In the last few years, the fields of Sephardic and Mizrahi Studies have grown significantly, thanks to new publications which take into consideration unexplored aspects of the history, literature and identity of modern Middle Eastern and North African Jews. However, few of these studies abandoned the Diaspora/Israel dichotomy and analysed the Jews who moved to Israel and those that settled elsewhere as part of a new, diverse and interconnected diaspora.

Contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi Literature argues that the literary texts produced by Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews who migrated from the Middle East and North Africa in the 1950s and afterwards, should be considered as part of a transnational arena, in which forms of Jewish diasporism and postcolonial displacement interweave. Through an original perspective that focuses on novelists, poets, professional and amateur writers – from the Israeli poets Erez Biton and Shva Salhoov to Francophone authors such as Chochana Boukhobza, Ami Bouganim and Serge Moati – the book explains that these Sephardic and Mizrahi authors are part of a global literary diaspora at the crossroads of past Arab legacies, new national identities and persistent feelings of Jewishness. Some of the chapters emphasise how the Sephardic and Mizrahi past and present identities are narrated, how generational and ethno-national issues are taken into account and which linguistic and stylistic strategies the authors adopted. Other chapters focus more explicitly on how the relations between national societies and different Jewish migrant communities are narrated, both in today’s Israel and in the Diaspora.

The book helps to bridge the gap between Hebrew and postcolonial literature, and opens up new perspectives on Sephardic and Mizrahi literature. It will be a valuable resource for students and scholars of Jewish and Postcolonial Studies and Comparative Literature.

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Contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi Literature
A Diaspora
Edited by Dario Miccoli
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**Glossary**

**List of most recurring Hebrew terms**

'Aliyah (pl. 'aliyot, lit. “ascent [to Zion]”)  the migration of a Jew to the Land of Israel.

Ashkenazi (Jew)  a Jew from Central or Eastern Europe and, more broadly, a Jew of European descent.


Mizrahiyut  Easternness, Eastern identity.

Mizug galuyiot  “ingathering of exiles”. The term refers to the melting pot ideology upon which the process of migration to the Land of Israel, and the absorption into a new Jewish national culture, was to be based.

Sephardic (Jew)  a Jew whose ancestors came from the Iberian Peninsula. More generally and with reference to contemporary times: a diasporic Jew of Middle Eastern or North African descent.

Shlilat ha-golah  “the negation of the Diaspora”. This expression refers to the idea that, after migrating to the Land of Israel, the Jews were to abandon and negate their previous diasporic history and memory.

The book follows a simplified version of the scientific transliteration system from Hebrew into English: “‘ ” stands for ‘ayin, “’ ” for ‘alef, “v” for vav, “h” stands both for heh and het, “kh” and “k” for kaf, “q” for qof, “tz” for tzade and the sign “-” between two or more words indicates the construct-case. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Hebrew and other languages are of the chapter authors.
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2 An old-new land

Tunisia, France and Israel in two novels of Chochana Boukhobza

Dario Miccoli

When looking at the development of Hebrew literature in the last two or three decades, its increased heterogeneity and the detachment from some of its founding principles – such as the absolute centrality ascribed to the Hebrew language and to the Land of Israel – one cannot help but think: “Now that the desert has bloomed, the swamps have been drained, and Hebrew itself revived, Israeli writers seem eager, more than ever before, to re-examine the humanizing effects of over two millennia of exile.” At the same time, an attentive gaze on the history of Hebrew literature would reveal that even before the emergence of post-Zionism and the weakening of the idea of Israel as kibbutz galuyiot (“ingathering of exiles”), Hebrew and even more so Jewish literature generally speaking “never fully rid itself of the stubborn ghosts of diasporic worlds.” But then, if Jewish diasporas can exist within the so-called Jewish state, how do they relate to those other Jewish diasporas that are located outside Israel and whose modern history was equally shaped by migration from the country of origin and resettlement in a new context? Should these diasporas replicate the pre-Israeli and pre-migratory ones or should they be new entities that escape centuries-old Jewish classifications and divisions?

The case of the Jews of the southern shore of the Mediterranean seems to be particularly enlightening. In fact, it is arguable that the modern Sephardic and Mizrahi diaspora came into existence mainly after the migratory waves of the 1950s and 1960s and the subsequent process of resettlement in Israel, Europe, the US or elsewhere. So, my analysis wishes to interrogate Jewish processes of literary memorialisation at the crossroads of Europe and Israel and to look at how the Jewish migrations from North Africa and the Middle East have been told in narrative form. I unravel how memory travels across the various spaces that the Jews encountered and how this impacts on the process of identity-(re)making. In fact, my argument is that from the 1950s and 1960s not only people but also memory itself migrated at least from the southern to the northern shore of the Mediterranean, in some cases embarking on multiple voyages: for example, from Tunisia to France and then to Israel or from one city to the other. This leads to the conceptualisation of Mediterranean Jewish memory as a set of noeuds de mémoire
Dario Miccoli

(“knots of memory”), with which Michael Rothberg understands “rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialisation (whether at the local or national level) and identitarian reduction”, as opposed to Pierre Nora’s strictly national lieux de mémoire (“sites of memory”).

Clearly, literature plays a central role in the memorialisation of the past, even more so for communities and diasporas – like the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa – that long remained at the margins of historical research. This depended on many factors, the most significant one being the greater weight and impact that European/Western paradigms of Jewish identity and history have had, especially but not only in the aftermath of the Shoah, both in Europe and in Israel. As people who in most cases did not experience the Shoah, these Jews did not seem to fit the predominant historical canon and their past has long been downplayed. As Albert Memmi eloquently put in 1974, “so far, Jewish history has been written by Western Jews only [. . .]: as a result, we only know the Western aspects of the malheur juif.” Also within the field of colonial studies, that of the Jews has been a history difficult to handle, since it complicates the opposition between coloniser and colonised and often disrupts the linear understanding of the relations between Europe and the Arab world: think for example of the Jews of Algeria.

With reference to those Jews who settled in Israel, one has inevitably to refer to Mizrahi identity as a tool for social, political and cultural demands, informed by experiences such as the 1970s Ha-panterim ha-shehorim (“Black Panthers”) and – on a different level – the intellectual debates started in the 1980s around notions of Mizrahiyut (“Easternness/Eastern identity”) and Arab Jewishness by scholars such as Ella Shohat, Yehudah Shenhav and Sami Shalom-Chetrit and the activities of social movements like Ha-geshet ha-demoqratit ha-mizrahit (“Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow”), established in 1996.

For both the Jews who live in the Diaspora and those who live in Israel, literature serves as a personal and collective tool capable of filling the gaps of historiography, of maintaining imaginative links with the past and transmitting an identity and heritage from one generation to the other. Literature therefore entails a historical value, even though it is other from history tout court because, generally speaking, it does not need to attentively distinguish between different temporalities or articulate them in a coherent discourse. It can talk about what is left behind us based upon fragments of memory that “involve a past of loss and a longing for a world that perhaps never was”. Yet, it has a historical value when one recognises its potential in transmitting the past in a very intimate and immediate way, in recording details and stories that rarely feature in institutional archives. Furthermore, as De Certeau among others demonstrated, one should not forget that also historians write and create narratives that are acts of personal creation. What one needs ultimately is a mediated approach that goes beyond both “‘positive’ historical inquiry based on a literal reading of the evidence, on the one hand, and ‘historical narratives’ based on figurative, incomparable and unrefutable interpretations on the other”.

In this chapter, I focus on three interconnected spaces – Tunisia, France and Israel in the post-migration period – as depicted by a Franco-Tunisian Jewish
novelist, Chochana Boukhobza. By doing so, I wish to understand how this writer envisions her identity in relation to different national and ethnic feelings of belonging and how she discusses ideas of Jewishness, Israeliiness and Frenchness. Born in Sfax in 1959, Chochana Boukhobza is a renowned Francophone novelist who often defined herself as an exile: born in Tunisia and having grown up in Paris, at seventeen years old she moved to Israel but after a few years came back to France, where Boukhobza now lives. Since her debut in 1986, she published a number of novels, among which are Bel Canto (1991), Le troisième jour (2010) and Métal (2013), wrote scripts and co-directed two documentaries. Here, I will discuss Un été à Jérusalem (1986) and Pour l’amour du père (1996), the two novels by Boukhobza that most explicitly discuss her Tunisian Jewish background and the peregrinations of her family across the Mediterranean, from Tunisia to France and Israel.

It is to be remembered that the migration of the Tunisian Jews began around the mid-1940s and continued up to the early 1960s, reaching a peak of 15,000 exiles in 1956 alone – the year of Tunisian independence. Another 25,000 Jews left between 1956 and 1960. In the end, more than half of the approximately 105,000 Tunisian Jews resettled in France, but many others also went to Israel or elsewhere. As in the case of other southern Mediterranean Jewries, the Tunisian diaspora was formed by different subgroups, of which the largest one was the so-called twansa, then the grana and the Jews of Djerba. Whereas the twansa had resided in Tunisia since late antiquity, the grana were Sephardic Jews mostly arrived from the Tuscan port city of Leghorn at the end of the seventeenth century. Lastly, Djerba hosted a small yet ancient and well-integrated Jewry that formed an integral component of the island’s mosaique communautaire. Tunisian Jewish life and status greatly improved during the French protectorate, when many Jews also underwent a gradual process of francisation – even though, as opposed to the Algerians, they never obtained French citizenship. The deep impact that France had on Tunisian Jewish identity became visible at the end of the protectorate when many Jews, who in the meantime had become Tunisian citizens, migrated to France rather than to Israel or other destinations. It should be noted, however, that in the last years a growing number of French Jews – many of Maghrebi ancestry – started to make ’aliyah to Israel, in most cases out of fear of growing (Muslim) anti-Semitism in France. The effects of this on the future of French Jewry remains to be seen, but it is interesting to note, also through Boukhobza’s novels, how the idea of a multiple diaspora in which more than one past and memory intersect was present in the minds of many Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews already before the recent migratory waves to Israel.

**A summer in Jerusalem**

*Un été à Jérusalem*, which came out in 1986, is the debut novel of Boukhobza. It tells the story of a French-born girl of Tunisian Jewish origin who travels to Jerusalem during the Lebanon War (1982) in order to visit her family, which had moved to Israel from Paris a few years earlier. In actual reality, it was the girl who had pushed for the migration to Israel but she had subsequently changed her mind.
and come back to France on her own. This led to her gradual estrangement from the family, especially from her religious parents, who accused her of misbehaving and dishonouring their good name. Whereas back in Paris the girl has a relationship with a Jew of Ashkenazi origin, in Jerusalem she goes out with a man of Algerian Jewish background. Thus, the father, who wished his daughter would behave according to Tunisian Jewish traditions and religious obligations, harshly reprehends her conduct. On top of all this is the war between Israel and Lebanon and its impact at a familial – the protagonist’s two brothers are both drafted into the army – and national level.

Awarded with the *Prix Méditerranée*, a French literary prize that “celebrates [. . .] the cultural space between different countries of which the Mediterranean is the crucible”, Un été à Jérusalem is a painful elegy for a Tunisian and Mediterranean world that struggles to continue in Paris and Jerusalem but that seems destined to die in front of the protagonist’s eyes. At the centre of the novel is Jerusalem, a city “out of the limits of my logic. It dances inside me with meaningless and deeply banal details. [. . .] Jerusalem is cumbersome. You think it is frail but it oppresses you.” Jerusalem figures as an oppressive space, which is represented neither by the vestiges of the Old City and monuments like the Western Wall nor by the modern cafés of Jaffa Street. It is a no man’s land made of stones “that do not say anything”, of contrasting neighbourhoods that go from the ultra-Orthodox Meah Shearim to the surroundings of Abu Tor with its “Arab children, floating in their djellabas”, up to “the road that, after Talpiot, leads to Bethlehem and then to Hebron”. It is under the sky of Jerusalem, which “on certain mornings, becomes a sea”, that the protagonist meets strange people like Mavrika, a Maghrebi Jewish prostitute with whose uprooted and cursed existence she likes to identify. Boukhobza then guides the reader in a complex Jerusalemite itinerary constellated by silence and oblivion, and by a lack of emotions among the members of the family, who all live in their own little corner without really listening to what the others have to tell.

In addition to Jerusalem, other places appear in the novel – firstly, the Israeli periphery and the city of Beer-Sheva where the protagonist’s grandmother lives. This is not a coincidence, as since the 1960s many Israelis of Middle Eastern and North African origin settled in those areas, following *ad hoc* policies of urban planning and development. Beer-Sheva is “the door to the desert” and a city populated by “dodderly elders, gutless and lazy Georgian immigrants, dangerous Moroccans who speak with the knife more than with the mouth”. From their exile in Beer-Sheva, the migrants transformed the Maghrebi past into “a mythical paradise, a North African *Shangrila* [sic!], where Jews lived in great happiness”. Yet, for the narrator it is not like that: she perceives Tunisian Jewish life as a dead body, just like that of *Safta* (Hebrew *savta*: “grandmother”) Rachel, or as something that survives only in traditional dishes and clothes. Israel is not the end of the Diaspora but, on the contrary, the temporary stop in a diasporic voyage that cannot come to an end: “The voyage has been long [. . .]. First awakening: North Africa. Then the exile to Paris, Lyon, Marseille with sneezings of nostalgia, tinglings of the chest, poisoned *tête-à-têtes* with the ‘paradise’. In front of a crowded compass, they repacked their suitcases, a fantasy. Jerusalem. An expensive caprice.”
The migration to France and then the ‘aliyah to Israel made the protagonist’s entire family feel like victims of history: none of them migrated out of individual will, but as a consequence of historical contingencies or because of a caprice. This is even more evident for the elders of the family, for whom Israel “only represents [...] that most holy land where they came to die and that will bury them under a tombstone”. Far is the joyful depiction of Israel as the place where Jews would finally build a state for themselves and where they would forge a new, shared national identity. In Un été à Jérusalem, every character is a nomad unable to find a place to stay and for whom the past is irremediably gone and survives only in the objects that were brought from Tunisia.

The death of the grandmother, which occurs shortly after the beginning of the story, symbolises the beginning of the loss of an entire world that cannot pass to the younger generation: “One by one, our elders are dying, and Tunisia, Morocco, Yemen will die with them.” Even those who are not dead are like ghosts coming from an unknown past who suddenly make their appearance in Jerusalem for the funeral of Safta: “they came from the North, from the kibbutz of the coast or from Dimona the White, sensing in this death their imminent disappearance. They still wear the traditional clothes of Gabès or Souss[e], the baggy trousers and the kabouch. [...] They are beyond everything. When they walk, their body trembles, imprisoned under their weight.”

Marianne Hirsch, in her work on the Jews of Czernowitz – in today’s Ukraine – tellingly entitled Ghosts of Home, argued that “objects and places can function as triggers of remembrance that connect us, bodily and thus also emotionally, with the physical world we inhabit”. But if this process is quite obvious for those who actually used those objects or lived in those places, what happens with the subsequent generations? How can they relate to objects that only have an indirect connotation for them? In our case, the Tunisian elders wander in a world that is not their own but nonetheless carry with them – or rather on them, by wearing Tunisian traditional clothing – the little that remains of their past. On the other hand, the generation to which the protagonist belongs does not seem to have a past of its own. Upon discovering that the grandmother’s traditional clothes had been given by her aunt Aliza to some ragman in Beer-Sheva, the girl gets very angry, as if the past could only exist in these clothes:

“You are crazy! You destroyed the past because of your jealousy! We already have so few memories because of the exile. How will I explain to my children that I come from North Africa if you throw our history in the dustbin?”

“Invent, embellish, imagine . . . You know enough to fill in the gaps.”

But does this young girl really know enough? Will she be able to construct her own past and fill in the gaps, or will everything remain ambivalent and uncertain? The inter-generational conflict that opposes the narrator to the generation of her parents is a cliché that can be found in many other novels by Sephardic and Mizrahi writers. It relates to the traumas that the family had to go through upon leaving North Africa and then France, but also on more general generational divides.
As said, the family of the narrator is a living remnant of the dying Tunisian world to which the girl feels attached but that she wishes to delete in order to conduct a normal life in France. The trauma of exile is also mirrored in that of the wars that Israel fights, the last being the 1982 Lebanon War. During this conflict, all sorts of misfortunes happen, from the death of Safta to the death – due to a stray bullet – of the protagonist’s Algerian Jewish lover, who had gone to Beirut as a reporter. The friend who brings the news tries to console her, saying: “Mektoub! C’était son heure . . .”, but the girl angrily accuses him: “It is your fault. You killed him. You! Not the Arab in front [of him]! You! You!” Jerusalem is not a holy city inhabited by God but, as the prostitute Mavrika says: “I think God has cursed you, Jerusalem! Let all your sons die! One day, you will come back to your ruins!”

The setting of the novel in 1982 is obviously due to the timing of the publication, which came out in 1986. However, it also shows the deep impact that the Lebanon War had on Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora. It was a turning point that led to a rethinking of the role of the army in Israeli society and the future meanings of Zionism at a moment when this ideology seemed to enter into crisis. The war and events such as the killing of Palestinians by the Lebanese Christian Phalangistes in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila – which, according to many, the Israeli army failed to prevent – also triggered a change in the perception that sectors of European public opinion had of Israel: not anymore a small state that wished to defend itself from enemies, but one that sometimes acted in questionable if not immoral ways.

As if to further elaborate upon this critical moment in Jewish and Israeli history, the other in Un été à Jérusalem is not so much the Arab, but an internal Jewish other that haunts the present and the future: Jewish Tunisia, the migration and rue du Chemin-Vert in Paris, the dead grandmother, the protagonist’s (Ashkenazi and Algerian) lovers. New diasporic spaces cut across and connect the (old) Diaspora and Israel, leading to the erasure of previous feelings of belonging and to the evoking of a Mediterranean fantasy where the characters’ plus beaux jours are lost. If Israel surely is one of these new spaces, another one is France – or, better to say, Paris. It is there that the protagonist of Un été à Jérusalem wishes to go back. And in Paris live the characters of the second novel by Boukhobza that I will now introduce, Pour l’amour du père. As we shall see, the family and its complex memory are present also in this text – at the centre of which, however, is not the absence but the omnipresence of feelings between generations and between a father and his daughter.

For the love of the father

“In that same moment, the Ville de Tunis trembled. On s’en va, we are leaving. . . . As the boat departed from the quay, from the land, from Tunis, those words flew from one group of people to the other. It was over. And so it began.” Pour l’amour du père, a novel published in 1996, narrates the turbulent relationships that, decades after the migration, still characterise the members of a Tunisian Jewish family in Paris. The protagonist, Alice, is a successful lawyer who struggles
to find love and to cope with her father and sisters, one of whom – Sassou – disappeared several years earlier, after the family’s discovery that she intended to marry a non-Jew. Even though the entire novel is set in Paris, the city of Tunis is always in the background. As opposed to the French capital, where “it is always grey, it is always bad [weather]”, Tunis el-hedra (Arabic: “the green”) “looked like a garden, with little houses facing the sea”.35 Here, the climate becomes a mirror of the feelings that the protagonists, and especially the father, perceive after the migration: “the father cannot be cured from Tunisia, he always compares everything, he compares the taste of the fruit he ate là-bas with those that he buys at the market of Clichy; he says that life was easier under the sun, it had a taste.”36 Là-bas, a term that is always found in the writings as well as in the memory of many North African Jews, is a place where everything was better and whose echoes can now only be found in spaces other from Tunis – for example in the Parisian neighbourhood of Belleville.

The Tunisian Jewish quarter par excellence, Belleville has been defined as “a protective universe where the brutality of assimilation [in French society] was alleviated”.37 It is there that the man goes every Sunday, in order to meet with three other Tunisians: “Là-bas [i.e. in Tunis], he only greeted them nodding his head, he barely said good morning. In Paris, they became like brothers.” During their Sunday gatherings, the men “little by little, . . . made their neighbourhood come back to life in their memory. [. . .] For them, it was like going back to their true and most authentic self. [. . .] They drink mint tea, eat semolina sweets. They never talk about the present”.38 As Simon and Tapia explain, in the aftermath of the migration, Belleville gave many Tunisian Jews – who in the 1970s formed the absolute majority of the Jewish population of that neighbourhood – the illusion of being closer to their homeland: people lived as if in a village, surrounded by newly established Tunisian-owned cafés and shops that often bore names like La Goulette or Dar Djerba.39

Another space that makes Alice’s father remember Tunis is Israel, where he visits his son Gérard: “[In Israel] the father started again with the comparisons with Tunisia [. . .]. He said that the fruits were just as big, the watermelon, the peach, the orange. [. . .] He began to have an idea of Israel that was related to the white light of Tunis.”40 As also found in novels and memoirs by Jews from Morocco and in Un été à Jérusalem, the Promised Land paradoxically is the place where the Diaspora comes back to life.41 This also reminds one of the Algerian pieds-noirs of Maltese origin who nowadays embark on memory voyages to the land of their ancestors, Malta, where most of them have never been but which is perceived as another, mediated Algeria.42 This kind of transference – that is, in Freudian terminology, the reproduction of feelings relating to repressed experiences and the substitution of someone or something for the original object of the repressed impulses43 – occurs throughout Pour l’amour du père. For example, in another passage of the book, Alice meets a young man of Algerian origin in a bar who eventually kisses her and who symbolically “is like the father when he was young, he is the memory of the father’s body”. Just like the father, the man longs for a bygone epoch when, on the other shore of the Mediterranean, “we [Arabs
The lives of Arabs and Jews were shaped by violence and the trauma of exile and the same also happened to Alice, even though she migrated to France when she was a child. Both Alice and her father manage to resist exile through specific regimes of memory and the creation of unexpected correlations: between Tunisia and Israel, between the memory of the father and that of a young Franco-Algerian.

This said, it is not clear to what extent the protagonist actually believes in the idyllic memory of Tunisia that the father transmits. Alice is very reluctant in thinking about the past and seems to have forgotten many details. In fact, the past for her signifies not only the departure from Tunisia, but also the death of a mother she hardly remembers and last but not least the disappearance of her sister Sassou. Therefore, the past comes back in the shape of haunted memories and barely comprehensible Arabic words. Arabic is transformed into the repository of her traumas and secrets, into a language “whose words stayed with me like embers”. “Arabic, the forbidden language, the language of before the exile, the language of the father. [. . .] ‘What is it you mumbled? I did not understand a word…’ ‘I was inventing words.’”

It is true that pre-1960s Tunisia is often portrayed, as for example happens in the case of pre-Nasserist Egypt, like a cosmopolitan society where Muslims, Jews, Italians, Maltese and others lived together. For example, the Italians feature prominently in the Tunisian case – last but not least, since they were the biggest and most ancient community of Europeans present in the country and, as opposed to the French, remained in an in-between position that made them neither colonised or colonisers. For the Italians as well as for the Jews, the migration ended the world of là-bas in a definitive manner, unveiling ethno-religious and national cleavages that hitherto had been less visible and crucial. So, in France much of Tunisia is forgotten, as if it never existed:

“You sang us this song [of Farid El Atrach], when we were children,” she says [. . .].
“It is true! Ya Hassra [‘alas’]!” says the father smiling. “Sing!”
“My voice is lost.”

As said above, the only moments when the past reappears are in Belleville, or in the casual encounters with other exiles – for example, a taxi driver accused of having killed his wife and whose family Alice is defending: “This taxi driver,” says Alice’s father, “he is a bit like myself. He wants to find his land . . . his home. And he does not see anymore his wife or his daughter, because he works, he works. That is how it is, la ville.” The city of Paris – as opposed to Tunis – is an alienating location where migrants work and forget about the rest, even about their own families. Despite previous similarities, North African Jews and Muslims are no longer part of a shared milieu: the migration and life in the metropole has in the long run estranged the two communities from each other. This occurred not only because of the societal reactions and the policies that since the 1960s the French state implemented vis-à-vis the two – generally speaking, more inclusive and less othering for the Jewish than the Muslim immigrants – but also as a
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consequence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its impact on the identity and self-perception of French Jews and Muslims respectively.\textsuperscript{51} If so, what is left to Alice and her father? How can they continue their lives, despite the difficulties at individual, familial and national levels? Perhaps the answer is to be found in a feeling onto which everyone can cling, love: between the father and his dead wife, between Alice and her companion, love for one’s \textit{pays perdu} and for the noisy streets of Belleville – the only place in the whole of Paris where “there are colours, coloured men, \textit{et c’est beau}.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{Whither?}

Both \textit{Un été à Jérusalem} and \textit{Pour l’amour du père} present the migration as a traumatic experience whose marks pass from one generation to the other and have a deep impact on family relations. The migration unravels memories that often make the protagonists feel displaced, as if they could never find a place to settle and find solace. Secondly, their diasporic existence does not end upon resettling in Israel, let alone in another country, but instead is born again in new forms after the migration. Even in Paris or Jerusalem, the past and the violence of exile cannot be forgotten.

As I said at the beginning of the chapter, modern Jewish and Hebrew literatures have often been characterised by writers and poets who showed the difficulty of a clear-cut separation between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel, and underlined how these two spaces interact at a literary and cultural level. Think of the early twentieth century writer Yosef Haim Brenner and his uprooted characters who find it hard to adjust to the new life in the Land of Israel, or of the conflicting relation between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel in the novella \textit{Yad vashem} (“The Name”, 1955) by Aharon Megged. In similar yet different ways, the Diaspora is, even for more contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish writers, not the counterpart of Israel, but an \textit{old-new land} – were one to cite the title of a renowned novel by Theodore Herzl – intimately connected to it. However, what distinguishes these younger writers is the fact that they cannot really be Jews of \textit{that} Diaspora from where their families come from: often, they only know it through the memories of their childhood or thanks to the mediation of their parents and grandparents. This is something not unique to the Sephardis and Mizrahim, as similar things could be said also for the descendants of Jews of Eastern European or Russian origin – whose families lived in one of the many cities and \textit{shtetls} annihilated in the course of the Second World War. Yet, the case of the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa is more visible, since for many years they represented a group of people whose memories and past have been put aside vis-à-vis the dominant model of identity – whose origins were rooted in European (Jewish) culture and history.

If the places and worlds of the parents and grandparents of contemporary Middle Eastern and North African Jews cannot return, the only solution left is to reinvent them in a fictional manner. The past is transformed into an imaginative and literary diaspora that is related to the Israeli present as well as to “diasporic public spheres” scattered across space and time.\textsuperscript{53}
An author like Boukhobza, while willing to assert her individual approach to literature and her specific familiar origin and to go beyond stereotypical views about the Jews of the Muslim world, seems equally eager to share a collective identity that permits her to claim more space and cultural influence within a global Jewish cultural and literary collective. Seen from her perspective, contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi literature appear as an old-new land that neither replicates the pre-Israeli and pre-migratory diasporic model nor is a completely novel entity that escapes pre-existing Jewish classifications. In it, the Diaspora and Israel blend and give birth to an interconnected space populated by familiar memories and beloved grandparents, traumatic legacies and complex returns, from where it is possible to elaborate original models of identity and express hope for a better future.54

Notes
2 Omer, “Jewish Diasporism”.
4 See the monographic issue of the journal Expression Maghrébines, 11/2 (2014) on “Nouvelles expressions judéo-maghrébines”.
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Boukhobza, Un été, 135 and 137.

Boukhobza, Un été, 21.


Boukhobza, Un été, 47.


Boukhobza, Un été, 32.

Boukhobza, Un été, 192.


Boukhobza, Un été, 55.

Boukhobza, Un été, 117–118.

Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, Ghosts of Home: the Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 293–300.

Boukhobza, Un été, 208.

Boukhobza, Un été, 253–255.


35 Boukhobza, *Pour*, 86.


38 Boukhobza, *Pour*, 50–51.


40 Boukhobza, *Pour*, 46.

41 See the chapter by Emanuela Trevisan Semi in this volume.


43 Jonathan Lear, *Freud* (London: Routledge, 2005), esp. 122–124. The concept of transference (Übertragung) was first introduced by Freud in his 1895 *Studies on Hysteria*.


49 Boukhobza, *Pour*, 147.

50 Boukhobza, *Pour*, 126.


53 Benvenuti and Ceserani, *La letteratura globale*, 147.