

Ethnic demonstration and cultural representation: From multiculturalism to cultural hybridization, the case of Mizrahi-Sabras in Israel¹

Baruch Shimoni

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I examine the cultural identity of Mizrahi-Sabras, second- and third-generation of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. I find them to be a hybrid of their parents' cultural characteristics and those of the dominant Israeli Ashkenazim. I describe both my own cultural identity and that of contemporary Mizrahi-Sabra singers, who produce contemporary Muzica Mizrahit, a hybrid musical form.

Introduction

[I]t may be a mistake to think that social production—the process by which societies maintain themselves over time—presupposes some sort of consensus with regard to dominant values or norms (Appiah, 1992:179).

I was born in the Halisa neighborhood of Haifa—at its edge, near Wadi Rushmia, as near as possible to the border with the Hadar neighborhood.² Halisa is a poor and

1 I thank my colleagues and friends, Eran Argov, from Brasenose College, Oxford, and Yaron Avitov, novelist and world citizen, for encouraging me to write this paper and for their meaningful comments. A special thanks to Harriet Bergmann from Yale University, Eyal Ben-Ari from Hebrew University, and Yossi Yonah from Ben Gurion University for their insightful remarks. I wish to acknowledge the thoughtful notes to the last draft of this paper and the financial support that I have received from Mrs. Nina Weiner, president of ISEF (International Sephardic Education Foundation) without her help, this paper couldn't have been written. Finally, I would like to offer my deep appreciation to the *Hagar* reviewers and to the *Hagar* editor for their comments, suggestions and editing. A short version of this paper was published in Hebrew in 2006, *Te'oryah Ubikoret* 28:209-216.

2 Today the Hadar neighborhood is populated mainly by immigrants from the former Soviet Union and by labor immigrants.

neglected neighborhood which was, and still is, populated mainly by Palestinians and Mizrahim (Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands).³ Wadi Rushmia separates Halisa from the Hadar neighborhood, with its beautiful houses that looked so majestic to me, sitting on the opposite hill. Hadar, at least in my mind, was populated by the Ashkenazim, European Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe.⁴ When I was six years old we moved one street above, precisely on the border with Hadar. I was so glad to get away from Halisa and to shorten the distance between me and Hadar, to the point where I never thought about the fact that I was born in Halisa. I erased Halisa from my biography. In Hadar the white people lived, the educated ones, those who, to my mind, understood more. Some of the parents of the children who attended the same school as I did had matriculation certificates and I always assumed that they also had better financial means. They were members of Egged (the nationwide bus company) and of the Histadrut (the biggest labor union in Israel), both established mainly by Eastern European Jews, and there was even one contractor. My body was in Halisa but my soul was in Hadar, with the “others.”

During the big and frequent family events of my childhood, I learned to know the diverse Kurdish music, sung by family members headed by my father. On Tuesday afternoons and on Saturday mornings, I participated regularly in Tzofei Geulla, a scout movement, in Hadar. I remember how I admired Muli, the instructor who sang us Israeli songs, most of them originally from Eastern Europe, during summer camp. To this day, you can find me discreetly shedding a tear when I hear Kurdish folk songs or the *Hareut*, one of the old Israeli songs. This Kurdish-Israeli mixture took part in shaping my musical taste and probably my complex, dislocated, hybrid identity as well. The more it becomes apparent and clear to me, the more I feel that this identity is not fully represented by the two dominant identity discourses in Israel, not by the hegemonic Ashkenazi discourse and not by the critical Mizrahi discourse.

My dialogue is not with the producers of the Ashkenazi discourse—the official education system and the media, for instance—since for them my history has never existed, but with the producers of the Mizrahi discourse, Mizrahi activists and writers/researchers who write about Mizrahim. The uncompromising efforts of the latter undoubtedly brought about the deconstruction (not yet completed) of the discriminatory and unequal representation of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands by the Ashkenazi hegemony (Chetrit, 2004; Dahan Kalev, 1999; Menachem, 1979; Shenhav, 1996; Shohat, 1997; Swirski, 1981). Yet, as part of a multicultural effort aimed at achieving equal representation (Yonah, 2004), the producers of Mizrahi discourse seem to have manufactured a unified Mizrahi appearance that contributes in the long run to

3 For a discussion of the concept “Mizrahi,” see Hever, Shenhav and Motzafi-Haller (2002).

4 On the vagueness of the term “Ashkenazi,” see Dahan-Kalev (1999); Sasson-Levy (2006) and Zuckerman (2001).

a homogeneous and non-diverse representation of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands as “Mizrahim” or “Arab Jews.” As a Mizrahi-Sabra, one of the second generation of Israeli Jews from Iraqi Kurdistan, this homogeneous epistemology does not represent my full cultural identity. The category “Mizrahi” ignores my “contemporary” history, Israeli-Ashkenazi, or refers to it as a false product of the Zionist Ashkenazi ideology. The category “Arab Jew” completes the lack of recognition of who I am, by referring to my “deep” history, Jewish-Kurdish, as Arabic.

The writing of this paper was very hard for me emotionally, as I felt a sense of danger from two directions. From the hegemonic Ashkenazi side, I feared being *mitbachyen*, a whiner, when claiming recognition for the Jewish-Kurdish character of my identity; and from the Mizrahi side, I feared being *mishtaknez*, trying to be like an Ashkenazi (or to act like a “wog,” a Westernized Eastern gentleman, to use colonial jargon; Naipaul, 1971:117), when claiming recognition of the Israeli-Ashkenazi character of my identity. Yet, the silencing power of these discourses and the resulting inner unease I felt as I was writing have encouraged me even more to continue.

Through a description of my cultural identity, I would like to suggest a theoretical perspective that views the cultural identity of the Mizrahi-Sabras, second- and third-generation Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands, as a hybrid of the cultural characteristics of their parents and of Israeli-Ashkenazis—an identity that is free from the power of the two suppressing discourses, *mitbachyen* and *mishtaknez*. I begin by presenting the theoretical assumptions of this paper, and then review the public and academic multicultural Mizrahi discourse, showing its difficulties in representing the diverse cultural identities of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. A close inspection of my hybrid cultural identity is presented thereafter. In order to show that my cultural identity represents a broader cultural phenomenon, I then offer a brief review of the construction of the hybrid cultural identity of Mizrahi-Sabra singers through the production of contemporary *Muzica Mizrahit*, music sung by Israeli performers from Arab and Muslim lands. I conclude by developing a theoretical perspective for the representation of the Mizrahi-Sabras’ cultural identity as a hybrid of their parents’ and the Israeli-Ashkenazi cultural characteristics.

Cultural identity as hybridization

The recognition of my cultural identity as hybrid drew me to a perspective that offers more than seeing the Israeli cultural sphere as a system of constant binaries: Mizrahim vs. Ashkenazim, Arab Jews vs. European Jews. Hybridization helps me see it, rather, as a historic process of change and enrichment. Through this process, the multiple and diverse cultural values and practices of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands are hybridized with those of Israeli-Ashkenazi Jews, and vice versa.

Cultural hybridity is mostly known as a key concept in post-colonial discourse in cultural studies and, more specifically, in Bhabha's (1994) writings about post-colonial culture. Bhabha developed the concept of hybridity from literary and cultural theory to demonstrate the reconstruction of culture and identity within colonial conditions of physical and cultural control, suppression and oppression. For Bhabha, hybridization is the process by which the colonial power tries to shape the identity of the colonized within a homogeneous framework, but fails, producing something familiar but new (Papastergiadis, 1997). According to him, new hybrid configurations emerge from the interweaving of elements of the colonizing and the colonized cultures to challenge the existence of any fixed, coherent, stable or pure cultural identity: "For me, the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges; rather, hybridity to me is the 'Third Space,' which enables other positions to emerge" (Bhabha, 1990:211). These "other positions," that is, new cultural hybrids, are located therefore between the colonizer and the colonized; they are produced in a *third space* where the hegemonic colonial cultural discourses and practices are disrupted and displaced by the colonized people through translation and negotiation with and in terms of their own cultural understandings (Bhabha, 1994).

A key criticism of the concept of hybridization as it applies to culture is that it assumes the pre-existence of pure and stable cultures (Werbner and Modood, 1997). Therefore, it seems important to note that I don't claim that meetings and mixtures between cultures are historically new. Cultures are always in a process of flow, change and mixture. Following Rosaldo, I understand hybridity first and foremost "as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity" (1995: xv). The cultures of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands are assumed here to be already hybrids of Jewish, Arab and variations of other Muslim cultural traditions, such as Moroccan, Kurdish or Persian. From this perspective, I see the cultural identity of Israeli Mizrahi-Sabras as reflecting a process in which their parents' already hybrid cultural traditions are rehybridized with Israeli-Ashkenazi cultural values and practices.⁵

This conception of hybridization argues that cultures are not given or fixed, but are constructs of history and discourse. That is, cultures are shaped and reshaped through interactions with other cultures in which people reflectively or unreflectively insert new meanings into their own hybrid cultural understandings. It is not enough to be aware of the presence of various cultural groups within the same space, as multiculturalism would assert; one must also be aware of the new cultural production achieved through encounters between these groups. Where multiculturalism would

5 Nor do I perceive Israeli-Ashkenazi values and practices as unified (cohesive), but rather as made up of diverse characteristics rooted in various cultural traditions European, North American and, today, also Arab and Muslim traditions, brought by the Mizrahim.

see the Israeli sphere atomistically, as constructed of Mizrahim vs. Ashkenazim or Arab Jews vs. European Jews, hybridization shows this very same sphere to be an arena of cultural negotiation and contestation between both ends of these binaries in which cultural interpenetrations, borrowing and enrichment happen.

My claim, then, is that the hybrid cultural identity of Mizrahi-Sabras goes unseen by writers, researchers and activists that base their work only on coherent definitions such as Mizrahim or Arab Jews, dictated by the multicultural approach. The potential of these agents (writers, researchers and activists) to understand, and more importantly to represent, the Mizrahi-Sabras' (hybrid cultural) identity, I claim, is not fully realized.

The Mizrahi project: From struggle to homogenization

The development of the Mizrahi discourse

Many forms of Mizrahi protest began with the early 1950s' emigration to Israel in educational frameworks, immigrant settlements, the political arena or the media (Motzafi-Haller, 2002). Yet, the nationwide active public protests of Wadi Salib in 1958, the Black Panthers in 1973 and the Tents Movement at the beginning of the 1980s seem to constitute the most important landmarks in changing the way in which immigrants from Arab and Muslim lands were treated—from a passive and dependent category, *meutei yecholet* (lacking in ability) or *teunei tipuach* (in need of nurturing), to a productive group with ambitions, wills and capabilities of its own (for a detailed description, see Chetrit, 2004).

At a 2003 conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the thirtieth anniversary of the Black Panther movement, Charlie Biton, one of its major leaders, suggested that the movement be recreated. In reaction, Kochavi Shemesh, another central figure, turned to the audience, mainly Mizrahi-Sabra social activists, with the following words: "There is no need for new Panthers; the need is to change the methods. You have studied; you have better ways to succeed. Keep the struggle alive in your way" (quoted from memory). The Keshet HaDemocratit HaMizrahit (Democratic Mizrahi Rainbow), a social movement created mainly by Mizrahi-Sabras, whose goal is to promote multiculturalism, democracy and social justice, seems to be the clearest expression of the new "methods" and "ways" of "struggle" at which Kochavi Shemesh aimed. The Law of Public Housing (Purchasing Rights) that enables public housing tenants (most of them in underprivileged neighborhoods and towns) to become the owners of the apartments in which they live, just like the tenants of moshavim and kibbutzim, and the Supreme Court's decision for a more equal distribution of public lands, led by the Keshet movement, are perhaps the most successful results of such efforts.

One of the important landmarks in the efforts to remove the Ashkenazi hegemony over the Israeli social and cultural sphere is “A conspiracy of silence” (*Kesher hashtika*), a paper written by Yehouda Shenhav (1996), one of the major leaders of the Keshet movement. In this paper, published in the leftist *Haaretz* daily newspaper, probably in order to hit right at the heart of the Ashkenazi hegemony, Shenhav accuses the Israeli left wing, populated mainly by the Ashkenazi elite, of holding an Oriental, patronizing and condescending view of Palestinians and Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. Towards the Palestinians, who are outside the borders of the Israeli society, behind the fence, from where they cannot threaten its hegemony in the Middle East, the Israeli left wing changes its view in order to be considered by itself and by others as enlightened and progressive; but towards the Mizrahim, who are part of Israeli society and as such are capable of threatening its hegemony, the left wing continues to hold and practice its discriminating view to maintain its social and cultural hegemony (see also Shohat, 1997).

Ella Shohat (1997:39,49) and Aziza Khazzoom (2003) point out the historical sources and the types of discourse which constitute the “structural oppression” that is the Mizrahi experience in Israel. Looking at Israeli society from a post-colonial perspective, both researchers claim that the discourse of the Zionist representatives, the Ashkenazim, taken from the colonial lexicon, creates a false division between Western, enlightened and superior Israeli-Ashkenazi Jews, and Eastern, inferior Israeli-Mizrahi Jews. It is their claim that, after years of living in Europe, the European Jews have internalized the patronizing European gaze towards the Orient (which they themselves, the Eastern European Jews, were perceived to be part of) and applied it to Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. The European Zionism, says Shohat, is responsible for the process by which the millennial pride and collective self-confidence and creativity of the Israeli Mizrahim were destroyed. In his collection of articles, *The Ashkenazi Revolution is Dead*, Sami Shalom Chetrit shows the social, political and cultural marginalization of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands to be an expression of the “racism of the Ashkenazi founders and their successors toward the Mizrahim” (1999:5). In the important collection of articles, *Mizrahim in Israel*, a vast gallery of writers examine the formation of the “ethnic experience in Israel from the different perspectives of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands [Mizrahim]” (Hever, Shenhav and Motzafi-Haller, 2002:17-18).

From struggle to homogenization

A close inspection of the Mizrahi public and academic discourse shows that it adopts both a dividing and unifying perspective to represent the Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. This perspective was organized in the past by concepts such as “Sephardim” or “the Eastern ethnics” (*Edot Hamizrah*) and in the present mainly by “Mizrahim” and “Arab Jews.” The rebellion of 1958 in Wadi Salib was of Sephardim against Ashkenazim; the Panthers represented the “blacks” (*Shchorim*) against the whites in

1973; the Tents Movement represented the underprivileged Mizrahim of Jerusalem's neighborhoods in the 1980s; during the 1990s, Shenhav, in "A conspiracy of silence," examined the left wing's position towards the Mizrahi, the Keshet functioned as a Mizrahi counter-hegemonic, Ella Shohat complained of how European Zionism ruined the shared pride and self-confidence of the Mizrahim, and Sami Shalom Chetrit claimed the victory of the Mizrahim over the dying Ashkenazi revolution; and, in 2002, the contributors to *Mizrahim in Israel* viewed the Jews from Arab and Muslim lands as Mizrahim.

The most up-to-date expression of this cultural unification seems to be the category of "Arab Jews." More and more Mizrahi writers and artists and those who write about Mizrahim reveal the Arab culture that was separated from the legitimate Israeli cultural sphere by the Ashkenazi hegemony. A clear example can be found in "*Sfat Em*" ("Mother tongue"), an exhibition at the film conference and festival of May 2002, which focused mainly on the Arab roots of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. Reading through *Eastern Appearance*, the excellent book edited by Yigal Nizri (2004), following "*Sfat Em*," leaves the impression that, for the contributors to this book, the cultural identity, outlook, experience and common recollection of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands should be simply represented as *Arabic*. In the opening of the book, Nizri asks "[T]o what extent is the option of the Mizrahim to return to Arabianness possible as a symbolic return to the history?" (2004:15). In the same book, Ella Shohat claims that Israeli sociology and criminology pulled the Mizrahim out of their "Arab history" (2004:49). "For the Mizrahi," writes Zvi Ben-Dor, also in the same book,

[T]he immediate significance of this linguistic exile [from the Arab language] is the fact that the Arab language was forced to become a language of the private sphere. Hebrew is spoken outside, in the public sphere—with the clerk, the teacher, the principal, the landlord, the physician, the government; Arabic is spoken at home (2004:35).

Examining the writings of novelists Shimon Ballas, Sami Michael and Itshak Gormezano-Goren, who are originally from Arab countries (the first two from Iraq, the last from Egypt), Hanan Hever claims that the Mizrahi cultural being operates in a "heterotopy" or a "third space" in which there is "a totally unclear mixture between Judaism and Arabism" (2000:188-189). Yehouda Shenhav claims, in *Mizrahim in Israel*, that as part of the will to participate in the "Jewish-Israeli collective, [the Mizrahim] agreed with relative ease and even aspired to shed the relics of their Arabism" (2002:109). Arabism became, then, a synonym for being Mizrahi and both terms become a synecdoche for Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. To be a real Mizrahi in this view means to remember the Arab past, to preserve the Arab language

and to recognize the efforts of Zionist-Ashkenazi nationalism to detach Arabism from the cultural tradition of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands.⁶

It is clear to me that, for Mizrahi activists or intellectuals who write about Mizrahim, unification of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands as Mizrahim or Arab Jews does not represent a cultural being (Yonah and Shenhav, 2005). It is rather part of a multicultural strategy, planned and often intentionally provocative (see mainly the writing of Sami Shalom Chetrit), today more than ever, aimed at fighting Ashkenazi dominance. I also believe that this unification represents a political and reflective moment without which counter-politics cannot exist (Hall, 1997). Indeed, I'm not proposing here that we get rid of the multicultural approach. In the struggle for social equality and justice, this approach has shown itself to be effective. As long as the partial cultural representation of Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands continues to exist, the categories "Mizrahi" and "Arab Jew" seem to be valid and appropriate in serving multicultural politics in its struggle for social and cultural justice.

Nonetheless, continuing to refer to Jews from Arab and Muslim lands only in multicultural unifying and dividing terms, as Mizrahim (vs. Ashkenazim) and Arab Jews (vs. European Jews), often grants these groups of people a common and coherent cultural life which has never belonged to them and often doesn't fully represent them. There is a huge cultural diversity among Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. What is common among Jews from Iraqi Kurdistan, Yemen, Morocco or Persia is perhaps more a recollection of rejection and less the cultural identity that the term Mizrahi suggests (Amor, 2002). Moreover, not all Jews from Arab and Muslim lands are Arab Jews. The category of Arab Jews neglects the cultural tradition, and therefore identity, of those who came from geographical regions which are Islamic, but not necessarily Arabic.

For the Mizrahi-Sabras, the second and third generation of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands, the Mizrahi and Arab Jew categories add two problems. First, as one who grew up socialized in Israeli society, it is not always clear to me what to do with sayings such as "the Ashkenazi revolution is dead" (Chetrit, 1999). Does this mean that I should kill parts in me which are the result of this revolution, stupid, mean and naïve as it might be? I carry strong feelings of anger for the lack of consideration for my history and myself personally (as I will demonstrate later on) which I experienced in my socialization into the Israeli-Ashkenazi culture. Yet, cultural identity is not a room whose character can change when you replace its furniture. For me, and I believe for Mizrahi-Sabras in general, Israeli-Ashkenazi characteristics are not

6 A close look at who the main producers of the "Arab Jew" category are, or what research field is feeding those who hold it, shows that this category was formed primarily by Israelis from research on Arab countries, mainly Egypt or Iraq (see Ben-Dor, 2004; Shenhav, 2002; Shohat, 1997, 2004; and Hever, 2000).

“out there.” They are inside. Although connected to processes of oppression and, more important, self-denial and hate (Khazzoom, 2003; Shohat, 1997), acting like an Israeli-Ashkenazi doesn’t always simply reflect a desire of Mizrahi-Sabras to get rid of their parents’ cultural identity, as is often justly argued by some commentators, but also reflects an *existing reality*.

Second, as one who grew up in a Kurdish-Jewish home, in which Kurdish sounds and the Aramaic (Kurdish-Jewish) language, rather than Arabic, were dominant, I do not feel that the Arab culture played a meaningful role in my cultural identity. As a Kurdish Jew, my father used to laugh when he heard that people defined him as an Arab Jew. As he stressed, he had never felt that the Arab culture served as a significant source for his identity. I assume that there would be those who would hurry to refer to Foucault, and point out to me the page explaining that identity is a matter of power and discourse, in order to show that my father was also the product of the Zionist propaganda that aimed at the discrimination of Arabs also in Kurdistan, and therefore my father refused to recognize his Arab characteristics. I do believe that my father was more Arabic than the European Jews. Yet, as that very page of Foucault would suggest, as a member of a Jewish minority within a minority of Muslim Kurds in an Arab country (Iraq), my father was first a Kurdish Jew and only then an Arab Jew. Applying the Arab Jew category to all Jews from Arab and Muslim lands seems to me similar to referring to Moroccan, Andalusian, Tunisian, Persian, Armenian or Kurdish music as “Arabian.” It can be only partially true. There are Arabian elements in all these forms of music, yet a full representation of them requires an investigation of the local musical heritage. Like their music heritage, then, the cultural traditions of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands (Persian, Moroccan or Kurdish, for example) are complex and diverse, certainly not only Arabic.

The conception of Mizrahi-Sabras as a cultural hybrid is not intended to substitute for the multicultural strategy. The discussion here is not about opposing lanes, but about separate lanes of the same route of traffic. There is still a need to continue the multicultural social-class struggles to end the taken-for-granted and powerful Ashkenazi hegemony over the Israeli social, economic and cultural sphere. Yet, there is also a need to recognize the concrete cultural reality in which Mizrahi-Sabras live. This reality includes mixtures between the often self-rejected cultural tradition of parents (Jewish-Persian/Moroccan/Kurdish) and externally imposed (by the melting pot strategy) Israeli-Ashkenazi values and practices.

From melting pot to cultural hybridization

Homogenizing Zionism

Any attempt to seek the roots of the Mizrahi-Sabras’ cultural identity first requires an understanding of the aspiration of the Zionists’ founders to create the “new Jew.”

This Jew, the “Sabra,” had to meet two conditions. First, he/she had to foster virtues such as vigor, bravery and fearlessness; to get rid of what the Zionists’ founders saw as the passive, defensive and obedient Diaspora Jew who, as David Ben Gurion, the first Israeli prime minister said, was easily “led like sheep to the slaughter” (Melman, 1992:16). Second, this new Israeli Jew had to think and act in accordance with European values and practices in whose production the Jewish people had actively participated, according to Zionist founders. In the words of Max Nordau, one of the significant Zionist leaders,

We participated in the development of European culture [in greater proportion than] our number; it belongs to us as much as it belongs to the Germans, French and English. ... We shall not allow someone to invent an imaginary contradiction between our Jewish culture and the European culture (cited in Lam, 1988:58).

For many Israelis the way to the first goal, to the production of a strong and fearless Jew, is very difficult and sometimes insufferable. More and more Israelis are expressing discomfort with the invasive and burdensome Israeli directness and aggressiveness, directed to those both inside and outside the country, and with the high price paid by a whole generation aiming to develop “masculine” characteristics, such as toughness and determination (Ben-Ari and Levy-Schreiber, 2000).

For other Israelis, mainly those who arrived from Arab and Muslim lands, the way to the second goal, a state whose cultural life is organized by European values and practices, has been accompanied by unbearable rejection. “I love you, but my parents would be sick if they were to see you in my house,” or “my father would die if he knew that I’m dating you,” are only two expressions of the discriminatory messages I got as a Mizrahi-Sabra in Israel. I didn’t dare talk about marriage, of course. The combination of the personal rejection which, according to my potential dates, was the result of my parents’ history, and the priority my dates’ history got in the Israeli public sphere (in curricula, television, theater) led me for a long time to an inevitable adoption of a dichotomist worldview: on one side, a group of those who are worth more (Ashkenazim) and, on the other side, a group of those who are worth less (Mizrahim). Along with this dichotomy, I developed what I understand today as self-rejection, which includes suppression and sometimes even disgust for everything my parents represent; their judgment, worldview, clothing style, book and music choices. In *Arab Jews: Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Yehouda Shenhav (2003:11) describes the “creative solutions” he found “in order to shut down or disable the radio at home” when his Iraqi-born parents listened to Arab singers, Um Kulthum, Farid El-Atrash or Abed El-Wahab (see also Shohat, 1992). This is exactly the picture I imagine when I listen to Kurdish, Armenian or Arabic music. At these moments I cannot help but see my father listening to Kurdish music played at low volume, fearing that his enjoyment would be stopped at any moment if one of his children decided that the music was a

distraction from the desired Israeli integrative pathway. Until a late age I didn't know, or rather chose not to know, that I speak Aramaic, the Kurdish-Jewish language, spoken by my parents. This language, the language of the Passover Haggadah, ironically stayed hidden in me and gave me great shame when my parents chose to use it outside the home. Did I internalize the oppression, as Aziza Khazzoom (2003) would suggest? Did I adopt the oppressor's subtracted gaze and develop self-hate, as Ella Shohat (1992) says? The answer to both questions is apparently positive.

It is important to understand that the marginalization of my parents' history (or, alternately, my decision not to recognize it) wasn't always a consequence of direct and explicit external deeds. The outside patronizing gaze was, and still is in many cases, implicit and unseen, difficult to point out, to defend or go against. "Kurdish Einstein," one of my colleagues at the university called me, after he found that written materials of mine were appropriate for publication. Who can resist such a compliment? Who would refuse to be called Einstein, even if the price is social tagging? He meant to compliment me. I'm definitely sure about that. (To understand the prejudiced and reductive character of this combination of words, and the unpleasant feelings it provoked in me, change the word "Kurdish" to the word "woman.") And this is how Ilan Kfir, an Israeli journalist for a Russian-language newspaper, explains the decision of Israel's Tunisian-born former foreign affairs minister, Sylvan Shalom, to support the referendum on the issue of detachment from the Gaza Strip:

The reason for Shalom's decision is simple. He acts from insult, because Sharon [former Israeli prime minister who was against the referendum] didn't take him to Sharem Al-Sheik [in Egypt]. Actually, Shimon Peres [East European-born] could have been insulted, but the difference in mentalities and education enables Peres to overcome small insults (cited in *Maariv*, 2005).

For Israelis, there is no need to present the academic qualifications of Sylvan Shalom, I suppose. Ilan Kfir represents a spectrum of living, breathing and acting stereotypes in Israel, and probably in the whole world, towards those who originate from Arab and Muslim lands, that are based on reductive ideas such as low mentality, intolerance of insults and lack of education. "At the cinema," claims actor Yigal Adika, Israeli-born son of second-generation Israeli Jews from Kurdistan, "they always put me in the same role ... when one thinks about Yigal Adika, they think about those who carry a dark skin" (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 2005:30). And who among the Mizrahim in Israel, at least those who have dark skin, hasn't gone through a Fanonian experience? Take, for instance, night clubs in Israel where an Eastern appearance, Jewish or Arab, is rejected on the spot. "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened! Frightened! Frightened!" This is how Fanon (1986:112) describes his fetish experience, the one that revealed to him "The Fact of Blackness" (Read, 1996). The frightened eyes of the screaming young white girl brought Fanon to confront a world that made him reject himself

and develop that fantasy and passion to be seen like the white human being. Reading Fanon took me back thirty years, to the basketball yard in the Hadar neighborhood, where an Ashkenazi boy made clear to me “what black and ugly legs” I had. This violent remark provoked in me what I today understand, following Fanon, as a great will to eliminate the white Ashkenazi boy and at the same time a strong passion to be exactly like him. This boy confronted me at once with the two histories that constitute my cultural identity. He set my parents’ history before me as a clear picture reflecting an inferior cultural tradition that deserves to be erased, while posing the Ashkenazi history as a desirable object to be admired and adopted.

Cultural adoption

The rejection I experienced was bound to a constant attempt to adopt what was defined by my surroundings as right, good and acceptable—an appropriate Sabra accent, enjoyment of “Israeli” popular music and classical (Western) music. Like many Israelis, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim alike, I also adopted the characteristics of the “new Jew” created by Ashkenazi Zionism. I find an expression of that in my tendency to generally base my life on improvisation and local initiatives and to act directly, aggressively and sometimes impolitely (Sela-Sheffy, 2004). These characteristics, to summarize the major literature (e.g., Ben-Rafael, 2000; Shahar and Kurz, 1995; Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch, 2000), are (1) a surplus of an improvisational Jewish behavior in the European Diaspora, (2) a product of the aspirations of Eastern European Zionist founders to produce a new strong and fearless Jew; and (3) a product of the founders’ determination to establish a state under conditions of limited resources, uncertainty and ongoing conflict. Improvisation, initiative, directness and aggressiveness weren’t necessarily manufactured by my parents, who weren’t in the European Diaspora, weren’t the founders of the Israeli state, and didn’t participate in the armed forces of the pre-Israeli state, which by self-developed improvisatory solutions and in conditions demanding resourcefulness won the 1948 War of Independence. These characteristics were manufactured mainly by the Ashkenazi, Eastern European Jews. For them, the Diaspora symbolizes impotence and a lack of ability to provide self-defense, to move freely or define oneself autonomously, while coming back to the Land of Israel, the Redemption, represents a shift from weakness to power, from giving up to dictating, from surrender to winning and from being occupied to occupation of lands, roads and, for more than two thirds of the state’s lifespan, also of other people. This shift is responsible, I believe, for the creation of a culture largely based on power and domination, a culture that dictates the way in which Israelis, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim alike, fight their wars and run their civilian lives, including the political sphere, as a determined and uncompromising military operation.

I am, then, a product of a Zionist-Ashkenazi project that, in reaction to the European Diaspora, improvised a nation-state (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch, 2000)

and within it an educational system based on available materials, those which were brought from Eastern Europe, while ignoring my parents' history and culture (Dahan-Kalev, 1999:207). I grew up on the stories collected and diffused by the Ashkenazi Zionists in the youth movement, army and everywhere. My masculinity adapted to the myths they created and was put to the test according to a standard they set. In interactions with people from other cultures, I often feel the dominance of these myths in the way I interpret daily experiences. More than once, I have found that the need not to be a *fraier*, a weak person who is easy to set up, has turned me into a relentlessly suspicious person, or alternately, how much the Israeli characteristic of improvisation has assisted me. Not counting the imagined appearance of blond hair and blue eyes, the new Jew, the Sabra, the product of Ashkenazi Zionism, is me—a spontaneous, direct, straight-to-the-point, improvisational and sometimes impolite and aggressive performer.

From adoption to hybridization

As a new Jew, a Sabra, born into the Ashkenazi hegemony, I turned into a perfect Israeli, acting as expected while rejecting any threat from the side of my parents' cultural tradition. Yet, it seems that this complete Israeliness doesn't fully overlap with my cultural identity. Through all this fairly long, dark process of integration and intensive acquisition of everything represented by the world outside the home, the cultural tradition of my parents continued to bubble from below; it didn't disappear, but remained inside me, refusing to get finished or vanish, and from this place conducted a dialogue with the coerced Israeli-Ashkenazi values and practices, which I more often treated as better. In spite of the unequal power relations that characterized it, this dialogue didn't leave any room for a homogeneous, Israeli-Ashkenazi shaping of my cultural identity. On the contrary, this dialogue is responsible for the production of a hybrid cultural identity which is indeed made of Israeli-Ashkenazi characteristics, but also of the oppressed, mostly hidden, Kurdish-Jewish characteristics.

From my parents I learned to cope with situations of change, crisis, illness, sadness and joy. I acquired the concept of marriage and its gender distinctiveness by reading, seeing films and looking at the parents of friends, but first of all from watching how my parents ran their shared lives, as is accepted in the *patriarchal Kurdish cultural tradition*—how they conducted their communication, divided roles at home and raised (in a fairly different manner) their daughters and sons. From my father and significant others such as uncles or my parents' friends, I learned to be a father, a brother, an uncle and probably also a partner (meaning a husband). The way in which my parents understood the concept of family offers me today its language in my relations with my wife, my son and, I suppose, also with my siblings, nephews and nieces. My attitude to authoritative characters is respect, and sometimes fear. Older people, commanders, professors or teachers were always right in our house, even if, in our opinions, the children's opinion, they were wrong. When, in a moment of anger, I dared to call

a teacher a fool, the reaction was: “Shhhhhhh... this is forbidden, she (or he) is a teacher.”

“What for?!” my father asked in wonder, when I dared to act in a way which he conceived as a protest. “Act for your future, integrate. Why should you research life in Kurdistan? Where does it lead you? You’d only aggravate. Why should you declare with a sticker on your car that you support peace? Why provoke unnecessary anger?” The message was clear: climb the existing ladder, the one set by others, and don’t try to look for alternatives. Be active, advance, but remain conformist—meaning, don’t act as someone who has *Garme Yakure*, to quote my parents accurately, in Kurdish-Jewish. Don’t deviate from the existing social and cultural border lines, my parents were strict about telling my sibling and me, for that way you would act in *bebachtusa*, in a way that creates unnecessary antagonism. *Hatchala* (penultimate accent), meaning “that’s the way it is,” was a key sentence in our house. “That’s the situation! Accept it as is, and don’t try to change it.”

Such cultural themes were found in research based on life stories I conducted among a group of people who immigrated to Israel from Zakho in Iraqi Kurdistan, where my parents were born (Shimoni, 1996, 2005). “A crooked tree does not straighten. If you straighten it, it will break,” explained Miriam, one of the research participants, when she tried to describe the relationship of the Jewish community with the Muslims, Kurds and Arabs in Zakho (Shimoni, 1996:93). One can only assume that the generations of inferiority and threat in which the Jews of Zakho lived led them to treat the surrounding sociopolitical reality as a given, like a tree, a natural object that is permanent and stable and that there is no point in trying to change it.

Expressions of this worldview were found in the life stories when the participants described their first stages of life in Israel as well. These descriptions are almost completely set within a framework of acceptance, and by and large do not include expressions of disagreement with the given situation or an attempt to change it. “When we arrived in Israel,” says Avraham, “they gave us food. They sprayed us [for hygienic reasons], drove us by car, and brought us to Shaar Haaliya [an absorption camp]” (Shimoni, 1996:115). When asked how he felt about being sprayed, Avraham replies,

Why be offended? They say it’s to fight diseases. We slept there, and on the following day they took us by a cargo train used for donkeys. ... It was a very hard time for the country. A man should think about everything. So they took us by a train for donkeys, so what? (Shimoni, 1996:115).

In his words, Avraham reflects the research participants’ respect and total acceptance of the conditions set by the state’s founders. Yet, it seems that the relatively wide space that this theme, acceptance of reality, takes in the life stories represents not only the participants’ appreciation of the Israeli state’s founders, but also common values

and practices. An expression of that can be found in the number of descriptions in the life stories in which acceptance, lack of disagreement and a constant attempt to adapt to the existing order are used by the storytellers to organize their life experiences, as we can see in the following excerpts:

Yaacov: Life was always difficult ... no knocking on doors, no asking for good work (Shimoni, 1996:115).

Yafa: No complaints. There are always complaints, but one has to get used to the least complaints. If a person wishes, he can (1996:96).

Shoshanna: We were ashamed to say that we cannot (1996:112).

Regina: We didn't know the language ... hard life, no water, no taps, no lights ... I immediately made a vegetable garden with my husband around the hut ... we didn't wait to be given ... we overcame... we didn't complain. We didn't ask... (1996:121).

Sarina: In the absorption camp we sat all day, we sat and cried ... and we didn't complain, we really didn't complain (1996:121).

Indeed, my parents usually "didn't complain" as well, not about the difficulties of entering the new country at the beginning of the 1950s, or about the later difficulties of integration. My mother, for instance, never complained about the humiliating remarks she got from some of her employers during the daily journeys she took to clean the houses of the "rich" people who lived in the Carmel neighborhood in Haifa. Only during my research into the Jews' life in Kurdistan did she tell me about her 4 AM awakenings with shouts of "*schnell, schnell*" (fast, fast in German), accompanied by light pokes in the ribs, when she stayed to sleep at her employers' houses during the absorption camp period. I never heard my father (or my mother) making distinctions between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim or claiming for a change in the unequal relations represented by this equation. There was no ignoring of the idea of "we" and "them" in my parents' refusal to mention the Mizrahim vs. Ashkenazim dichotomy. The difference between "us" and "others" was clear. Yet the message was that there is no reason to change the dichotomy, including its asymmetric cultural anchors, but only to accept it as is and look for the channels of mobility it offers—if we wish to arrive at a place where "they" are, we have to work hard and acquire their material, social and cultural resources.

Culturally, then, I was created in the image of my parents and Israeli society. That is, my cultural being is made of a mixture of characteristics I adopted from these cultural traditions that were largely separated, until they ran into each other to construct my cultural identity. I'm secular, as I was taught to be by the Israeli society, yet, like my parents, I am sensitive to religion and tradition and mainly to the Kurdish

tune of prayers that I absorbed during my early visits with my father to the synagogue. In daily life, in sequence and sometimes in parallel, I interpret the social world in an accepting and uncomplaining way, like my parents, but also in the direct, rude and uncompromising way I learned in Israeli society. For instance, I sometimes act as a performer who organizes his daily routine in an improvised manner, yet I do it within the existing social framework; I usually approach people in a direct way, which can seem invasive, until I run into people older than me or authoritative figures to whom I give way spontaneously.

Shlomo Artzi with *het* and *ayin*: Musical hybridizations as a form of cultural identity construction

In this story, I believe, I'm not alone. The cultural hybridization process I describe seems to be represented by the route of *Muzica Mizrahit*, music sung by Israeli performers from Arab and Muslim lands, from its early marginalization until the mid-1990s to its domination today (Regev and Seroussi, 2004). This domination has been accomplished often by hybrid music in which the Israeli-Ashkenazi style of music (influenced mainly by Western forms of popular music) is rearticulated by Mizrahi-Sabra singers according to melodies and sounds of music to which they were exposed at home. Very good documentation of this process can be found in research conducted by Galit Sa'ada-Ofir, in which she shows how "the dominating Israeliness" (defined in this paper as the Israeli-Ashkenazi hegemony) is hybridized by performers from the town of Sderot, most of them second-generation North African Israeli Jews, with musical styles "taken from the stock of culture brought from [their parents'] country of origin" (2001:263). Other examples can be found in the hybrid of Israeli-Ashkenazi music with the Turkish musical style by singers Miki Gabrielov and Shlomi Shabbat, the Yemenite style by Eyal Golan and Margalit Tzan'ani, the Tunisian style by Eti Ankri, the Moroccan style by Kobi Oz and the Persian style by Ehud Banai. These hybrid musical projects, I argue, seem to largely reflect a desire on the part of the Mizrahi-Sabra performers to be part of the Israeli cultural center along with a will (and perhaps a social need) to maintain their cultural roots. Singer Eyal Golan conceptualizes this process with the following words:

I managed to cast Rita, Ricky Gal and Shlomo Artzi [who sing in an Israeli-Ashkenazi style] into my roots without offending them. I sing in Hebrew. People write for me in Hebrew. And there are still Mizrahi motifs for the conservative audience. ... I'm not trying to defect from the lines. I am proud of my Mizrahiness. Yet, if you listen to the nuances of the songs in the new album, how do I sound? Just like Shlomo Artzi [a well known Ashkenazi-Sabra performer who sings in Israeli-Ashkenazi style] with *het* and *ayin* [a Mizrahi accent] (2005:40).

Singers like Eyal Golan (or Eli Luzon and Haim Moshe) are accused by commentators of eliminating their Mizrahi roots to gain broadcasting time. Eyal Golan, says journalist Edi Masubi (see Regev and Seroussi, 2004:31,46), sings with “*het* and *ayin*” and once in a while “there is a hint of a *silsul*,” vocal shaking or trilling of the longer sounds in melody, as is customary in Arab and Muslim singing. Yet, in fact, claims Masubi, Golan abandoned “authentic Yemenite materials” in order to be broadcast. I, on the other hand, see Golan’s music as a hybrid, in which the Israeli-Ashkenazi style of music joins, but does not eliminate, his Yemenite style, as Golan himself testifies. An expression of Golan’s musical hybridization can be found, however, not only in the text above. Listening to Golan’s music shows that he maintains his musical style, melody, accent and *silsul* in a way that reminds one of the work of musical groups who sing in a Yemenite style, such as “Tzliley Hakerem” and “Lehakat HaUd,” while adding the dominant Israeli-Ashkenazi style to it, to produce a hybrid music that he calls “Shlomo Artzi with *het* and *ayin*.”

An interesting example of this musical hybridization can be found in a growing phenomenon in Israeli popular music, in which Mizrahi-Sabra singers *trill* old Israeli-Ashkenazi songs, produced by Eastern European Israeli-Jewish poets and composers. An example are songs appearing in an audio cassette produced by Galei Tzahal, the Army radio station, under the hybrid name “Israeli Darbuka” (Arabic and Middle Eastern drum). In this cassette, the songs *Hachnisini Tachat Kanfech* of Haim Nachman Bialik, *Makom Ledeaga* of Mati Kaspi and *Lashir Ze Kmo Lihiot Yarden* of Naomi Shemer are trilled by singers Yoav Yitzhak, Avner Gedasi and Aviva Avidan and given the Mizrahi melodies, sounds and accent to which these singers were introduced at home. This cassette was produced by an official institution, Galei Tzahal. Yet, assuming that musical production reflects a process of identity construction (Stokes, 1994), it seems valid to view the decision to enrich their repertoire with Mizrahi versions of canonic Israeli songs as reflecting a process in which, despite the power exerted by the Ashkenazi hegemony to exclude their parents’ tradition from the Israeli legitimate sphere, these singers locate themselves in the heart of the Israeli cultural being where an integrated, Mizrahi-Ashkenazi, musical style organizes their identity.

Another way to view the musical hybridization produced by Mizrahi-Sabra singers is as part of the accelerated global flow of music, resulting in a mixture of local and Western music, the so-called “world music” (Abu-Lughod, 1997:133; Longhurst, 1995:224). A clear example is the Western-style performance of Yemenite songs by singers Ofra Haza and Noa (Achinoam Nini). Yet, it seems that the increasing number of new trilled versions of old songs taken from the Israeli-Ashkenazi popular music canon embody primarily a process of *local* identity construction, a process in which Mizrahi-Sabra performances take advantage of the legitimate tag given by the global sphere to “other,” local musical styles to freely express themselves. Supported by the global sphere, and therefore feeling relatively free to create new trilled versions of songs taken not only from the present, but also from the past of Israeli popular

music, the Mizrahi-Sabra singers seem to accomplish a more equal, legitimate, agreed-upon and integrated, Mizrahi-Ashkenazi, cultural identity, one which is not only contemporary, but also historical—a “deep” identity that represents not only the present, but also the past of the Israeli culture from which their predecessors, Mizrahi singers, were excluded.

It is important, however, to note a difference here. Not all Mizrahi-Sabras are successful singers. Not all of us have a stage on which we feel comfortable to freely express, and in fact construct and reconstruct, our cultural identity as have Mizrahi-Sabra singers. With most of us Mizrahi-Sabras, the disruption of Israeli-Ashkenazi cultural understandings by our parents’ cultural traditions is private, personal, largely spontaneous, unconscious, unspoken, more than often hesitant and unconfident, and emanating from a basic sense of inferiority. Yet, our parents’ cultural tradition is always there and consistently, mostly in an uncontrollable manner, knocks on the door from inside, trying to burst out and join the practices and values that we received officially in order to take an equal part in the construction of our cultural identity.

Conclusion

In this paper, I present my cultural identity as an unintended consequence of the efforts invested by the Ashkenazi hegemony to turn me into a new Jew, brave and fearless, holding European values—efforts which haven’t fully succeeded. By generating concealed processes of self-hate and internalization of oppression, the melting pot strategy applied by the Ashkenazi hegemony pushed the Kurdish-Jewish cultural tradition to the margins of my identity, but failed to accomplish its total removal. Through the long process of my cultural identity development, I have been thinking and acting in a *third space* in which consciously and unconsciously I mix Israeli-Ashkenazi and Kurdish-Jewish values and practices to produce my hybrid identity. This identity represents imposition and coercion, initiated by Israeli-Ashkenazi Jews, but also a process of self-creation and innovation in which I hybridize the Ashkenazi and my parents’ cultural characteristics to produce my identity.

This hybrid identity, one needs to remember, is connected to imposition and suppression and parts of its materials are bonded with shame, rejection and anger. Yet, this identity is me. It defines my self and the cultural borderlines indicating who I am. The actual recognition that parts of this identity were imposed on me, implanted into me, while other parts were suppressed (by outside forces as well as by myself) is important, as it enables me to be aware of myself not only as fragmented, dislocated, angry or bitter, but also as a complete whole in which such processes exist.

I believe that signs of this hybridity can be found in the Mizrahi-Sabra singers’ cultural identity, as reflected in their musical mixtures. These singers are not ashamed of their parents’ musical tradition. Rather, they use this tradition explicitly and,

together with the Israeli-Ashkenazi music, produce hybrid styles of music. The growing popularity of these musical hybridizations in Israel can largely be seen as an indication not only of the construction of the Mizrahi-Sabra singers' cultural identity, but also as part of the production of a new cultural order in Israel, an order in which the cultural traditions of marginalized groups like Jews from Arab and Muslim lands, women, new immigrants and Israeli Palestinians play a meaningful role in redefining the boundaries of the Israeli cultural identity. This cultural order should be researched, of course, on a wider, national scale.

This cultural hybridization shows the difficulty multiculturalism has in representing the complexity of the Mizrahi-Sabras' identity. The multicultural approach serves to remove Israeli Jews from Arab and Muslim lands from political and social marginalization, to legitimate them and bridge the gaps between them and the Ashkenazi hegemony. Yet, its dichotomous and unifying political position, Mizrahim vs. Ashkenazim or Arab Jews vs. European Jews, forces me and Mizrahi-Sabras in general, I believe, to be a "homogeneous Mizrahi" rooted solely in the Arab tradition—not to be mixed. The cultural hybridization approach, on the other hand, suggests a representation that is free of these dichotomies, which can then identify, and more importantly, *legitimize* cultural overlaps of Israeli-Ashkenazi and Mizrahi-Sabra parents' cultural characteristics. By recognizing and accepting the existence of these cultural overlaps, the hybrid representation enables Mizrahi-Sabras to bring their parents' cultural tradition back to the official Zionist narrative and condemn any reductive expression toward it without being considered *mitbachyen* and, at the same time, to freely express their ambivalence towards the Ashkenazi hegemony, which includes feelings of rejection, alienation and pain, yet also an awareness that parts of their cultural identity have been shaped by this very hegemony, without being considered *mishtaknez*.

It is clear to me that relying only on my own personal experience and on a brief discussion of the Mizrahi-Sabra singers' cultural experience does not allow me to argue that this represents the experience of all Mizrahi-Sabras. It is possible that research among Mizrahi-Sabras who live in development towns and underprivileged neighborhoods, which are relatively separate and homogeneous, or among Mizrahi-Sabras from the religious sector, might reach different conclusions. I would still expect feelings of rejection and attraction to come up in such research, but most likely in terms of "our" and "their" culture and less in terms of cultural "penetration" and "hybridization."

This paper suggests a theoretical contribution to understanding the *development process* of hybrid cultural identities amongst Mizrahi-Sabras in general, on which additional and broader research can rely. My cultural experience as a Mizrahi-Sabra shows that the melting pot strategy did the job quite well. That is, my cultural identity was mostly formed by Israeli-Ashkenazi values and practices. Yet, this formation is not absolute. I do not give up my deep history, the Jewish Kurdish, but rather use it

to regulate the penetration of Israeli-Ashkenazi practices and values. Values such as acceptance of the existing reality and avoidance of challenge, which I adopted from my parents, are largely responsible for the production of *reconciling and accepting cultural hybridization*, one that grants priority to Israeli-Ashkenazi values and practices over those I adopted from my parents. Focused research among second- and third-generation Jews from Morocco, however, whose parents were always the most dominant in the Mizrahi counter-struggle, would also find cultural hybridization, yet, I believe, one which expresses itself not only in terms of reconciliation and acceptance (as in my case), but also in terms of *protest and opposition*–hybridization which tries to preserve the Jewish-Moroccan cultural tradition as much as possible while integrating Israeli-Ashkenazi values and practices into it. An expression of that may be found in the dominance of the Mimuna Festival, the traditional Moroccan holiday celebration (which is now an official Israeli national holiday), in the flourishing of Moroccan Piyutim, Jewish liturgical poems, and in the growing popularity of Andalusian music.

The cultural hybridization I'm indicating here stresses that multicultural categories, such as Mizrahim and Arab Jews, should stay focused mainly on social-class struggle and leave the work of cultural representation to a more complex perspective that understands the Mizrahi-Sabras' cultural identities in terms of coercion, adoption and mixture. In this respect, the case of the Mizrahi-Sabras' cultural identity contributes to our understanding of the general relationship between society and culture, class struggle and cultural representation, and more specifically, to our understanding of this moment in which multiculturalism as a political tool aimed at representing marginal groups (Jewish-Israeli immigrants from Arab and Muslim lands in our case) takes part in an unintended process of cultural silence and concealment of parts of these specific groups.

References

- Abu-Lughod, Janet. (1997). "Going beyond global babble," in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (pp. 132-137). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Adika, Yigal. (2001). "His life role." *Yediot Ahronoth*, 7 Yamim, November 1, p. 30 (Hebrew).
- Amor, Meir. (2002). "Israeli citizenship: From multiculturalism to interculturalism," in Hannan Hever, Ychouda Shenhav, and Pnina Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizrahim in Israel: A Critical Observation of Israel's Ethnicity* (pp. 244-271). Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, HaKibbutz HaMeuchad (Hebrew).
- Appiah, Anthony Kwame. (1992). *In my Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ben-Ari, Eyal, and Levy-Schreiber, Edna. (2000). "Body-building, character-building and nation-building: Gender and military service in Israel." *Studies in Contemporary Judaism* 16:171-190.
- Ben-Dor, Zvi. (2004). "*Eib, hashuma, infagrat kanbula*: Toward a history of the Mizrahim and Arabic," in Yigal Nizri (ed.), *Eastern Appearance/Mother Tongue: A Present that Stirs in the Thickets of its Arab Past* (pp. 29-44). Tel Aviv: Bavel (Hebrew).

- Ben-Rafael, Eliezer. (2000). "Collective identity in Israel," in H. Herzog (ed.), *Society in the Mirror* (pp. 489-514). Tel Aviv: Ramot, Tel Aviv University (Hebrew).
- Bhabha, Homi. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- . (1990). "The third space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 207-237). London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Chetrit, Sami Shalom. (2004). *The Mizrahi Struggle in Israel: Between Oppression and Liberation, Identification and Alternative, 1948-2003*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved (Hebrew).
- . (1999). *The Ashkenazi Revolution is Dead: Reflections on Israel from a Dark Angle*. Tel Aviv: Kedem (Hebrew).
- Dahan-Kalev, Henriette. (1999). "Mizrahim in Israel: A postmodern point of view," in Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (ed.), *Modernity, Postmodernity and Education* (pp. 197-232). Tel Aviv: Ramot (Hebrew).
- Fanon, Frantz. (1986). *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto.
- Golan, Eyal. (2005). "An interview with the singer Eyal Golan," *Maariv*, March 25, p. 40 (Hebrew).
- Hall, Stuart. (1997). "Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities," in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (pp. 41-68). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hever, Hannan. (2000). "We have not arrived from the sea: Towards literary Mizrahi geography," *Te'oryah Uvikanet* 16 (Spring): 181-196 (Hebrew).
- Hever, Hannan, Shenhav, Yehouda, and Motzafi-Haller, Pnina (eds.). (2002). *Mizrahim in Israel: A Critical Observation of Israel's Ethnicity*. Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, HaKibbutz HaMeuchad (Hebrew).
- Kfir, Ilan. (2005). "Mentality of a racist," *Maariv*, May 22 (Hebrew), <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART/873/668.html>.
- Khazzoom, Aziza. (2003). "The great chain of Orientalism: Jewish identity, stigma management, and ethnic exclusion in Israel," *American Sociological Review* 68:481-510.
- Lam, Zvi. (1988). "The ideological basis of Jewish studies in Israeli education," *HaChinuch HaMeshulaf* 130:57-76 (Hebrew).
- Longhurst, B. (1995). *Popular Music and Society*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Melman, Yossi. (1992). *The New Israelis: An Intimate View of a Changing People*. New York: Carol Publishing.
- Menachem, Nachum. (1979). *Tensions and Ethnic Discrimination in Israel*. Tel Aviv: Rubin (Hebrew).
- Motzafi-Haller, Pnina. (2002). "Mizrahi intellectuals, 1946-1951: Ethnic identity and its boundaries," in Hannan Hever, Yehouda Shenhav and Pnina Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizrahim in Israel: A Critical Observation of Israel's Ethnicity* (pp. 152-190). Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, HaKibbutz HaMeuchad (Hebrew).
- Naipaul, V. S. (1971). *In a Free State*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Nizri, Yigal. (2004). "Prologue: From adjective to our own name," in Yigal Nizri (ed.), *Eastern Appearance/Mother Tongue: A Present that Stirs in the Thickets of its Arab Past* (pp. 11-19). Tel Aviv: Bavel (Hebrew).
- Papastergiadis, N. (1997). "Tracing hybridity in theory," in P. Werbner and T. Modood (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* (pp. 257-281). London: Zed Books.
- Read, Alan. (1996). *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. Seattle: Bay Press.
- Regev, Motti, and Scroussi, Edwin. (2004). *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Rosaldo, Renato. (1995). "Forward," in C. Garcia (ed.), *Cultural Hybridity: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (pp. xi-xviii). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sa'ada-Ofir, Galit. (2001). "Between Israeliness and Mizrahiness: Musical hybridizations from the town of Sderot," *Israeli Sociology* 3:253-276 (Hebrew).
- Sasson-Levy, Orna. (2006). "The unseen whiteness: Contemporary discourse on Ashkenaziyut." Paper presented at the conference "What Is Ashkenaziyut?", Jerusalem, Van Leer Institute, June 19 (Hebrew).

- Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. (2004.) "What makes one an Israeli? Negotiating identities in everyday representations of 'Israeliness.'" *Nations and Nationalism* 10,4:479-497.
- Shahar, Lucy, and Kurz, David. (1995). *Border Crossings: American Interactions with Israelis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Sharkansky, Ira, and Zalmanovitch, Yair. (2000). "Improvisation in public administration and policy making in Israel." *Public Administration Review* 60,4:321-332.
- Shenhav, Ychouda. (2003). *Arab Jews: Nationalism and Ethnicity*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved (Hebrew).
- . (2002). "Jews from Arab countries in Israel: The split identity of Mizrahim in the national memory." In Hannan Hever, Ychouda Shenhav and Pnina Motzafi-Haller (eds.), *Mizrahim in Israel: A Critical Observation of Israel's Ethnicity* (pp. 105-151). Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, HaKibbutz HaMeuchad (Hebrew).
- . (1996). "A conspiracy of silence." *Haaretz*, December 27 (Hebrew), http://hakeshet.tripod.com/articles/israeli_left.htm.
- Shimoni, Baruch. (2005). "The interaction of the Kurdish-Jewish community of Zakho with the 'other.' 1930-1951," *The Sephardi Report* 2:35-37.
- . (1996). "Life stories of the Jews from Zakho in Iraqi Kurdistan." Masters thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Hebrew).
- Shohat, Ella. (2004). "Destruction and return: Shaping a Mizrahi epistemology," in Yigal Nizri (ed.), *Eastern Appearance/Mother Tongue: A Present that Stirs in the Thickets of its Arab Past* (pp. 45-82). Tel Aviv: Bavel (Hebrew).
- . (1997). "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the standpoint of its Jewish victims," in A. McClintock, A. Mufti and E. Shohat (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives* (pp. 39-43). London: University of Minnesota Press.
- . (1992). "Dislocated identities: Reflections of an Arab-Jew." *Movement Research: Performance Journal* 5 (Fall/Winter):8.
- Stokes, Martin (ed.). (1994). *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*. Oxford: Berg.
- Swirski, Shlomo. (1981). *Orientalism and Ashkenazim in Israel: The Ethnic Division of Labor*. Haifa: Machbarot Lemechkar Ulbikoret (Hebrew).
- Werbner, P., and Modood, T. (eds.). (1997). *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. London: Zed Books.
- Yonah, Yossi. (2004). *In Virtue of Difference: The Multicultural Project in Israel*. Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, HaKibbutz HaMeuchad (Hebrew).
- Yonah, Yossi, and Shenhav, Ychouda. (2005). *What is Multiculturalism? On the Poverty of the Discourse in Israel*. Tel Aviv: Bavel (Hebrew).
- Zuckerman, Moshe. (2001). *On the Fabrication of Israelism*. Tel Aviv: Resling (Hebrew).