arabic (equated in this discourse with *fusha*) as is sometimes implied by the concept of "Judeo-Arabic language." (In fact, by the *fusha* criteria many Muslim speakers would also fail the Arabic test.) It is because "Judeo-Arabic" exists in the liminal zone of presumably mutually exclusive identities. It is also a phantom because it is spectral, because it haunts, precisely because it is still, by its hyphenated definition, part of the language of "the Arab enemy," despite its classification within the safe zone of a "Jewish language of the Diaspora." It is therefore not enough to claim that various (Jewish) languages were lost. They were not lost in the same context, and the efforts to recover them do not have the same implications. To say that they do forms another way of collapsing the Jewish-Arabic difference into a Europeanizing normativity. In the case of Jewish-Arabic idioms, the loss of dialects, furthermore, is actually exacerbated by the axioms implicit in the recovery projects themselves, by their a priori assumption of the irrelevance of the living Arabic dialects across the border. The effort to capture the authentic "Judeo-Arabic" speech tends to suffer from the Arab-versus-Jew binarism. Thus, along with questioning the blanket dismissal of any "nostalgia" of Jews toward their Arab past, we also must question the implicit erasure of the living Arabic matrix tacitly assumed by the very idea of a quasi-archeological recovery of a lost Judeo-Arabic language. The passive voice—"something that was lost"—erases the role both of the institutions that actively delegitimized Arabic, even when spoken by Jews, and of the resistance to this delegitimization.

The rupture that severed Jewish-Arabic idioms from their Arab cultural location, moreover, has resulted in further metamorphoses, to the point that one can now discern multiple vernacular syncretisms, even in contexts ideologically hostile to Arabic. The dispersal of Arab-Jews, as we

have seen, has meant that today the various Arabic dialects have come to intersect with modern Hebrew as well as with Farsi, French, English, Yiddish, and Español, depending on the new geographies into which Arab-Jews have been displaced. Therefore, this question of rupture and continuity must take center stage before one prematurely declares the death of the Arabic of Jews. Within a translinguistic framework, Bakhtin critiqued comparative linguistics as being designed only for dead languages, defined as those that have ceased to change, just as a dead body is one that is static, mortified, one that has ceased to change. Despite being under a kind of unofficial death threat, the Arabic expression of Jews, as long as it participates in processes of "becoming," including mixing with other languages, cannot be viewed as simply disappearing. The dramatic displacement of the Arab-Jews could nonetheless be viewed as an ongoing dynamic process giving way to new transformations and living syncretisms. A conscious return to Arabic idioms could be regarded as a nostalgic fixation over irrecuperably lost origins. It could also be regarded, however, as a case of what Walter Benjamin called "revolutionary nostalgia"—which is less about remembering than about becoming. Rather than erect a fixed, static, and presumably coherent entity called "Judeo-Arabic language" to be retrieved within a museological project, it is vital to conceive the Arabics deployed by Jews as constantly shifting utterances, which can even be imagined in their future potentialities.

Generating the notion of a "Judeo-Arabic language" uprooted from Arabic could on one level be viewed as a matter simply of sociolinguistic classification, but on another, as I have tried to suggest, it reflects an undergirding investment in dislocating Arab-Jews from their Arab past, as well as in partitioning Jewishness and Hebrew off from their affiliation with Arab/Muslim civilization. Although the hyphen ontologically suggests a kind of equation or linkage of the two sides of the hyphen, it can also suggest delinking and subordination. The ambiguity of the hyphen triggers an oscillation in meaning, depending on the contextual lexicon and the grid adopted. Yet the "bad object"/"good object" bifurcation with regards to "the Arab-Jew" versus "Judeo-Arabic" offers a clue to the opposite signification of the hyphen in the two terms. In the first instance, the stress in the hyphen is placed on attaching Jews to Arab culture, while in the latter the stress is on detaching Jews from Arab culture. Although all hyphens bridge seemingly distinct entities, they also paradoxically may accentuate

a certain separation. The hyphen itself indicates a complex relationship between two joined entities, and not merely because of their noun/adjective placement, but also because the joining itself corresponds to different modes of knowledge productions. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the terms were received in diametrically opposed ways within Arab studies circles. In that field, the idea of the "Arab-Jew" has had in recent years an increasingly positive reception, while the notion of "Judeo-Arabic" has been met with skepticism. If within the house of "Jewish languages," "Judeo-Arabic" has had a seat—even if in the back of the room, quite behind the paradigmatic "Jewish language"—Yiddish—within the field of Arab studies the category has been altogether out-of-place. This "bad object"/"good object" dichotomy, I have tried to suggest, fuels the general anxiety provoked by an Arab cultural genealogy for any Jewish identity. And conversely, the anxiety about the "Jewishness" embedded in Zionism has led to the gradual excision of Jewish-Arab culture from Arab studies.[97] In this sense, this essay offers a comment on the state of affairs whereby Arab-Jews and their vernacular expression and cultural production are still regarded with ambivalence within Arab studies itself. To produce a complex discussion of "the Arab-Jew" and "Judeo-Arabic" would require de-essentializing our understanding of both notions "the Jew" and "the Arab."

The point of this essay is not to cast aspersions on the invaluable comparative research on the Jewish/Hebrew/Aramaic components of the diverse languages/dialects deployed by Jews, but rather to question the exceptionalist axiom that severs them from their cultural geographies. It is certainly useful to deploy "Judeo-Arabic" as a rubric or scholarly shorthand to refer to texts that typically mix several languages (Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic); or to evoke Arabic texts written in Hebrew letters; or to label the study of the various forms of Arabic spoken and written by Jews, especially within intra-religious and intra-communal settings. It is a very different matter to deploy "Judeo-Arabic" to demarcate an ontologically isolatable language. Studying the diverse Arabic dialects spoken by Jews within a kind of a prison-house of "Jewish languages" renders Jewish/Muslim affiliation as at best something to be relegated to medieval history.[98] Imprinted in the concept of "Judeo-Arabic," furthermore, is a deep ambivalence toward its intimate affiliation with Arabic, which along with the assertive metanarrative of the uniqueness of "Jewish languages" has undermined a multidirectional

and intersectional narrative for Jewish-Arabic vernaculars and cultural expression. Within this metanarrative, the syncretism of all languages is downplayed in favor of an exceptionalist linguistics emphasizing a uniquely singular "Jewish History." Despite its obvious and a priori attachment to Arabic, the concept of a "Judeo-Arabic language" paradoxically evacuates Jewish-inflected speech modes from their Arab and Muslim history. Within Arab studies, conversely, the notion of "Judeo-Arabic language" is in excess of the paradigm of the Arabic language. At the same time, Arab studies, more broadly, tends to render Jewish-Arabic cultural expression as out-of-place, due to the ambivalence toward Arab-Jews in the wake of their evacuation of Arab spaces and their incorporation into the Zionist project. Yet understanding the cultural politics that shape the attachment or detaching of languages/dialects would shed light on a curious terminological binarism between "Judeo-Arabic" as "the good object" and "the Arab-Jew" as "the bad object," or vice versa from the Arab studies vantage point. Rather than delink the category "Judeo-Arabic" from the concept of the "Arab-Jew," both terms must be used conjuncturally, as always-already in flux and under erasure. And both rubrics would ideally need to be articulated relationally, within a Jewish studies that does not exclude Arab studies, and, conversely, within an Arab and Arab diasporic studies that does not exclude Arab-Jews and their concomitant vernaculars.[99] The issue, then, is not simply whether languages/dialects are attached or detached, but rather how transnationalizing the discussion might help us capture the fluidity, the ins and outs and crisscrossings of languages/dialects as they intersect across various kinds of borders.

ENDNOTES

Author's Note: This essay is based on several lectures and presentations, including: "Between Enemy Homelands: Writing the Arab-Jew," at the "Sami Michael and Jewish Iraqi Literature" conference, Taub Center for Jewish Studies, Stanford University, 5-7 September 2007; "Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices: Al-Andalus, the Middle East, and the Americas," The Center for the Humanities, The University of Madison, Wisconsin, in conjunction with the "Legacies of Al Andalus: Islam, Judaism, and the West" conference, 19 October 2007; "The Question of Judeo-Arabic" at the "Unsettling Languages: Jewish Lingualisms in Global Contexts" conference, The Jean and Samuel Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 4-5 November 2010; and also at the "Sepharad in New York: From Al-Andalus to Multiculturalism" conference, King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center, New York University, 15-16 November 2011. A shorter version of this essay, entitled "The Question of Judeo-Arabic(s): Itineraries of Belonging," is forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press in *Jewish Languages in Global Contexts*, co-edited by Joshua Miller and Anita Norich. I would also like to acknowledge Sinan Antoon and Sherene Seikaly for generously facilitating the publication of this essay. My transliteration of Arabic and Hebrew names of well-known figures and of titles of songs and films follows their common rendition. Similarly, I have transliterated Arabic lyrics and spoken phrases according to their dialectal idiom rather than that of *fusha* in order to render the pronunciation "audible," as it were, to the reader.

1 Published by the Ben-Zvi Institute, the Hebrew language journal *Pe'amim*, which has focused on "Studies in Oriental Jewry," dedicated a section of its first issue, entitled "A Scholars' Forum," to the subject of "The Jewish Languages—the Common, the Unique, and the Problematic" ("Ha-Leshonot ha-Yehudiyot: ha-Meshutaf, ha-Meyuhad ve-ha-Be'ayati") *Pe'amim*, no. 1 (1979). The issue includes key figures in "Judeo-Arabic studies" such as Joshua Blau (on classical Judeo-Arabic) and Haim Blanc (on Modern Judeo-Arabic). The leading essay by Chaim Rabin, "What Distinguishes the Jewish Languages," which discusses the general characteristics of Jewish languages, exemplifies the investment in the uniqueness narrative highlighted in my critique.

2 Shelomo Dov Goiten's monumental series was condensed in *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgment in One Volume*, ed. Jacob Lassner (University of California Press, 1999).

3 For a critique of discovery discourses in relation to the Geniza, see Ella Shohat, "Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions: Columbus, Palestine and Arab-Jews," *in Performing Hybridity*, eds. May Joseph and Jennifer Fink (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 131-156, included in Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

4 At a conference in Stockholm, Sweden, entitled, "To See the Other: Cultural Communication Between Palestinians and Israelis" (sponsored by the Swedish Cultural Authority and the Swedish Film Institute in October 1993), my paper focused on Arab-Jews and the representation of Israel/Palestine. In response to the playwright Yehoshua Sobol's critique of the marginalization of Yiddish, I highlighted the more severe acts of hostility toward Arabic, including toward the diverse Judeo-Arabic dialects. Whereas the Zionists' rebellion against Yiddish expressed hostility toward the language of their own "Diaspora", the hostility toward Arabic was toward the language of the enemy "other." I suggested that, in the context of Israel, our Arabic vernaculars could be viewed as a kind of "last of the Mohicans" syndrome, but in a situation that could also be remedied within a transformed

ideological ambiance. Consciously addressing Sobol and the participants by speaking in my home Jewish-Baghdadi dialect, I then switched to English at the request of the Swedish organizers. In the literal speech-act, I was performing the anxiety of disappearance and calling attention to the unequal history of non-Hebrew languages/dialects in Israel, especially for the Arabic of Arab-Jews/Mizrahim. (The only other speaker of the Baghdadi-Jewish dialect present at the conference was Sasson Somekh, whose presentation concerned modern Arabic literature.)

5 It is commonly accepted that in the late eighteenth century, the German Orientalist August Ludwig von Schlözer first deployed the term "Semitic languages," which by the nineteenth century in conjunction with racial classifications of people, largely replaced the previous term "Oriental languages." Widely used, the term "Semitic languages" was carried into Arabic and Hebrew discussions, which in the wake of the Israeli/Arab conflict manifested mutual anxiety about association with the "other" Semite. Chaim Rabin assumes the notion of "Semitic languages" and at times casts doubt on the value of Arabic as useful comparative language for illuminating certain aspects of Hebrew. See Rabin's *Safot Shemiyot* (Hebrew) [Semitic Languages: An Introduction] (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1991). The concept of "Semitic languages" has also been challenged by Arab intellectuals trying to disassociate Arabic from a rubric associated with Jews and Israel. Among those who called for an alternative definition for "al-Samiyya": 'Adnan al-Buni, Muhammad Muhafil, Muhammad Bahjat Qubaysi, Jawad 'Ali, Ibrahim al-Samira'i, and Nikula Ziyada.

6 On the splitting of the Jew and the Arab see Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); and on the ambivalent place of the Arab-Jew within this splitting, see Ella Shohat's *Israeli Cinema: East/East and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); and "Columbus, Palestine, and Arab Jews: Toward A Relational Approach to Community Identity," in *Cultural Readings of Imperialism*, eds. Keith Ansell Pearson, Benita Parry, and Judith Squires (London: Lawrence & Wishart in association with *New Formations: A Journal of Culture, Theory & Politics*, 1997).

7 In modern Hebrew's syntax, the sentence begins with the pronoun rather than with the verb, as would be the case in Biblical and traditional Hebrew as well as in Arabic. The accent, too, has been ideologically shorn from its relation to its neighboring Arabic dialects as in Jabotinsky's statements about the Hebrew accent of the Israelite ancestors viewed as similar to the Mediterranean languages (Greek, Italian, Spanish) rather than to Arabic. For a critique of Jabotinsky, see Ella Shohat's section, "The War of Languages," in the first chapter of *Israeli Cinema.* Interestingly, Anton Shammas's Hebrew novel *'Arabeskot* [Arabesques] (Am Oved: 1986) could be viewed as an attempt to re-Semitize, as it were, the Hebrew language.

8 My translation of the Arabic and Hebrew is taken from *Sefer Birkot Shamayim* (Jerusalem: Yishaq Baqal and 'Ezra Yafe ha-Madpis Publishing House, 1952). After 1948 the demand for Arabic liturgical texts in Israel, I would emphasize, did not immediately decrease since 1) Arab-Jews, often departing in haste and carrying very little baggage, left many prayer books behind; and 2) the generation coming of age required new books.

9 The term "Ladino," to take another case, is commonly used in mainstream Jewish circles but does not necessarily correspond to the diverse speakers' designations, sometimes simply called "Español." For a discussion, see for example, David M. Bunis, *Judezmo: Mavo li-Lshonam shel ha-Yehudim ha-Sephardim ba-Imperia ha-'Otomanit* (Hebrew) [*Judezmo: An Introduction to the Language of the Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire*] (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University 1999).

10 To find out when exactly Fulbright introduced this separation would require further research.

The online database does not provide an answer and the correspondence with the Fulbright office revealed that they were able to track down some paper archives dating back to 1964, but that they are apparently far from complete.

11 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

12 For a discussion of this "methodological splitting," see Ella Shohat,"Rupture and Return: The Shaping of a Mizrahi Epistemology," *Hagar: International Social Science Review* 2, no. 1 (2001), 61-92; and the later version "Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab-Jews," *Social Text* 75 (Spring 2003), 49-74, included in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*.

13 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

14 For that matter, even Judeo-Español contains the traces of Arabic, since Spanish, as well as Portuguese, retain a rich vocabulary that dates back to the Arabic of al-Andalus.

15 See for example, Christa Muller-Kessler, "Aramaic 'k', lyk' and Iraqi Arabic 'Aku, Maku: The Mesopotamian Particles of Existence," *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, no. 3 (July-September 2003), 641-46.

16 Not unlike Arab-Jews in the recent past, Christian-Arabs today are entangled in a complex relation toward the notion of "Arabness." But for that matter, Arabness, as a multifaceted designation, is arguably a slippery category for Muslims as well.

17 On the translinguistic within a Bakhtinian perspective, see V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929/1973).

18 Ibid.

19 The rich field of Judeo-Arabic scholarship has largely focused on Arabic documents written in Hebrew script, or in other words on the textual dimension of "the language," carried out by many scholars, including Shlomo Dov Goitein, Joshua Blau, A. S. Halkin, and Norman Stillman.

20 Sa'adia Ben Yoseph Gaon also translated several other books of the Bible, including Isaiah, Job, and Psalms.

21 Significant work has been done on Sa'adia Gaon's contribution to the Hebrew grammar. See, for example, Aharon Dotan, *Or Rishon be-Hokhmat ha-Lashon: Sefer Tzahut Leshon ha-'Ivrim la-Rav Sa'adia Gaon* (Hebrew) [*The Dawn of Hebrew Linguistics: The Book of Elegance of the Hebrew Language of the Hebrews by Saadia Gaon*] (Jerusalem: Ha-Igud ha-'Olami le-Limudei ha-Yahadut, 1997). For a discussion of Sa'adia Gaon's linguistic work see for example Solomon Leon Skoss, *Saadia Gaon: The Earliest Hebrew Grammarian* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1952).

22 For example, the influential Sephardic poet and grammarian Dunash ben Labrat (920-990) traveled to Baghdad to study with Sa'adia Gaon, continuing to use Arabic grammar for the study of Hebrew language, and introducing Arabic meter into Hebrew poetry.

23 Interestingly, a new initiative on the exegesis of the Torah in Arabic (*Tafsir al-Tawrat bi al-Lugha al-'Arabiyya*) has brought Sa'adia Gaon back, as it were, to Egypt and his work back to Arabic. Focusing on "the history of translation of Holy Jewish scriptures and its reasons" (*Tarikh Tarjamat Asfar al-Yahud al-Muqaddasa wa Dawafi'uha*), Saïd 'Atiyah Mutawi' and Ahmed Abd al-Maqsud al-Jundi translated, presented and commented on Sa'adia Ben Yoseph Gaon al-Fayyumi according to the edited and corrected version of Sa'adia Gaon's text by Joseph Derenburg (Cairo: Al-Markaz al-Qawmi lil-Tarjama, 2015).

24 See Yoseph Hayyim Ben Eliyahu al-Hakham, *Qanum al-Nisa'* (Baghdad: 'Ezra Sasson Ben Reuben Dangoor Printing, in Livorno Letters, 1906). *Hakham* is Hebrew for "wise

man"—which shares the same root with the Arabic hakim, for wise or judge—and refers to the traditional Sephardic title given to religous leaders or rabbis.

25 In Israel, these prayer books have been published predominantly by Baqal Publishing House in Jerusalem.

26 My translation is taken from the opening page of Yoseph Ḥayyim Ben Eliyahu al-Hakham, *Qanun al-Nisa'* (Baghdad: 'Ezra Sasson Ben Reuben Dangoor Printing, 1906).

27 Yoseph Ḥayyim Ben Eliyahu mi-Bagdad, *Sefer Hukei ha-Nashim*, translated to the Hebrew from Arabic by Ben-Tzion Salman Musafi (Jerusalem: Otsar ha-Mizrah—Mekhon Ben Ish Ḥai), 1979.

28 See Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, "Transnationalizing Comparison: The Uses and Abuses of Cross-Cultural Analogy," *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (Summer 2009), 473-99; and *Race in Translation: Culture Wars Around the Postcolonial Atlantic* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

29 Eli Amir, *Mafriah ha-Yonim* [*The Dove Flyer*] (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1992).

30 Haim Blanc, *Communal Dialects in Baghdad* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed for the Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University by Harvard University Press, 1964). For a synchronic analysis, see for example Jacob Mansour, ha-*'Aravit-ha-Yehudit shel Bagdad* (Hebrew) [The Judeo-Arabic of Baghdad], expanded with an introductory section in the English version, which discusses the dialect in comparison with classical Arabic as well as with Baghdad's Muslim and Christian dialects, *The Jewish Baghdadi Dialect: Studies and Texts in the Judeo-Arabic Dialect of Baghdad* (Or-Yehuda: The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 1991).

31 Anwar Sha'ul (1904-1984) was among the Jewish-Iraqi intellectuals, such as Mir Basri and Salman Darwish, who decided to remain in Iraq, departing only in the 1970s. His memoir *Qissat hayati fi wadi al-rafidayn* was published in Arabic in 1980 in Jerusalem by Rabitat al-Jami'iyyin al-Yahud al-Nazihin al-'Iraq; Samir Naqqash, *Nabuat Rajil Majnoon fi Madina Mal'una [Prophesies of a Madman in a Cursed City]* (Arabic) (Jerusalem: Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq; Al-Mashriq Printing House, Shefa-'Amr, 1995).

32 In Turkish the word *charpaya* is used for bed and *takhta* for wood, which would seem to suggest that the Iraqi dialect uses these Farsi words in their Turkish meaning, another case of common linguistic palimpsest. I thank Shouleh Vatanabadi for this comparative discussion.

33 In Morocco, to use another example, one common name was *il-'arabiyya dyalna* (our Arabic) and *il-'arabiyya dil-msilmin* (the Arabic of the Muslims.)

34 Some of the scholars who address the multiplicity within "Judeo-Arabic" include Shlomo Morag and Benjamin H. Hary. See especially Hary's *Multiglossia in Judeo-Arabic: With an Edition, Translation, and Grammatical Study of the Cairene Purim Scroll* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

35 Iraqi-Jews who sang the song would sometimes pronounce the words in a hybrid fashion. While pronouncing the word *fog* as in the Muslim dialect (instead of *foq*), they then would slide into their Jewish pronunciation of the word *al-nakhel* with a soft l.

36 On separate occasions in 1932 Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab and Umm Kulthum visited Baghdad, performing but also interacting with Iraqi musicians and singers, including Saleh al-Kuwaity and Salima Murad, who impacted the incorporation of Iraqi *maqam* (e.g., *naghim lami*) unfamiliar in Egypt.

37 The lyrics express the perspective of the groom's mother and register a rather phallocentric assumption about the importance of the groom for his mother, but not about the importance of the daughter for her mother.

38 Much of the information here on the music scene of Baghdad from the turn of the century to the early 1950s is based on years of conversation with my father, Sasson, who used to play the *kamanja* (violin).

39 It included Hugi Patao playing the *santur* and Saleh Shummail playing the *joza*. According to Yehezkel Kojaman, the singer who accompanied the Muslim-Iraqi al-Qundarchi in some of the *pastas* was a famous Jewish-Iraqi *maqam* singer, Heskel Muallim. For more, see "The Old Iraqi Music," *The Scribe* 76 (Spring 2003): http://www.dangoor.com/issue76/articles/76026.htm.

40 Naïm Kattan, *Adieu, Babylone* (Montreal: Les Editions La Presse, 1975).

41 Naïm Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon* (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1980), 6.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*, 8.

45 It should be noted that the Muslawi dialect in general has been viewed by Baghdadi and southern Iraqi speakers as funny, jokingly referring to the Muslawi dialect as "*qiqo*," due to the predominance of the spoken "qaf." The predominance of "qaf" has also to do with the deployment of the form "*qada*" to signify the present-continuous verb tense.

46 See Naïm Kattan, *Adieu, Babylone* (Montreal: Les Editions La Presse, 1975).

47 Kattan, *Farewell Babylon*, 8-9.

48 Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon*, 9. Here the text refers to "two distinct languages" (in the original French *en deux langues distinctes*), although throughout the passage Kattan speaks of two closely related dialects. He refers to the Jewish-Baghdadi dialect as *en dilaecte juif*, or *notre dialecte*, or *notre accent*. Rather than definitional inconsistency, the text uses the French word *langue*, "language," figuratively to emphasize Naïm's hope that Nessim would compromise. In any event, the memoir reveals Baghdadi speech zone as a site of negotiation.

49 Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 9-10.

50 Kattan, *Farewell, Babylon,* 9.

51 The Iraqi-Israeli Samir Naqqash wrote a story based on the folktale figure, entitled "Tantal" included in his short-story collection *Ana wa-ha'ula'wa al-fisam* (Arabic) [Me, Them, and Schizophrenia] (Jerusalem: Matba'at al-Sharq, 1978).

52 Full disclosure: 'Ezra Haddad (Iraq/Israel, 1900-1972) is a relative of mine.

53 'Ezra Haddad, *Rihlat Binyamin, 1165-1173*, translation to Arabic of Benjamin of Tudela's Hebrew text (*Massa'ot Binyamin mi-Tudela*) with an introduction by Haddad and a preface by the Iraqi historian 'Abbas al-'Azzawi (Baghdad: Al-Matba'a al-Sharqiyya, 1945); *Rub'iyyat 'Umar al-Khayyam* (selected translation from Persian to Hebrew), mentioned in Ahmad Hamid Sarraf's overview of the various modern translations of *al-Khayyam* in *'Umar al-Khayyam: al-hakiim al-riyadi al-falaki al-Nisaburi* (Arabic) [*'Umar Khayyam, the Philosopher-Astronomer of Naisabur*] (Baghdad: Matba'at al-Sha'b, 1949); *Alpha Beta: ve-Targieil Mikra la-Mathilim* (Hebrew) [*Alphabet: Reading Exercises for Beginners*] (Baghdad: Al-Matba'a al-Sharqiyya, 1947); and *Fusul min al-kitab al-muqaddas bi-uslub qisasi* (Arabic) [*Chapters from the Bible in Narrative Style*] (Baghdad: Wizarat al-Ma'arif, 1947). Haddad's abridged version of *Chapters from the Bible in Narrative Style* and the *Alpha Beta* textbook took place within a context of Arab-Iraqi nationalist emphasis on a thoroughly Arabic education, but also against a backdrop where the teaching of Hebrew provoked much anxiety. While Hebrew was taught continuously in Jewish Midrash schools under diverse Muslim regimes for over a millennium, with the emergence of Zionism and the new political environment generated in its wake, the teaching of Hebrew came under suspicion.

54 'Ezra Y. Haddad, *Avnei-Derekh le-Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Bavel-*'Iraq *mi-Hurban ha-Bayit ha-Rishon ve-'ad la-*'Aliya *ha-Hamonit* (Hebrew) [*Milestones in the History of Jews in Babylon, Iraq from the Babylonian captivity, 597 BC to the Mass Exodus to the State of Israel, 1951 AD*] (Tel Aviv: The Organization of Iraqi Jews in Israel, 1971). The book was published in conjunction with the commemorations of the twentieth anniversary of the move to Israel.

55 I rendered the text's mixture of Hebrew and Arabic in the following English transliteration: "*megishim lekha siflon shel eze nozel roteah, ve-le-ze qor'im qafe...qashmara (la'ag), ya walad...ah, ya walad... bo iti ha-baita...sham teqabel 'qahawa' ve-lo qafe—qahwa amitit ve-'te'ref allah haq' (ve-teda' she-elohim emet hu,)*...," 'Ezra Haddad, "*Abu Dawud Mamshikh Lihyot*" (Hebrew) "*Sofer u-Mehanekh mi-Bavel: Dapei Zikaron le-'Ezra Haddad zal.* (Tel Aviv: ha-Histadrut ha-kelalit shel ha-'ovdim be-Erets Yisra'el, ha-Va'ad ha-Po'el ha-Merkazi le-Tarbut ule-Hinukh, ha-Mahlaqa le-Qlitah u-Fituah, 1973), 69.

56 I am here amending Boris Uspensky's notion of ideological norms of the text.

57 Haddad, "*Abu Dawud Mamshikh Lihyot,*" 69-80.

58 Sami Michael, *Victoria* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1993), 101.

59 Sami Michael, *Hasut* (Hebrew) [*Refuge*] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1977); and *Shavim ve-Shavim Yoter* (Hebrew) [*All Men are Equal—But Some Are More*] (Tel Aviv: Bustan 1974).

60 Shimon Ballas, *Ve-Hu Aher* (Hebrew) [*And He Is an Other*] (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1991) it was published in English under the title *Outcast*, translated by Ammiel Alcalay and Oz Shelach (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 2007); Sami Michael, *Mayim Noshkim le-Mayim* (Hebrew) [*Water Kissing Water*] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2001).

61 In order to retain the overall meaning, my translation is not fully literal, for example the word "accursed" refers to *soda*, literally black in Arabic; or the phrase "a bug drove us nuts" refers to *dakhlet bina duda*, literally "a worm entered inside us." The lyrics translated here are taken from the version I am familiar with, sung in my Baghdadi community in Israel.

62 An Arabic word commonly deployed in colloquial Hebrew, *yalla* has multiple meanings, including "already" or "enough already," but also "end of discussion." (Israeli slang contains many Arabic words from various dialects, reflecting the diverse versions of Arabic spoken by both Jews and by Palestinians in Israel.) Levi's *yalla* derives directly from the Arabic, since: 1) he speaks Baghdadi-Jewish Arabic with his sister; and 2) his Hebrew is quite traditional and literary, not attuned to modern colloquial Hebrew even when the source of the word is "Arabic."

63 I discussed the problem of agency in "the exodus" and its repercussions for the terminology in "Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab-Jews," also included in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices.*

64 On the popular representation of the Sephardi/Mizrahi attitude toward Yiddish, see my chapter on Bourekas cinema in *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation.*

65 On North African musical fusion, see Ted Swedenburg, "Against Hybridity: The Case of Enrico Macias/Gaston Ghrenassia," in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, eds. Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 231-56.

66 The return has also been in the writing of the family story by Saleh's Alkuwaity's son, Shlomo Elkivity, in an independent publication entitled *Meitarim 'Anugim* (Hebrew) [Tender Strings] (2011).

67 On Hebrew, Arabic and the multiplicity of languages in Israeli cinema, see my 2010 (I. B. Tauris) postscript to *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (1989).

68 *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs—The Iraqi Connection* (Samir, 2003).

69 Initially, the filmmaker Samir invited me to serve as an advisor for *Forget Baghdad*, and later he also asked me to participate as an interviewee, representing the younger generation of Jewish-Iraqi writers.

70 *Son of the Sheikh* (1926) was directed by George Fitzmaurice; *Exodus* (1960) by Otto Preminger; *True Lies* (1994) by James Cameron; *Sallah Shabati* (1964) by Ephraim Kishon; and *Fatma, Marika wa-Rachelle* (1949) by Helmy Rafla.

71 As evidence of the ethno-essentialist attitudes that work against such projects, Samir had trouble receiving funding for the film because he was not Jewish, even though the project itself was critical of an Arab nationalism that excluded Jews. For further analysis of *Forget Baghdad* along these lines, see Ruth Tsoffar, "*Forget Baghdad*: Jews and Arabs—the Iraqi Connection," in Gonul Donmez-Colin, ed., *The Cinema of North Africa and the Middle East* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007).

72 See, for example, *Language Contact and Language Conflict in Arabic Variations on a Sociolinguistic Theme*, ed. Aleya Rouchdy (New York: Routledge Curzon Press, 2003).

73 Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1994); Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America - A Woman's Journey* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); Ghada Karmi, *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* (New York: Verso, 2002); Elias Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* (New York: Picador Books, 2007), originally in Arabic, *Bab al-Shams* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1998); Ali Bader, *The Tobacco Keeper* (Doha: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2011), originally in Arabic, *Haris al-Tibgh* (Beirut: Arabic Institute for Publishing and Studies, 2008); and Sinan Antoon, *Ya Maryam* (Arabic) (Beirut: Dar al-Jamal, 2012).

74 For a recent scholarly examination of Moroccan-Muslim memories of Moroccan-Jews, see Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

75 Ian S. Lustick, "Two-State Illusion," *New York Times*, Sunday Review, 15 September 2013; And Alan Elsner, Vice President, Communications, J Street, "Letters: A Two-State Critic, And His Critics," *New York Times*, 16 September 2013.

76 In tandem with the notion of "Jewish languages," Norman Stillman refers to "Christian languages" and "Muslim languages." Norman Stillman, "Language Patterns in Islamic and Judaic Societies" in *Islam and Judaism: 1400 Years of Shared Values* ed. S. Wasserstrom (Portland: Institute for Judaic Studies in the Pacific Northwest, 1991), 41-55. Acknowledging such difficulties in language definition, Benjamin H. Hary, meanwhile, prefers to speak of "religolect." See Benjamin Hary, *Translating Religion: Linguistic Analysis of Judeo-Arabic Sacred Texts from Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2009.).

77 For such a critique of "Judeo-Arabic language," see Yasir Suleiman, *Arabic, Self and Identity: A Study in Conflict and Displacement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32-38.

78 Some scholars, such as Newby, point to the term *al-yahudiyya* to refer to the Arabic of Jews in the Arabian Peninsula. See, Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia from Ancient Times to Their Eclipse Under Islam* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988). However, the question is whether *al-yahudiyya* could be regarded as a separate language, since it would seem to indicate a variation within an Arabic continuum.

79 In French *de la chanson judéo-arabe* has sometimes been used to designate a language as has often been the case in the English and Hebrew "Judeo-Arab," but it has also been used popularly to refer to a religious/ethnic identity, as commonly indicated by the Hebrew and English term "Arab-Jews." Indeed, in popular music anthologies, produced in the wake of postcolonial dislocations of North African Jews to France, *judéo-arabe* has largely

served to demarcate the Jewish identity of the Moroccan, Algerian or Tunisian singers, rather than to define a Judeo-Arab language. Hence, the French anthologies labeled as *judéo-arabe* music are in fact a multilingual affair that includes North African dialects of Arabic, French, Spanish and Hebrew as in the series dedicated to *"Le meilleur des trésor de la chanson judéo-arab,"* or to "*trésor de la chanson judéo-arabe*," which features the singers Salim Halali, Blond-Blond, Line Monty, Samy Elmaghribi, and Reinette L'oranaise. The anthology "*Mélodies judéo-arabes d'autrefois*" meanwhile also includes songs from Jewish Iraqi, Egyptian and Syrian musicians and singers.

80 I would like to acknowledge the important contributions to the field made by such scholars as Yosef Tobi, Yitzhak Avishur, Moshe Bar-Asher, and Jacob Mansour. My focus here is not on the actual work, but rather on the conceptual framing that uncritically reproduces the notions of "Jewish languages" and "Judeo-Arabic," even though the actual work could be read as demonstrating the problematic nature of the category.

81 The gradual adoption of non-indigenous terminology may already be seen in the Hebrew lessons taught in Baghdad's modern Jewish high school (Shamash), whose graduates received the London Matriculation certificate. The teacher of modern Hebrew, Avraham Rosen, who had come from Palestine/Eretz Israel in 1929, encouraged the cultural activities around modern Hebrew, initiating for example the publication of a students' high school newspaper. Rosen supervised and edited the students' Hebrew texts, which were printed in the "modern" Hebrew script rather than in the traditional Baghdadi-Jewish *hatzi kulmus* or *ktav Rashi*. Sallah Mukamal, one of the students who had an important editorial in the Hebrew language paper, and who was also an activist in the Zionist underground, published a piece entitled "The Arabic Language Spoken Among Iraq's Jews" (Lev Hakak, *Nitzanei ha-Yetzira ha-'Ivrit ha-Hadasha be-Bavel* [Budding of Modern Creativity in Babylon] (Or Yhuda: Merkaz Moreshet Yahadut Bavel, 2003), 296 (Hebrew)). Pointing to the Hebrew and Aramaic elements in the local Jewish dialect, he also points to the Turkish and Persian elements, suggesting that in this sense Iraqi Jews do not speak "pure Arabic." He concluded, "it would be more correct to call the Arabic language spoken among the Jews of Iraq by the name the Judeo-Arabic language" (*ha-safa ha-yehudtit-'arvit*) (Hakak, 328). The student's partial account elides the fact that Turkish and Persian words similarly exist in diverse Iraqi dialects and that no Arabic dialect is pure. Sallah Mukamal's text reveals the early traces of the narrative of separate languages.

82 I elaborated on this point of Zionism's *familienroman* in in previous work, beginning with the discussion of the figure of the Sabra in chapters one and two of *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*.

83 There have been instances in the first decades of Israel of this social policing. In my family, for example, my father and his Iraqi friends in their workplace were told by their Ashkenazi boss: "Stop speaking Arabic—this is not an Arab country!"

84 Zionism's arrival in Arab countries began to impact some young Arab-Jews, who gradually echoed the discourse of a Hebrew/Arabic split, especially under the influence of Hebrew teachers from Palestine / Eretz Israel (the Yishuv.)

85 The Hebrew / Arabic schism has gradually resulted in the removal of Arabic from some liturgical texts, which now only retain the Aramaic along with Hebrew.

86 See Said, *Orientalism*.

87 Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky, *ha-Mivta ha-'Ivri* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Seffer, 1930) (Hebrew). Today, however, the Hebrew spoken by Mizrahim and Palestinians from Israel has also shaped a certain return—in pronunciation and vocabulary—to Arabic. Mizrahi Hebrew speech itself is not of one mold, bearing the traces of Iraqi, Moroccan and other Arabics as well

as of French,while the exilic traces of Palestinian-Arabic reveal the linguistic baggage of diverse host geographies.

88 In my work, the idea of the "Arab-Jew" functions not merely as a factual description of past existence but also as a potentially empowering concept for rewriting history and as a trope for future imaginative possibilities transcending the fait accompli of partition, and which, to invoke Walter Benjamin's words, offers a mode of a "revolutionary nostalgia." In this regard, I especially appreciate the reading of my writing on "the Arab-Jew" as "becoming" in Gil Z. Hochberg's *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

89 In a context where Golda Meir reportedly stated that "those who don't speak Yiddish are not Jews," it is not surprising that the Arab-Jewish/Mizrahi apologetics for Arabic sometimes took the form of: "It's just like your Yiddish!" In such divorcing of "Judeo-Arabic" from Arabic, an implicit analogy emerged between the Arab and the German *goyim*.

90 Thoroughly believing in co-existence, Sephardi leaders, already in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine, sought to mediate and reach a possible solution. In his independently published book, entitled *Metahim ve-Aflaya 'Adatit be-Israel* (Hebrew) [*Tensions and Ethnic Discrimination in Israel*], Nahum Menahem documented the efforts by diverse Sephardi leaders, who embraced Zionism but who also acknowledged the rights of Palestinians, to reach compromise (Ramat Gan: Rubin Pirsum, 1983). And in the 1980s, in homage to one such figure, Eliyahu Elyashar, the Elyashar Seminary initiative was launched in conjunction with the Mizrahi leftist space in South Tel Aviv, New Direction, some of its members defined themselves as anti-Zionist.

91 For this context of Arabic study for Mizrahim, see Zvi Ben-Dor, "'Eyb, Heshuma, Infajarat Qunbula: Towards a History of Mizrahim and Arabic," in *Hazut Mizrahim* (Hebrew) ed. Yigal Nizri (Tel Aviv: Bavel, 2004).

92 *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, ed. Christopher Moseley (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2010): http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas.

93 Talia Issacs, "Never Say Never: The Case for Iraqi Judeo-Arabic," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 10, nos. 4-5 (2006).

94 Eli Timan, "The Jewish Iraqi Website," Jews of Iraq: http://www.jewsofiraq.com/.

95 Curiously at times, the analogy to the Zionist resurrection of Hebrew is deployed. See Patricia Cohen, "Indian Tribes Go in Search of Their Lost Languages," *New York Times*, 5 April 2010.

96 See Eli Timan's website, http://www.jewsofiraq.com/, as well as the SOAS Endangered Languages Archive: http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0026. Interestingly, the Association for Jewish Studies describes Timan as "a native speaker of Iraqi Judeo-Arabic" whose project documents "the modern spoken language." His project is contextualized in relation to the Diaspora metanarrative as: "Of the Jewish languages and dialects that have been described and documented, many are now extinct in their spoken form. *The UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages: Europe* and a website produced by Beth Ha-Tefutsoth, the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, have identified those Jewish languages for which a few speakers remain. It is incumbent that scholars employ every effort to record and document the last speakers before these languages become fully extinct." See, The Association for Jewish Studies, "Audio and Sound Collections," in "New Tools for Jewish Linguistics," in Heidi Lerner, "Perspectives on Technology *Association for Jewish Studies Perspectives* (Fall 2008): http://www.ajsnet.org/lern08fa.html.

97 As an anecdote of this split between Arab studies and Jewish studies and its impact on the ambivalent academic space for the study of Arab-Jews, I would cite my own experience

following the "Rethinking Muslims and Jews: Interdisciplinary Perspectives" workshop (Georgetown University, 25 February 2000), sponsored by the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, the Georgetown Jewish Studies Program Initiative, and the National Resource Center on the Middle East and North Africa. The workshop, which included the participation of Joel Beinin, Joseph Massad, and myself resulted in the usual aggressive efforts to silence critical perspectives, whereby Massad and myself were inappropriately delegitimized as "not objective" by the discussant Daniel Brumberg, a scholar with little academic background in the fields of both Palestine studies and Arab-Jewish studies. My presentation on Arab-Jews, entitled "The Aporias of the National," more specifically, got caught up in the assumption of the exclusive authority of Jewish studies over the knowledge of Middle Eastern Jews. In the wake of the polemical exchanges, with Beinin in particular defending our work, I corresponded and spoke with Michael Hudson, at the time the chair of Arab studies, about the place of Arab-Jews in Arab studies generally. I expressed a hope that Arab studies might participate more actively in a conversation about this topic, and engage the subject of Arab-Jews, Jews within Islam, and even the Mizrahim in Israel within the larger framework of Arab culture and its diasporas. In a sense I was trying to "translate" the theoretical arguments advanced in my paper into a kind of institutional and curricular reformulation. The issue of Arab-Jews, situated within the liminal zone between Arab studies and Jewish studies, was not about substituting Jewish studies with Arab studies, but rather about opening up dialogical space and a multi-perspectival approach within academic institutions.

98 Indeed, much important scholarly work has been done on this historical dialogue, for example by María Rosa Menocal, Ross Brann, and Ammiel Alcalay.

99 For some of the efforts to include the Arab-Jews within Arab studies projects, see *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging, eds.* Rabab Abdulhadi, Nadine Naber and Evelyn Alsultany (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011); *We Are Iraqis: Aesthetics and Politics in a Time of War*, eds. Nadje al-Ali and Deborah al-Najjar (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013); and *Between the Middle East and the Americas: The Cultural Politics of Diaspora*, eds. Evelyn Alsultany and Ella Shohat (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).