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Welcome to the Winter 2012 edition of *Lights: The MESSA Quarterly*.

As a publication of the Middle East Studies Students' Association at the University of Chicago, *Lights* aspires to provide a forum for scholarly work on the Middle East, particularly for those students pursuing a Master's Degree at the University. We are a non-political publication, seeking to foster understanding of the region and its people and offer a space for intellectual exchange. Our undertaking is to promote professional and educational growth among students and faculty through this avenue.

*Lights* adheres to high standards of scholarship, choosing the work that it publishes in consultation with University of Chicago faculty members. All submissions are considered anonymously and evaluated on their scholarly and stylistic merits. We select papers that explore the political, linguistic, historical, and cultural significance of the Middle East; works that transcend limitations across formal cultural and ideological boundaries, with varying aesthetic approaches.

We would like to sincerely thank the Center for Middle Eastern Studies faculty and staff for their support and cooperation with our mission. Special thanks to Dr. Fred M. Donner and Dr. John E. Woods for their insights and valuable time dedicated in guiding the Subcommittee with this publication. Additionally, we are extremely grateful to the authors who submitted their work for this inaugural edition.

- The Executive Board of MESSA's Subcommittee of Publications
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PART I
Featured Master’s Thesis

Katherine Bertash

Katherine Bertash completed both a Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies and a Master of Public Policy at the University of Chicago in 2011, concentrating her studies on the policy intersections of gender, poverty, and crime. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies and Political Science from Rutgers University. During her time at UChicago she organized events and activism with MESSA, V-Day, and other campus groups.

After graduation, Katherine moved to San Francisco where she now works as a development officer for a global nonprofit that specializes in education and entrepreneurship for women and girls in the developing world. She continues to be active in local women’s empowerment networks, and her academic and professional interests include emphasizing the importance of female change-makers in reducing violence and increasing access to economic participation.

Synopsis

In under a decade, from 2001 to 2009, Israel cut the number of foreign trafficked prostitutes from over ten thousand to less than a hundred. Advances in national and local policing procedures along with tougher penalties for traffickers and an increased support network for victims of the ‘Natasha Trade’ would seem to reflect a sea-change in attitudes towards sexual coercion. However, the very narrative that was developed to combat this struggle, and, indeed, proved fundamental to Israel’s success has now become a major stumbling block in the fight against prostitution.

As Bertash asserts in her Master’s thesis, From Natasha to Rebecca: Shifting Narratives of Sex Trafficking and Prostitution in Israel, Israel saw the emergence of a ‘slave-ship’ narrative of prostitution. The naive young woman from a former Soviet bloc country who is taken captive and forcibly kept in permanent sexual servitude makes for a compelling story. For one, this narrative has clearly defined victims and villains. More importantly, it can easily be mapped on to concerns over national security. Seal the borders, and the problem is resolved.

What the success of Israel’s foreign anti-trafficking program has failed to address, writes Bertash, is the general issue of sexual exploitation in Israel. The coercive aspect of prostitution still remains, but, because women who fit in to that ‘slave ship’ narrative do not meet the demand for sex, little is done on their behalf.

Therefore, a new model is needed to help Israeli society tackle prostitution in the ‘domestic trafficking’ of women. These ‘Rebeccas’ lack agency in equal degree to their foreign counterparts and require the same degree of intervention. Most importantly, this model must confront the one person that the trafficking trade does not address: the John. Israeli policy, argues Bertash, needs to come to grips with the lenient treatment given to the persons who provide the demand for sexual services.
As sex trafficking of women and girls for prostitution emerged as a global phenomenon, few could have predicted the intensity with which it would strike Israel. The Israeli government responded to NGO calls for action and moved swiftly to eradicate the entrance of new victims to Israel; but in terms of public interests in reference to the state, this was because the trafficked woman is remarkable only as an indicator of the nation’s own perceived risk. This approach stemmed the supply of women for the sex trade, but without diminishing demand gave rise to a new phenomenon of domestically trafficked Israeli women. This paper will examine how the state-oriented model of combating sex trafficking that worked so well to address foreign trafficking of “Natashas” has become ineffective in addressing the harms of prostitution and sexual exploitation of domestically trafficked women in Israel.

The narrative constructed to combat sex trafficking that took shape after 2001 succeeded in cutting the number of foreign trafficked prostitutes in Israel to only a few hundred. This narrative was successful because it tapped in to Israel’s concerns over American special relationships and military protection. It marked a change in the way in which prostitution was understood because it enabled a different kind of “slave ship” narrative, where innocent people are stolen and forced to work against their will in a country in which they are the illegal migrant. However, the very success of this foreign anti-trafficking program did not reflect a success in changing institutional and public attitudes towards prostitution and victimhood, merely a desire to seal the borders. It ironically made it more difficult to tackle the general issue of prostitution in Israel because the people who now meet the demand for prostitutes are those who do not fit into that slave ship narrative, even though the coercive aspect of prostitution still remains.

Therefore a new model is needed to help Israeli society tackle prostitution as “domestic trafficking” of women who equally lack agency and require the same degree of assistance. This model most importantly must confront the one person that the trafficking trade does not confront: the john. Israel needs to come to grips with the lenient treatment given to the persons who provide the demand for sexual services, and stop believing them to be entrapped or seduced by the body they are purchasing without questioning whether their services were obtained coercively.

Scholars who have examined the sex-trafficking story of Israel have deemed the government’s combined efforts with police and NGOs to be a success. However, scholars have focused on the Natasha trade to the specific exclusion of current prostitution of domestic women. My paper exposes this contradiction and discusses why one initiative was successful and the other is ignored. In my conclusion, I will suggest that refocusing policy on johns and away from prostituted women will more effectively drive down domestic trafficking and the enemy within.
The Literature:

The literature on prostitution in Israel can be divided into two major areas; the first is prostitution in Israel prior to the peak of the Natasha Trade. Pursuant to the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of immigration to Israel, the emergence of new means of illegal labor migration also gave rise to a new discourse on “trafficking.” The second phase of literature on prostitution in Israel is heavily influenced by this global fixation with the sex trafficking phenomenon, including Israel as one of many destination nations. The specific works that discuss Israel are outlined below.

There are a few key works that discuss the development of prostitution markets in Israel, the first of which is Margalit Shilo’s account of “Prostitution in the Holy City,” which addresses the circumstances following the British conquest of 1917—wherein those women widowed or orphaned by war began entering prostitution in Jerusalem to survive—that led to the government initially concerning itself with prostitution. Commentators on the resulting legislation include Shlomo Guberman and Plea Albeck, who both outline the development of Israeli law to include legal prostitution from 1936 to 1951 under “abolitionist” principles. This is especially interesting when combined with the work of Cnaan, who discusses the vulnerability of North African immigrants when entering prostitution following the wave of immigration in the 1960s. It is interesting to note that both Shilo and Cnaan recognize similar key factors in women’s entrance to prostitution, most notably the barriers to legitimate social participation caused by economic vulnerability.

The next body of research addresses trafficking in Israel as it peaked in the last ten years. Donna Hughes’ work on the “Natasha Trade” uses Israel as an example of the growth of trafficking of women from the Former Soviet Union, and finally hypothesizes from her many examples of nations that focus on demand will be an essential component in diminishing the trade. Janet Halley, Prabha Kotiswaran, Hila Shamir, and Chantal Thomas include Israel as an example of one of four studies of feminism in contemporary governance of trafficking issues, and examines not only the influence that feminists had on the development of Israeli trafficking policy, but also whether the critique they apply to issues of choice, consent, and harm render Israel not a truly “abolitionist” state even while it maintains an abolitionist legal code on prostitution. It should be noted that while they do effectively incorporate feminist viewpoints, both of these works only refer to Israel’s experience with foreign trafficked sex workers. Deborah Golden discusses the fallout of the trade in the resulting assumption of sex worker status among Soviet immigrant women, and Sara Helman and Tamar Rapoport address the backlash this assumption creates among non-immigrant women.

There are few or no academic works addressing the transition of the sex market in Israel from foreign trafficked women to domestically trafficked women, as I intend to do. This neglected area of research is the focus of this thesis. Instead of looking at the current situation, the majority of the literature continues to retroactively examine the Natasha period. In order to discuss this transition in an academic context I am referring to a wide body of academic articles that provide a feminist critique to issues of prostitution, Johns, choice, and consent to sex work. None of these works refer specifically to Israel, but many address these critiques from a global perspective. Because they identify factors that are
Several articles were instructive in examining the problems of the institutions that arose during the Natasha Period, and I drew upon them in my analysis of the government action in the transition period. Claudia Aradau addresses the issue of sex trafficking from the perspective of a critique on the state-oriented model, showing that states are most motivated by migrant status in addressing the criminality of trafficking. In particular she highlights the problems that this system creates for the trafficked person; they must be the perfect model of a victim so as to be effectively divorced from the other dangerous illegals. Jo Goodey, Wendy Chapkis, and Jacqueline Berman further articulate this theoretical model, and apply it specifically to the problems within the United States TVPA and Trafficking in Persons report, which was the model for Israeli reform, and which fails to address all but the most violent or egregious forms of trafficking. They highlight that the TVPA ignores the idea of “domestic trafficking” entirely, showing effectively that when prostitution is legal and migrant status is not an issue, no domestically prostituted woman can sufficiently qualify as a victim according to its standards.

Kathleen Barry, Donna Hughes, and Melissa Farley have extensively outlined the harms of prostitution in their research, and they have become prominent academic voices in the field. Their works, when referenced, are intended to effectively describe the harms of the prostitution market that are not typically interesting to the state. I intend to use their feminist critiques of prostitution to articulate the social and legal challenges for women in the Israeli prostitution market, and demonstrate how they should warrant as much attention as their foreign trafficked counterparts. Janice Raymond and Sheila Jeffreys discuss the issue of the johns and the role that they have in disincentivizing governments from addressing trafficking, foreign or domestic. These works in particular will help to address the reluctance of Israeli johns and their government to see domestic prostitution as exploitative and worthy of intervention.

The availability of this relevant material and the strong focus on the issue of foreign trafficking in media notwithstanding, there are no works that critique the transition of sex markets from foreign trafficked women to domestic trafficked women and the failure of the Israeli government to recognize the problem. The absence of this literature is remarkable in and of itself because it reflects the way in which international sex trafficking was only recognized through an artificial construction of a victim narrative, or the “Natasha.” It represents an unwillingness to deconstruct this model of victimhood as part of a larger critique of legal prostitution and sex markets, and a cultural unwillingness to expand that narrative to domestically trafficked women. It is exemplified in Israel’s challenge to recognize the problem of domestic trafficking, because in Israel illegal aliens are illegal, but the sale of sex is not. The literature that does attempt to place Israel’s challenge in combating international trafficking within a larger discussion of demand for prostitution does so from a feminist perspective. I will attempt to use this same feminist critique to carry their discussion further to not just the problems for the “Natasha,” but to the unexamined realm of the domestically trafficked Israeli prostitute, our “Rebecca.”

In an effort to more effectively gauge the status of the issue, I traveled to Israel in the summer of 2010 and arranged meetings to discuss the issue with persons working in various capacities to combat trafficking. Two of these individuals were able to speak with me in the context of an official interview as experts that work intimately with the policy
and criminal justice aspects of trafficking. They included Nomi Levenkron, an anti-trafficking lawyer at the Hotline for Migrant Workers, and Rachel Gershuni, an anti-trafficking coordinator at the Israeli Ministry of Justice. They spoke candidly about the progression of the primary goals of the efforts of their non-government and government organizations in response to the changing landscape of trafficking in the country, and their perspectives helped to crystallize the impacts of contradictory policy on victims and their advocates.

1. The History of Prostitution in Israel:

The history of prostitution in Israel is similar to most developed nations as it reflects the manner in which the “world’s oldest profession” had become a dumping-ground for a society’s most marginalized persons. Just as the United States was fretting over the corruption of young white women in 1910, British military forces in Palestine during World War I saw an emerging market in prostitution of young Jewish women. The military occupation of Jerusalem brought with it a market for sex, and a few hundred young women—orphanned by the war, disadvantaged by recent immigration from Eastern Europe, or otherwise impoverished—were fulfilling the new demand. This phenomenon was characterized by religious and social leaders as indicative of a moral degradation of society, and the women themselves were represented not as subjects of exploitation by their occupiers but as women who had suffered a moral failing and were responsible for their own plights. Visiting the Land of Israel in 1924, the secretary of the League of Nations committee concerned with the “white slave trade,” had gone so far as to characterize the problem of prostitution in Jerusalem as “evil.”

Not much about the attitude of government officials toward prostitution would change in the years following the establishment of the state of Israel and the influx of new immigration of Ashkenazi Jews from Western and European countries, in addition to Mizrahi Jews from the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. Maintaining the often racist and Orientalist attitudes of their home nations, Ashkenazi Jews viewed their more conservative and often traditionalist Mizrahi counterparts as backwards or uncivilized, and Mizrahi Jews faced discrimination that led to a significant poverty gap between the populations. In the years following peak immigration the prostitution trade would also grow, undoubtedly fueled by Israel’s “abolitionist” approach to the sale of sex.

Israel had been following the Mandatory Criminal Code Ordinance of 1936 as its primary penal law, and starting in 1951 a series of amendments were made to further articulate a criminal code. The Penal Law Amendment (Prostitution Offenses) Law was added in 1962, and specified that neither the prostitute nor the purchaser of services would be viewed as a criminal by the state, but that men benefiting from the earnings of a prostitute (pimping) and owning or leasing a place for purposes of prostitution (brothels) were in violation of the law. This legalization of prostitution fueled a growth in the industry both in demand and in entry of those marginalized poor and new immigrant.

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populations into prostitution. In 1977 a survey of prostitution in Tel Aviv found that a majority of prostitutes interviewed were of Middle Eastern or North African origin, and noted the influence that family conflict between old cultural ways and adapting to life in a new country had pushed them towards prostitution. Literature on prostitution growth in this period appears to characterize prostitution as a symptom of criminality or delinquency endemic in a “free society.” This suggests that there was both some kind of moral judgment or failing of her family values to be attributed to a woman’s entrance to the industry, and a sense of permanence in that prostitution is a necessary cost of modernity and liberalizing of social values, and its fallout (and human casualties) must be tolerated. However this perspective acknowledged the greater influence that marginalization of a population appears to have on whether prostitution appears to be the most accessible means of income, as new or poor groups of people find themselves blocked from full “legitimate” social participation.

2. The Emergence of the Natasha

The dynamic of who was most apt to enter prostitution shifted again in the late 1980s with the entry of a new group of immigrants to Israel. As Israel’s identity as a functioning and economically independent entity grew in the 1970s after the victorious 1967 war, so did its opportunities for labor. There was a greater demand for housing as new immigrants continued to flood in, in addition to greater need for domestic labor and for agricultural labor to support the growing farming industry. As it would turn out, there was consequently a greater need for sex workers to satiate both citizen nationals and the foreign laborers themselves. Cheaper transnational flights and other means of international transportation aided a growth in trafficking of persons all over the world, and Israel was no exception. The groups that would be moved to Israel included large populations of domestic laborers from mostly South Asia, day laborers from the Palestinian territories and surrounding Arab nations, and soon those individuals seeking a variety of means of work from the Former Soviet Union, which will hereafter in this paper be referred to as the “FSU.”

The collapse of the Soviet Union would have economic ripple effects around the globe, and the issue of the long repressed Soviet Jewry would send its own proportional shock waves through the State of Israel. The standards for naturalization were relaxed to

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5 Cnann, “Notes on Prostitution,” 117.
8 Practice of religions like Judaism was formally banned in the FSU, precipitated by a long history of persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe and under the rule of the Czar even before the rise of Communism. The State of Israel maintained that all Jews, especially those fleeing persecution, were welcome to become citizens, or “make aliyah” to Israel. The process of Aliyah is comparatively uncomplicated with respect to most naturalization processes in other industrialized nations, and the new and very much socialist state that offered a wealth of social services to its new immigrants attracted ever-increasing numbers of FSU Jewish migrants. Generally speaking, in order to immigrate to Israel it is only required that an individual provide some proof of Jewish heritage, which could mean *ketubot* or marriage contracts of parents, or other written documentation of some kind of Jewish life cycle event. However having been pushed to the fringes for decades meant that such documents would be illegal or well-hidden under the Soviet rule, and the requirement for this documentation was relaxed or ignored. This provided a mechanism for many non-Jewish soviets to take advantage of the opportunity to leave the FSU and enter Israel.
accommodate Soviet Jewry, and soon thousands of people were clamoring for a way, legal or not, to leave the FSU and enter Israel.\textsuperscript{9} Eventually Russia began granting tens of thousands of exit visas per year, culminating in the arrival of nearly 890,000 immigrants to Israel between 1989 and 2000.\textsuperscript{10} The result was that former Soviet Jews, generally using their common language of Russian, would form their own insulated communities in Israel, most of which are in Tel Aviv.

These communities would not only help facilitate the entry of Russian culture into Israel, but also that of the FSU’s criminal organizations. The Russian Mafia arrived in Israel not long after the Soviet Jews, as many Mafia members were Jewish and legitimately entered or otherwise posed as Jews to obtain citizenship.\textsuperscript{11} Using their foreign contacts and the desperation of individuals from their home nations, it was easy for them to set up shop as traffickers of foreign women for various forms of labor for profit. “For these organizations, trafficking in women represents an attractive source of income, since it combines a low risk level with high profits,” unlike resorting to trafficking in weapons or drugs which are of comparatively higher risk in a state with an intensive security industrial complex.\textsuperscript{12} Using the information provided by arrested women, it was projected by human rights organizations in the 1997 CEDAW report that there were around 10,000 prostitutes working in Tel Aviv alone, servicing thousands of men per day.\textsuperscript{13}

The mechanism for transporting women into Israel from the FSU fit what has come to be understood as a primary model for sex trafficking around the world. Impoverished women seek out jobs mostly in the service sector of a country or area that is perceived as being more economically viable. Following the recommendation of an acquaintance or recruiter they travel to work in a bar, nightclub, restaurant, as domestic laborers, or even to knowingly work as a prostitute.\textsuperscript{14} In order to conceal their entry the women are flown from their home country to a number of stops or driven across borders. In the case of Israel their last stop will typically be in Egypt, and once there they are smuggled in Jeeps or trucks across the deserts of the Sinai Peninsula and brought in to Israel.\textsuperscript{15} Once there they may be brought to any of the major cities, but most end up in the largest metropolitan center of Tel Aviv. Once the woman has arrived, the fraud is revealed as the smuggler hands her off to the pimp, and the woman’s identity documents—her passport or other ID—are taken from her. She may be told she owes a debt for her travel, that her documents and freedom will be restored once she earns her pimp an often exorbitant sum.\textsuperscript{16} She may be threatened with violence, beatings, rape, or her captor may threaten the wellbeing of her family back home. In this way trafficking creates a “shadow

\textsuperscript{9} Donna M. Hughes and Tatyana Denisova, “Trafficking in Women From Ukraine” (paper submitted to the US Department of Justice, 2002), 13.
\textsuperscript{13} Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - Israel (United Nations, 1997), 90.
\textsuperscript{14} Christina Ling, “Rights Activists Rap Ex-Soviet States on Sex-Trade,” Reuters, November 6, 1997, 1.
market” of women (as well as children and increasingly men) that are otherwise unemployable in the legitimate sector and desperate for income.\textsuperscript{17} Whatever the means, the primary mechanisms of trafficking tend to be consistent in that they force mostly women and girls to work in prostitution on threat of violence or some other exploitative coercion. She will have no freedom to refuse a customer, to rest, to quit, or to have much other control over the terms of what can only generously be called her employment.

3. Development of Institutions in Israel

It is important to note that the slave ship narrative was of concern to international bodies long before transnational trafficking became the dominant mechanism of prostitution and other forms of forced labor, and that these bodies would have a strong influence on Israel’s own construction of a solution. In 1949 the passage of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others expressed similar concerns about the implied wrongs of movement of women for the purposes of sex, and very early in the history of trafficking discourse it was clear that sex trafficking and its relationship to prostitution would be treated differently than “real slavery,” or exploitation for other purposes. But these state institutions were mostly comfortable ignoring those forms of prostitution and coercion among poor and non-white or otherwise disadvantaged women, as they saw violence as a permanent fixture in underclass life. Even from this early stage in confronting the concept of sexual labor there was little effort made to attempt to discuss prostitution within the scope of forced labor; “the past willingness to define most prostitution as consensual, the stigmatization of prostitutes, and the ambivalence of male-directed law enforcement concerning prostitution meant that trafficking for prostitution was separated from ‘real slavery,’” and in essence tolerated or ignored.\textsuperscript{18}

A modern explosion in the visibility of the various forms of criminal means used to manipulate and channel these laborers in the world market prompted the passage of the 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This convention defined trafficking as not just smuggling, but labor enforced by violence, or inherently exploitative labor, regardless of individuals’ initial or continuing consent to remain in harmful working conditions.\textsuperscript{19} This is an extraordinarily broad definition of trafficking, and one that seeks most immediately to provide precedent for intervention in the widest possible range of human rights violations, and to prevent or remedy the widest possible range of harms. It sought to construct a narrative of trafficking that could change the perception of what was a very prolific global pattern in forced labor from an accepted practice to one that was harmful and victimizing.

Because it is such an inclusive definition, it does not require that an individual instance of harm meet all three separate criteria. States in particular are then apt to choose only the issues of smuggling and migration as their most immediate security interest, limiting the narrative to only the slave ship model, wherein illegal migration is forced. This interest arises from the fact that trafficking, in particular trafficking for the purposes of prostitution, is inextricably linked to other criminal elements and perceived physical and

\textsuperscript{18} Kevin Bales, \textit{Understanding Global Slavery: A Reader} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 127.
moral threats in a society regardless of the migration status of the prostitute. This focus is
the result of a state preoccupation with risk, and in particular its need to defend itself
against the specter of violence. For this reason above all other criminal elements the illegal
migrant is most “interesting” to the state when confronting trafficking, and the foreign
prostitute represents a triple threat of foreign invasion, sexual corruption, and public
health risks. Securitization is essentially emergency mobilization of the state in response to
demonstrated danger or risk of this dangerous “Other,” and it connotes urgency and the
exceptionalism that states perceive such threat of violence as distinct and must be
confronted in a deliberate way. The assistance of trafficking victims then requires that
they be designated as a suffering victim, an object of pity harmless to the state rather than
the dangerous “Other.” The means by which they are to be qualified by the slave ship
narrative is however far from standardized by either the international community or by the
state itself.

In the mid-1990s trafficking in developed countries such as Israel had become a
prominent issue in international media and especially in the United States. In 1998, after
visiting India and witnessing the destitution of women and children in brothels, US
Congresswoman Linda Smith would return home to the US to found Shared Hope
International, an organization dedicated to lobbying for full rescue and restitution of
victims of trafficking around the world. With its emergence in to the American and world
consciousness, in 2000 the United States Congress passed the U.S. Victims of Trafficking
and Violence Protection Act (TVPA), which identified trafficking as a form of slavery and
set out a variety of guidelines that constituted minimums for combating the problem. This
was accompanied by their first release of the annual Trafficking in Persons Report in 2001.
This report was meant to place countries on a tiered scale according to their efforts in
combating their trafficking problem, from those that were taking greatest measures at 1 to
those that were all but complicit in their trafficking at 3. The implication was that those
placed on tier 3 would have their foreign aid withdrawn as an enforcement mechanism, a
consequence that would have severe impacts on Israel.

However, unlike the sympathetically broad qualifiers for trafficking listed in the
2000 UN convention, the TVPA “specifically exempts a small class of abused and exploited
migrants—victims of severe forms of trafficking—from punitive immigration and welfare
reforms measures.” Only a very narrow group of women trafficked into Israel could be
designated as clearly victimized and would then be eligible for assistance under United
States standards. The discourse of who was clearly victimized was set by the media in the
terms designed to sell the issue to a widest audience, “the nexus of gendered and racialized
innocence and heinous crime serves as a central representation: young, innocent, ‘white,’
east European girls, tricked, kidnapped and forced into prostitution.” The securitized
state in particular relies heavily on these widely socially accepted “pitiable” distinctions. It
is when women transgress these categories by their failure to be the model of a perfect

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victim, or their trafficker the perfect villain, that they are then quickly removed from the protected class.

It is for this reason that the creation of the TIP report became first a great help and now in many ways a severe hindrance to groups working to combat trafficking of women in Israel. The imposition of severe foreign policy consequences by the United States meant that "even absent manipulative intent, human rights can very easily become a casualty of states' eagerness to demonstrate their anti-trafficking credentials to others... largely dominated by an aggressive unilateral monitoring regime, the compulsion to be viewed as doing something about trafficking is strong and universal."24 However, even within the context of the standards of the TVPA, it is difficult for this report to designate a meaningful standard by which Israel's government can hold itself accountable beyond regulating migration; it frequently interchanges terms of sex trafficking, sex slavery, and the general violations of migrant abuse and smuggling. Even within the TIP report, “in some accounts, all undocumented migrants assisted in their transit across national borders are counted as having been trafficked. In others, ‘trafficking’ refers exclusively to victims of sexual slavery. In some instances, all migrant sex workers are defined as trafficking victims.”25 As such, the only criteria for a positive evaluation under the TIP report seemed to be a demonstration of Israel doing something about it, whatever “it” was.

4. NGOs and their role in policy reform:

This was the problem that confronted a variety of concerned individuals in Israel who had seen the explosion in the sex industry that accompanied the rapidly escalating debate over foreign labor in Israel. Israel Women’s Network first initiated the research effort on trafficking in 199726 and those individuals who assisted in this initial effort would go on to form the Hotline for Migrant Workers in 1998. It is important to note that the first groups that approached trafficking were those that were concerned with migration issues, which suggests just how critical creation of this brand of victimhood narrative was for recognizing trafficking as a crime.

At the time there was no official government tabulation of the number of illegal immigrants, and especially none of women trafficked for the purposes of prostitution. Most numbers determined by their research then came not from identifying women currently trafficked in at the border, but by the number that were deported out.27 They found that nearly all women arrested as illegal migrants were from the FSU, and the women on average spent only 50 days in the Neve Tirze women’s prison before being deported to their home country. Israel Women’s Network found that not only were there thousands of women being trafficked in to perform thousands of sexual acts per day, but at any given time there would be 100 of these women waiting at the women’s prison by the airport for deportation.28

Advocates like IWN legal advisor Rachel Benzimen quickly pointed out the crux of the problem: “there is no law against trafficking people, and no law against prostitution,” and prosecuting for other inclusive crimes like theft, deceit, rape and battery would not slow the flow of women in to Israel. At this point, not a single trafficked woman had been called to testify against her trafficker, and NGO workers and accompanying legal counsel were quick to realize that some key needs would have to be met before they could begin to address trafficking at its source.

The United States Trafficking in Persons Report would unexpectedly aid these groups in Israel’s own fight against sexual exploitation. The country narratives in the report were taken from the State Department’s correspondence with those groups in each of these countries that had the ability to measure their trafficking problems. These would often include government agencies’ own reports, and where there were none (as in Israel) the State Department would contact individuals or NGOs known to be actively working on the problem. These groups had gathered their information through figures received from the Neve Tirze prison for women, and from the 474 foreign women who had been through the deportation process there in 2000. Using a team of volunteers they interviewed 30 of these women, who were either in prison or in hiding before they were to testify against their traffickers. One individual contacted was Nomi Levenkron, an attorney at HFMW who had begun the long and arduous process of identifying victims and in coordination with the authorities, assembling prosecution against traffickers and pimps. With her help, as well as the testimony of other experts and especially the findings of both Isha L’Isha and Hotline for Migrant Workers, in the first 2001 report Israel was placed on Tier 3, which indicated “countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.”

Israel had been dependent on US diplomatic and economic support since its founding, and the implications of having its substantial foreign aid budget reduced or removed entirely sent the Israel lobby in Washington into a furor. The Israeli government began hunting for those “concerned individuals” who had contributed to a document that while vague in nature, was incredibly damaging to the relationship between Israel and the United States. As the result of lobbying pressure, the following year (2002) the only countries apart from Turkey, Russia, and the UAE left on Tier 3 in the report were mostly those with which the US had no critical or meaningful diplomatic relationship. Israel had been moved to Tier 2, which meant that the government had not yet reached TVPA standards but was making some efforts to do so. There is little evidence to suggest that in as little as one year the situation in Israel and other nations on that list so improved that they were able to move up to an acceptable minimum of intervention in trafficking, despite State Department reports that Israel had since “aggressively pursued anti-trafficking initiatives… extensively coordinating with us on practical measures and policy strategies.” Nonetheless, the concept that the United States had both distinct and reactive

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29 Ibid.
interests in trafficking in Israel was incredibly valuable to those individuals working to stop it.

And there is much evidence to suggest that the TIP report was one of the factors that had effectively galvanized a federal response to the pressures of NGOs. Whereas the Israeli government was content to allow prostitution of foreign women to exist as a perhaps distasteful but legal component of its society, the TIP report established trafficking of women to supply sexual services as a social harm and a violation of human rights that necessitated intervention. This construction of the narrative of harm gave crucial traction to the mission of those NGO workers and government officials who used the TIP to force the government to adopt this narrative, which in turn justified creation of new departments and budgetary allocations to them. In 2000, the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on the Trading in Women was created, and was headed by MK Zehava Gal’on. An amendment was made to the penal code prohibiting the fraud component of trafficking in this same year, and 2000 would see its first police file opened on a trafficking case. By 2001 Hotline for Migrant Workers had opened 25 files, and had 9 cases awaiting prosecution.34

Still, there were already symptoms that the intent of the TVPA standards would not penetrate as far as its specific requirements for successfully suppressing trafficking and adhering to the new narrative. The solution in the eyes of the government was still not to punish the pimps but rather to expel the illegal immigrants who made up the workforce of the illegal establishments. Gideon Ezra, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Internal Security, characterized the nature of the government’s assessment of the issue in his statement at a seminar in 2001: “It is necessary to raid the brothels, to catch the prostitutes, and to deport them from the country as quickly as possible. Every woman deported brings us closer to solving the problem.”35 In the same year the women complained repeatedly that the police were unresponsive to their reports of crimes being committed, and were unwilling to investigate. Frequently pimps were used as informants in pursuit of other convictions in criminal circles, and police often were directly instructed not to intervene. When lawyer Nomi Levenkron and HFMW could not sufficiently convince the police to cooperate, they sued them in civil court.36 It also exposed and embarrassed the nearly 50 men immediately arrested, and while it may not have been the most effective measure to provoke sensitivity from police in other cities, it sent a clear message that the police themselves were part of a larger pattern of social behaviors that protect and condone violence against women.37

34 Levenkron and Dahan, “Women as Commodities,” 10.
36 In Jane Doe vs. Israeli Police, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labor in addition to the police were sued over the various ways in which they had failed to enforce the law or forced a woman into circumstances that made her stay illegal by not granting her the appropriate visas. It was this measure coupled with media publicity that opened up the investigation that would indict police officer Oskar Cis, a Beersheba police officer that had directly assisted traffickers and pimps.
37 It is not just policing that continued to lag behind; the courts have failed to set speedy trial dates between the time that a woman comes to a shelter and when they go to trial, violating the supreme court decision establishing the requirement of set a court date within 14 days of arrival. Many women wanted to go home as soon as possible or be rehabilitated, but could do neither till after the trial, and become continually discouraged by the delays. Having to repeat their stories several times was stressful and gives way to inconsistencies that can mean the release of a pimp. Often they lie about their own identities and circumstances leading up to their entering in to prostitution, as they fear common biases about sex and prostitution will make them appear to be a less reliable witness. The women are discouraged from testifying by the length of the process, fear of their trafficker in the courtroom, insecurity in testifying in their native
Just as problems with forcing police to accept the slave ship narrative continued to emerge, this pattern of mere superficial acceptance of prostitutes as victims likewise appeared in courts. Often the women did not fit the restrictive image of the perfectly innocent victim, and perhaps made decisions with a naiveté that a court could perceive as making a woman responsible for her predicament. “When prostitution is legal the prosecution’s case depends on proving that the woman did not consent… that women often do initially consent to traveling or even being in prostitution, it makes the case much more difficult to prove.” Likewise the traffickers themselves did not always reflect an image of a perfect villain, as they may often be older established men, disabled, or increasingly, women. Not wishing to criminalize the behavior of johns and even pimps who were citizens over the complaints of prostitutes, who were illegal aliens, the NGOs saw law enforcement as treating the issue mostly with indifference.

The strain on the courts in managing the illegal immigration issue finally prompted the Israeli border patrol division Magav Ramon, under the oversight of Israeli police unit Etgar, to appeal to the army’s US connections at the Department of State. This in turn motivated the US government to pressure Egyptian cooperation with Magav forces on the border in the Sinai Peninsula under threat of sanctions. This represents a very direct incarnation of the state-centered approach to anti-trafficking, and the preoccupation with eliminating trafficking as a form of illegal migrant control effectively reduced the number of illegal transactions per night on the border from 4-5 in 2003 to almost zero by the next year.

In 2004, due largely to foreign aid funds from the United States and repeated requests from NGO workers stressing the strain on their own donation-funded resources, the government-run Ma’agan shelter for trafficked women was created in Tel Aviv. The same year the NGOs pressured the government to provide state-funded medical services for those women in the shelter and in the detention center, and were successful in these efforts. This measure was notable in that these services included treatment for the immediate physical traumas of repeated sexual abuse, and for resulting STDs, pregnancies, and other conditions resulting from poor nutrition, isolation, and limited hygiene. This

language or in Hebrew or English, and threats from crime organizations that side with the defendant. Even with the establishment of the shelter, criminals have gone to lengths that included planting a woman in the federal shelter to have her discourage other women from testifying. Additionally women often fear that even if they are protected in Israel, they will have to face those who recruited them and their corresponding connections to their trafficker upon their repatriation.


Levenkron and Dahan, “Women as Commodities,” 3.

HFMW brought the story to the media to expose the lack of police ability to patrol and enforce, and the willingness of the police to hear testimony and not delay processes needed to arrest suspects began to slowly improve. In 2003 the Ministry of the Interior created a special budget to provide legal aid to trafficked persons as the result of another individual case, Yelena Zaritzkia vs. the Minister of the Interior. In this case HFMW argued successfully that the previous arrangement where “women were represented by lawyers hired by the pimps and traffickers themselves” was in short, “defective.” This Supreme Court decision encouraged the creation of a law that assured the women representation by the Legal Aid Bureau in both trials pertaining to their trafficking cases and those proceedings regarding the Entry to Israel Law.


was the initial acknowledgement that during these women’s time in prostitution, there were violations that threatened their health and safety in a very real and preventable way, and that their condition constituted a crime against their human rights and not just immigration statutes. It seemed that the primary message of the narrative of harm had finally begun to stick.

In 2006 the bill for the Prevention of Human Trafficking was passed through the Knesset, becoming the first anti-trafficking law to specify trafficking of persons as a crime. This provided new legal mechanisms for police to arrest suspects and for lawyers and courts to prosecute and convict them, and also concretely redefined the women rescued from prostitution as victims and not criminals, attempting to institutionalize the anti-trafficking narrative constructed by the TVPA as Israeli legal code. It was written by Rachel Gershuni, the anti-trafficking coordinator at the Israeli Justice Ministry, and was drawn directly from the needs expressed by the NGOs for the victims, using her own experiences with the gaps between government and non-government bodies in recognizing the crime. This bill not only included the prohibition of the actual sale and purchase of persons for labor, but described the ways that a person may become enslaved or forced to work with no freedom to quit, or “creation of ownership by their owner.” The Ministry of the Interior conducted a complete overhaul in the way it approached these women, and that year Israel would become the first country to issue visas strictly for the purposes of rehabilitation of trafficked persons. With these improvements and the continued efforts of NGOs in ushering victims through the process, in 2007 convicted traffickers began to go to prison. In 2009 multiple non-government shelters were opened for all foreign trafficked individuals seeking exit from prostitution as the recognition of the issue awakened in the Israeli public consciousness.

4. An Incomplete Solution

The overall number of trafficked women dropped sharply after reform in border patrol, decreasing from around 3000 in 2001 to around 300 in 2006. As of this year, due to the coordinated efforts of NGOs, volunteers, lawyers, and government officials in pressuring and improving federal practices, Rachel Gershuni states there have been no new illegal entries of trafficked women this year. Attorney Nomi Levenkron estimates that there are fewer than 100 foreign trafficked women left, and that communication mechanisms are well established to provide them a means of finding assistance and exit. By most assessments, Israeli institutions had succeeded in adopting the constructed narrative of victimhood and using it to develop effective new policies and practices to halt trafficking of foreign women into the country for the purposes of prostitution.

And yet when trafficking was defined as a crime in Israel in 2006 under the Prevention of Human Trafficking Law, it did not include the means or motivation for overall policing of sexual exploitation to be improved, or for police to intuitively expand their conception of trafficking beyond the slave ship model to apply its principles to other equally exploited persons. Police still tended to respond to what they have been told is the basic narrative of trafficking of foreign women, and only cracked down hard because of

43 Rachel Gershuni, interview by Katherine Bertash, July 8, 2010, Jerusalem.
45 Hotline for Migrant Workers, “A Decade of Activism for Migrants' Rights - facts and figures,” 5.
public pressure. They seem to have not improved with respect to sensitivity of victims during raids on brothels, using their judgment to investigate circumstances that may deviate slightly from the prescribed model, and especially not with regard to proactive investigation as they would for drugs or guns. Additionally, traffickers and pimps who were prosecuted under the new 2006 law rarely received the full sentence,\(^4\) reflecting a reluctance to enforce the law as seriously as it was intended.\(^4\) This all suggested that when trafficking became the principle violation, as prostitution of women is completely legal, perpetrators were more likely to plea out to greater personal advantage. This also suggested that punishing pimps and traffickers might have not been the most effective way to combat the crime.\(^4\)

A legal analysis of the reforms in Israel in 2006 found that this new system “is highly problematic in that it generates uncertainty, tolerates violence, abuse and induces exploitation of women… yet it also enables moments of humane treatment of sex workers while not buying in to the liberal discourse of free choice.”\(^9\) This new law and the systems it implemented provided some crucial mechanisms for women already victimized to obtain assistance, but prostitution and the damage it caused were still as prominent as ever. Most importantly the consistency in the price and number of sex transactions as polled by volunteers and local health organizations suggested to NGOs that actual supply of
prostituted women did not decrease. It begged the question: if there were no more foreign trafficked women, who was meeting this demand?

5. “Do you think there is such a thing as domestic trafficking?”

Lawyer Nomi Levenkron insisted on my answer to this question before allowing our interview to begin. She explained, “Government loves categories, and is content to ignore that which does not fit in to them.” In this case, she referred to the category of trafficked persons as something that the Israeli government would only recognize as being composed of foreigners. However as the numbers of foreign prostitutes dwindle, Israeli women are now being forced in to prostitution to fill the void left by foreign women. Her question was intended to highlight the fact that despite this trend, Israeli police “flatly deny” that there is such a thing as domestic trafficking. They are as reluctant to investigate matters of forced prostitution of Israeli women as they initially were to address the trafficking of foreign women, in particular because it deviates from the slave-ship trafficking narrative they have been forced to accept over the previous years, as well as the State-focused, security-oriented model set out by the TVPA.

Despite improvements in legislation and precedents set that attempt to hold police and other enforcement authorities accountable, the slave ship narrative of trafficking has proven brittle and inflexible, and cannot effectively transfer to serve women who are domestically trafficked. As prostitution remains legal in Israel, without diminishing demand the harms of the sex trade have now transferred to other equally marginalized, non-migrant Israelis.

Once again the paradigm of who is the most exposed to sexual exploitation in Israel has shifted, this time to citizen national women who are poor, victims of violence, homeless, and very often are addicted to drugs. The nonprofit group Elem, which works with at risk youth, has found an increase in the use of drugs by juveniles in Israel, as well as an accompanying increased exposure to sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and prostitution. There are few resources for women who were not victims of foreign trafficking, and with a decrease in the supply of young women from abroad, women who are “forgotten by society” fill the void. The few shelters that offer a place for prostituted women to sleep, shower, and obtain social services operate consistently at or over capacity. The Door of Hope shelter in Tel Aviv, one of a few privately run shelters, is in near constant danger of closing, and can only operate for 5-6 hours a day so as not to provoke retribution from the organized crime groups that run the nearby brothels.

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51 Nomi Levenkron, interview by Katherine Bertash, July 12, 2010, Tel Aviv.
56 Integrated Regional Information Networks
The market for sex had not been diminished by increased measures to block international trafficking, and so the demand for prostitution is now met by at-risk Israeli women who are as vulnerable or nearly as vulnerable to exploitation as illegal migrants. The changes encouraged by American anti-trafficking legislation and the corresponding Trafficking in Persons Report are insufficient to meet this new challenge because they rely on the previously discussed state and security-focused slave ship narrative. The successes of this model appear entirely intransitive to enforcement agencies and actors, highlighting the contradiction of an anti-trafficking program that is migration-focused and not women- or victim-focused.

The most prominent problem in policing for Israel is the fact that prostitution is legal. The harms of trafficking are recognized, but the identical harms in prostitution are comfortably ignored. Prostitutes tend to be primarily seen as criminals and a symptom of a society’s ills rather than victims of coercion and fraud. In order to identify where particular blockages exist with respect to gender violence in the public justice pipeline, it requires a distinct discussion of the meaning of consent, and especially of coercion. Israeli society itself is still in the same dynamic process as most nations of reconciling its attitudes towards women, sex and particularly the blame structure of gendered violence. Israel in particular also combats gender issues that have arisen over disputes over religiosity and plurality in the public sphere, and how they translate to ideas of morality in civil penal code. Ideologically, legalization is a means for market-regulating mechanisms to improve the lives of laborers, and this was certainly the intent for abolitionist Israeli lawmakers who chose to legalize prostitution.

Indeed there is a misconception that because these women work in a “legitimate” sector, they are not slaves like their foreign trafficked counterparts, but sex workers who hold a degree of agency that they could ostensibly claim under legalization. However even where legalized prostitution exists as it does in Israel, the social environment in which it exists has rarely developed to such a level of enlightenment about gender equality that the lax laws will do more than enable pimps and traffickers to act with impunity and reinforce to johns that the notion that the female body is a commodity available for consumption. There is, as a result, little evidence to suggest that legalization does much to combat trafficking and forced prostitution or inclusive negative social attitudes about sexuality and consent.

Prostitution especially, as “the world’s oldest profession,” tends to be viewed as a social constant, something that can never be eradicated because it is contrary to the nature of men and their perceived sexual needs to suggest that sex not be always available to them through some means. Where they do not obtain sexual satisfaction for free, there is a sense of entitlement that it must be provided for a price, with total impunity for the buyer. As such, the major driving factor in trafficking and prostitution overall tends to be male demand. In a system where women’s bodies are to be rented for a price, traffickers will find a way to deliver the product at the lowest possible cost to themselves as providers, and with greatest anonymity and ease to the buyer. There are certainly women who would voluntarily work as prostitutes, and the law prohibiting pimping and brothels but

permitting individual sale by independent prostitutes was meant in spirit to accommodate these individuals. But certainly it is cheaper and the profit margin higher to force individuals to work for free.

For this reason Israeli anti-trafficking organizations find it important to oppose prostitution as a legitimate industry because “wherever there is prostitution there is exploitation, to a lesser or greater extent, even when it occurs under the auspices of the state and even when ‘market forces’ are allowed to act freely.” Barry agrees that regardless of legal context the practice of prostitution in unequal societies is inherently exploitative “when the human being is reduced to a body, objectified to sexually service another, whether or not there is consent, violation of the human being occurred.” Because this form of labor happens under such distinct degree of coercion and exploitation, it is disingenuous to treat it as a pure choice in work. It is important here to reference the 2006 Anti-Trafficking Law’s point that slavery manifests itself as a “creation of ownership” rather than the purchase of a person from a slaveholder. Because these women are “prostituted” by their pimp and not by their own individual agency, one can see how this kind of ownership is created even where money does not change hands for rights over the individual woman. This violation within trafficking requires a thorough examination of the disproportionate way in which poor women are affected by the socialization of men’s sexuality, and especially how this affects their ability to exit the industry.

6. The John

In Israel this particular problem of the dominance of men’s sexuality in the social sphere is marked by the nation’s own distinct history with gender equality and sexism. Klein suggests that its experience as a country under fire means that as the nation’s legitimacy is questioned by outside forces, values of society are under pressure to remain stable and secure. Though women enjoy equal legal rights and are also required to serve in the army under the nation’s mandatory conscription policy, he notes that Israel’s dominant military culture also highlights a prominent culture of masculinity. The drive to serve is high despite the fact that service is compulsory, and it is no coincidence that completing service after high school presents a kind of rite of passage into adulthood and equal status among other Israelis. The culture of machismo presented through this unifying military brotherhood and shared experience is unshakeable, and reinforces values of in-group loyalty and confidentiality. This solidarity is bolstered by creating bonds that are exclusive to men within the Israeli military and other homosocial groups which, “create common understandings based on heterosexuality and strengthen solidarity by objectifying the ‘other,’ the woman portrayed as an anonymous figure and as a body without personality.” Not only are women’s bodies without personality, but ideally also without demands or needs of their own. The prostitute represents the perfect embodiment of this agentless ideal female sexual object, and reduction of all women to this status helps men in modern societies to solidify cultural feelings of secure masculinity and cultural

legitimacy. Threatening this dominant narrative of masculine social and sexual hierarchy with a new narrative of harm is then seen as threatening to all men as a whole. And so attacks on the behavior of johns cause men in societies with prostitution problems the world over to close ranks and insulate the buyers and the larger culture from punishment.

These effects can be seen by the extent of the demand, as foreign workers, Jewish men, Arab men, and especially religious Orthodox Jews all comprise the Israeli sex trade’s clientele. Men coming from sexually conservative societies frequently express the need for an outlet where they are able to commit adultery without wrongdoing persons of their own group or religion.63 Because the johns are themselves most frequently Israeli citizens in good standing, the government and police believe that it would not be worthwhile to intervene or to upset the majority population. To accept a narrative that criminalizes the purchase would require authorities to seemingly turn on all men and the johns within their ranks to a politically disastrous effect.

A broad definition of coercive labor and trafficking like that of the UN convention would appear to more adequately assist citizen national women engaged in prostitution, but it would require rewriting the dominant narrative of trafficking to show that the most common form of prostitution purchased by men (street prostitution under the management of a pimp or brothel) is dangerous and exploitative enough to be considered trafficking. This would unfortunately make a majority of johns who patronize these services complicit in a grievous and internationally condemned crime, an idea that both the state and the patriarchal influences in society find unacceptable. The security of the behavior of johns relies on a promise of anonymity not just for the transaction, but the ability to excuse themselves from any resulting harms inflicted on the prostitute through their patronage. Though they are the sole reason for the existence of the market, the law and the social mores of the culture of masculinity choose to see them as passive participants in the sex trade. They feel they are simply there to buy a service they need, and are not responsible for the abhorrent conditions under which the sex industry operates. This is certainly why prostitution remains legal in Israel.

This violation of women’s bodies and sovereignty within the context of coercive and forced labor highlights the disproportionate ways in which poor or otherwise marginalized women are affected by this unwillingness to confront sexual violence or unwillingness to even acknowledge it as violent. It additionally emphasizes that for the previously prescribed security-oriented model of intervention, their victimization must take a form that a society can effectively morally distance from the more socially acceptable forms of the commoditization of sexuality. This is because the sale of sex can be recognized as violence not just by governments and the public, but perhaps even by unwilling johns. And so those cases that warrant attention are only those that are the most horrifying, the most graphic or titillating, and certainly only those committed against the most ideal victims. And as the violence of trafficking no longer needs to be imported, and is instead working its way into the most intimately familiar parts of our societies, victims that seem effectively alien and pitiable are increasingly harder to come by.

The solution seems to then be to not only focus on those situations which are sufficiently severe to warrant intervention under such narrow definitions, but to break down the constraints of the prevailing narrative of victimhood. This requires further

articulation of the various forms of trafficking to encompass the many varieties of coercive labor and outline methodologies and punishments relative to the separate crimes of kidnapping, rape, fraud, theft, and coercion, and not just the threat of illegal migrants and permeable borders. As Aradau terms it, “the subject of a politics of pity needs to be divorced from a construction of danger,” meaning that the actions themselves should be compelling enough to warrant intervention, regardless of whether or not the prostituted woman was irresponsible or naïve, or not strictly “innocent,” or not existing in a situation that can be commonly read as “slavery.” A more multifaceted approach to trafficking and coercive labor by Israeli authorities may have the ability to calm moral panic as well as enable the state to more effectively identify those individuals and risks against whom it should secure itself and its constituent population.

Groups like Isha L’Isha and Hotline for Migrant Workers are seeking to make prostitution itself illegal in a manner that would criminalize the johns for purchasing services but not prostitutes for selling. This measure will effectively lift the veil of anonymity from johns, force accountability to a society that had previously been more than happy to turn a blind eye, and deconstruct the contradictions of a society where exploitation of legal residents is permitted but illegal migrants is not. Increasing the social cost, the embarrassment and inconvenience of purchasing sex will ideally drive down demand, and reinforce that men’s sexuality is not so insatiable that it requires exploitation of vulnerable persons. The proposed bill, drafted by Nomi Levenkron, is met with considerable opposition from conservative groups that view the men as victims of women’s sexuality and again choose to see the johns as passive: “The women are the guilty ones in the prostitution industry, and men are just the victims, because women tempt them.”

This bill represents not just expanded rights for prostituted women, but a push to reverse the cultural narrative of a woman’s body as temptation to sin and men’s urges as unquestionable. It seeks not just the actual imposition of a criminal code for those acts that are complicit in women’s victimization, but also in the thinking of those that would otherwise look the other way. This can even begin with words, as in previous legal language, “pejoratives ‘prostitute’ or ‘whore’ [were] used for the women, while the men are called ‘customers’ or ‘clients,’” allowing the buyers to believe that they are simply neutral consumers of a service, and that the criminals or deviant elements in the market are the women. Proponents of this bill seek directly to emulate the efforts of Sweden to outlaw prostitution, effectively driving down demand by making the costs for a john when he is caught higher than the willingness to engage in the risk of purchasing services. The result was that the number of prostitutes fell by half, even though none of the johns convicted under the new law served any prison time. This solution does not require that a society completely sidestep its struggles with attitudes regarding gender equality and sexuality, but rather means a stopgap to immediate victimization of women in the meantime.

7. Deconstructing the Post-Natasha

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65Yael Branovsky, “MK Nissim Zeev: The whore that tempts is guilty, the man is the victim,” YNet, accessed February 20, 2011, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3824120,00.html


Johns and indeed the Israeli government are both unwilling to acknowledge the purchasing of sex as criminal because they labor not only under a belief in the legitimacy of male sexuality, but under a number of myths regarding prostitution. The primary myth is that these women entered into prostitution of their own free will, and are likewise not victimized by their pimps, and actually even enjoy their work. However women who engage in prostitution are frequently subject to “the choice of no choice,” where they are coerced into prostitution as means of bare minimum survival, to eat, to fund drug addictions, or support their families. For most prostituted persons, turning to prostitution represents a situation in which a woman has lost access to a full range of educational and professional opportunities, and is desperate for income. If prostitution should ideally be a legitimate form of labor that people can choose of their own free will, then it should be extremely alarming that most people currently involved in it are those who were in so many ways denied access to participation in any other market. In this case no choice refers not to having one’s action forced or denied on direct threat of violence, but the passive removal of alternatives. If a woman is denied entry to any other alternative means to make the money she needs to survive, the idea that a choice between prostitution and starvation is a pure non-coercive choice breaks down.

It is because of this dispute over choice that governments express an extreme reluctance to acknowledge that forced labor coerced through violence exposes women to the exact same daily conditions and dangers as labor coerced through extreme poverty. Even for two women who exist in identical circumstances, one smuggled and forced into prostitution in Israel from abroad can be classified as a “slave,” while one who is in prostitution as the result of coercion, deception, fraud, the abuse of power, abduction, threats, violence, and economic leverage such as debt bondage but was not trafficked in from abroad is simply a “prostitute.” In the eyes of the law she is then the only one to blame for her situation. The law perceives her as having the ability to exit the industry at any time if she is unhappy, even though across countries around 92% of women in prostitution say they want to leave the industry, and clearly do not do so despite the fact that a majority have been repeatedly assaulted, raped, and meet the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder.

This misconception can be exemplified through an incident in Israel where the law did manage to punish a man pimping out underage girls, addicting them to drugs and otherwise taking advantage of their desperation. And yet the media needed to point out that, “there were some mitigating factors: that [the plaintiff]’s apartment served some of these girls as a refuge from terrible family or institutional situations; that he never used violence or force against them; and that he took responsibility and expressed regret for his actions.” This kind of perverse rhetoric categorizes providing children to be raped by adults in exchange for money and feeding them drugs to encourage dependency as acts of kindness and charity to girls that would have otherwise already been seen by society as lost causes. This is an excellent example of how lack of clear use of violent force somehow downgrades the harms suffered by prostituted women in the eyes of the public. As long as

the dialogue of trafficking remains couched in a slave ship narrative, then solutions will only shrink the number of women who are classified as sex slaves, and will not diminish the number who are treated as sex slaves. It will be successful only in providing cover for pimps and traffickers to exploit increasing numbers of non-migrant women and encourage others to see them as disposable.

Where policy is concerned, most of the Western world has fallen back on another tragic fallacy, that “criminalization forces prostitution into the underworld. Legalization would bring it into the open, where abuses such as trafficking and under-age prostitution can be more easily tackled.” The unfortunate reality of legalization is that it does not empower women, but “simply dignifies the sex industry…. And they haven't thought through the consequences of legalizing pimps as legitimate sex entrepreneurs or third party businessmen.” The consequences of legalization are clearly shown in assessments of countries that have a legal sex industry, including the Netherlands, where legalization of prostitution was found by NGOs to increase the number of foreign women trafficked in, or at best, did nothing to decrease it. Countries like Israel with no legal consequence for the sale of women are havens for pimps and traffickers. They operate almost identically to countries where prostitution is “underground,” as government and state actors such as police have little incentive or accountability to flush out illegal operators. The State can then be seen as having done something productive about trafficking by pasting a veneer of legitimacy over the actions of pimps and traffickers as businessmen, making it ever more difficult for a prostitute to disprove the many myths that surround her situation.

The perception of prostituted Israeli women, many of whom immigrated or who are from families that immigrated from the same former Soviet nations from which many other women were forcibly trafficked, is that they too represent the invasion of a deviant other and are equally “frightening,” even though they are legal migrants or born citizens. Golden infers that likewise all women who are immigrants, especially Russian immigrants, are perceived by Israeli society as prostitutes. And when they are sexually victimized, they are distanced from the accepted narrative of harm as “cautionary tales,” people to avoid instead of Israeli women in need. This condemnation of persons who seem to be acting outside of social norms as sexual deviants is suggested by Helman et al. to be politically transitive, as women who protest social expectations of behavior or contest government policies or other social orders face the frequent insult of being compared to or labeled as prostitutes. Threatening men who patronize prostitutes and the government that shields them not only excuses the perceived violation of value security that the prostitute represents, but challenges government’s inherent right to claim and maintain control. The Israeli government was only compelled to act against prostitution where it pertained to illegal migrants because of this interpretation. In order to effectively act against the violations of prostitution of non-foreign women, the narrative of coercion that would compel them to turn their attentions to Israeli men must be even stronger.

73 Ibid.
75 Golden, “National Cautionary Tale,” 90.
Up until this point any drive behind reformation of laws and practices to combat trafficking in Israel was bolstered by the government’s desire to maintain a productive and reciprocal diplomatic relationship with the United States. But now that these advocacy groups and activists within the government have gained traction, it is clear that any further impetus to reduce the amount of Israeli women impacted by prostitution will have to come from within. Public opinion and pressure is extremely influential in Israeli civil society, and NGOs have further capitalized on public attention to transfer support for anti-trafficking measures to anti-prostitution measures. They attempt to demonstrate the tangible harmful effects of prostitution, and various groups have begun to get more creative with rallying support for the bill that would criminalize purchase of sex services and reduce demand, a bill which has been sitting dormant in the Ministry of Justice for more than two years. They set up a shop front in Dizengoff Center, a mall in Tel Aviv with women for sale in the front window in an attempt to bring the invisible world of prostitution in to the public and give faces to the nameless women whose stories they are being asked to accept as a new narrative of trafficking. These efforts focus on humanizing women in prostitution, giving an identity to the often-abstract discussion of women that a man is supposedly harming by legally purchasing sex.

Israel’s experience with economic development, migration and prostitution provides a unique opportunity to observe the various global methods that have been used to combat sex trafficking in action, and to identify those methodologies that were insufficient or led to more comprehensive solutions. Through Israel’s experience with combating sex trafficking one can see how addressing the problem of sexual exploitation through concentrating on immigration and smuggling was at best temporarily effective. Without addressing demand, the market for prostituted women simply transferred to the supply of otherwise socially and economically vulnerable Israeli women. By initiating measures to criminalize purchase of sexual services, Israel has the ability to provide an effective example of a country that will successfully break out of the dominant model of anti-trafficking measures and successfully reduce harms inflicted by the sex industry. It may then also be able to assert even in a deeply gendered, stratified and politically-charged culture not only that men are accountable to their communities, their country and even to themselves, but that women are not for sale.

The progression of the issue of sex trafficking in Israel demonstrates that the creation of a victimhood narrative was necessary to allow for successful intervention to stop the transfer of women in to the country for the purposes of prostitution. However, once Israeli authorities were forced to accept this narrative and enforce the new 2006 anti-trafficking law to that effect, they were unwilling to address the problem of domestically trafficked women who suffer equal coercion and harm under legal prostitution. The limitations of the slave ship narrative results in a securitized state-oriented methodology that failed to address the source of sexual exploitation: legal prostitution that enables johns and the demand they generate for sexual services. Expanding this narrative to include domestically trafficked women and using it to refocus efforts on reducing demand may provide the most comprehensive and lasting solution to sex trafficking in Israel.

Bibliography


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PART II
Biographies

Oğuz Alyanak
Oğuz Alyanak is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences (concentration in Anthropology). He also holds degrees from Clark University (B.A 2006; Government and Int. Relations and Int. Development and Social Change) and Boğaziçi University (M.A 2010; Pol. Science and Int. Relations). His most recent research focuses on the negotiation of Turkish identity through festivals in Chicago and explores how secularism and Islam are discussed among members of the diaspora.

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Andrew Boyd is currently completing his Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies. He received a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs and Philosophy from Mercer University in 2010. He first became interested in Algerian politics while studying in Morocco and hopes to pursue that interest into policy and development work concerning North Africa. His other academic interests include political theory, world history, and US-EU-MENA relations.

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Leopold Eisenlohr graduated from the Ohio State University in 2011 with a degree in Chinese and Arabic and is currently studying Uzbek through the Center for Middle Eastern Studies MA program at the University of Chicago. He has studied in China and Syria, and is interested in poetry and prosody, Sinic Islamic intellectual traditions (specifically late Ming/early Qing dynasty Islamic scholarship), and in medieval Sino-Turkic relations in inner Asia.

Matthew Gillman
Matthew Gillman earned his Bachelor of Arts in Near Eastern Studies with honors, minor in art history, at the University of Washington, Seattle. In Summer of 2010, he received a Critical Language Scholarship to study Turkish in Bursa; in Spring of 2011, he was an exchange student at Boğaziçi University. He is currently working on his Master of Arts in the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and is interested in adaptations of literature and art across time, space, and media.

Anna Langer
Anna Langer is currently a graduate student in the Masters of the Arts, Program in the Humanities at the University of Chicago. Anna obtained a Certificate in Drama from the University of North Carolina, School of the Arts in 2006 and a B.A. in Theater Arts and English from Mount Holyoke College in 2008. After completing her undergraduate education, Anna worked in professional theater and taught at the high school level before moving to Israel. In Israel, Anna researched social justice and the position and forms of media in the Middle East, while continuing her involvement in the arts. Currently, Anna’s research is focused on the ideological structure of contemporary Israeli theater and the relationship of Israeli theater to Jewish religious practice, nationalism, and performance of identity in the public sphere.
**John Macdonald**
John Macdonald received his Bachelor of Arts degree with honors from Wesleyan University in 2009. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago. His interests include the ethno-political history of the Levant and the emergence of national and pan-national identities in the Middle East more broadly.

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Maryam N. Sabbaghi earned her Bachelor of Arts in Near Eastern Studies (Honors); Political Science; and Law, Societies, and Justice from the University of Washington, Seattle in March 2010. She also received certificates in advanced Persian and Persian Literature from the Dehkhoda International Center for Persian Studies in Tehran, Iran. She is currently a first-year Master of Arts student in Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

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August Samie obtained his Bachelor of Arts with a dual focus in Creative Writing and Literature from California State University, Northridge in May 2011. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago. His interests include, but are not limited to, Central Asian literatures, Turkic languages, and Uzbek identity and state formation.

**Rui Zheng**
Rui Zheng received his Bachelor of Arts from Rutgers University in History and Middle Eastern Studies in 2011. He is currently pursuing his Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago. Having studied in Egypt and Jordan during the summers of 2010 and 2011 respectively, he is interested in Saudi history, particularly from the early 20th century.
"Facing the Ghosts of the “Statue of Humanity”
By Öğuz Alyanak

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Statue of Humanity, under construction…
Sculptor: Mehmet Aksoy
Location: Kars, Turkey
Date Demolition Ended: 14 June 2011

“In order to dismantle it, first the head will be cut off and taken down with the help of a crane. Then, in the following ten days, the statue will be dismembered into 20 pieces.”
- Official statement by the construction firm in charge of taking down the monument.

Introduction

“...the work of contesting national histories and repositioning temporal landmarks implies far more than merely ‘restoring truth’: it challenges the entire national genealogy.”¹

In 2001, Taliban forces in Afghanistan demolished the Buddhas of Bamiyan, statues erected in 6 AD, as part of a campaign initiated by Mullah Omar to cleanse Afghan society of all idolatrous imagery that ran contrary to Islamic Sharia law. The blasting of the statues drew international criticism to the country, and to its people, whose only means of recognition in the global arena has been through heavy sanctions which were justified by the U.S government as a form of retribution for the jihadist tendencies of their ruling body, the Taliban, and its alleged harboring of Osama bin Laden.

A year later, following the September 11 attacks, U.S-led NATO forces entered the country to bring down the Taliban regime—hoping that the effacement of the Taliban would lead to the incarceration (or possible extermination) of Bin Laden, and bring democracy to the country, thus enabling freedom for the Afghans from oppression of a corrupt regime. This argument, however, carried the implicit assumption that the “corrupt” ruler was also the unjust and the unwanted; and that it ruled the country without any legitimacy, explicit or implicit, from Afghan society. Yet, as the aftermath of the invasion has shown, the Taliban was more than a physical entity entailing a list of names forming a governing body, let alone the unjust and the unwanted. Instead, it has to be grasped as a pervasive ideology embedded much deeper in the Afghan social imaginary. It was an ideology building legitimacy not necessarily through its disciplinary mechanisms, or use of hard power, but through its permeation into the social fabric and everyday interactions of Afghans in public and private life. The scene the global audience was left to witness in the days following the NATO intervention supports this claim. Although the Taliban government was removed, the legacy of the Taliban, which was present since early 1996 as a militia, government or insurgency force in Afghanistan, continues to this day.²

Revisiting the events of 2001 in a retrospective fashion, the following question comes to mind: was it only the forces of the Taliban who took the statues down, or was there another actor untold that prepared the necessary moral and psychological ground for the Taliban to take that move in the first place? In other words, was a certain level of consensus already reached within Afghan society that rendered the destruction of these monuments possible, and perhaps, plausible?

The highly acclaimed independent movie, *Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame* (2007) does a purposeful job in addressing this question in a different platform: cinema. In her movie, Hana Makhmalbaf, an independent film director from Iran, offers snippets of recent Afghan history from the perspective of a 5-year-old girl (Bakhtay) who challenges obstacles in order to attend the village elementary school. Through her eyes, the viewer witnesses how the Taliban legacy of male domination, strict religiosity, and dire poverty permeated in Afghanistan, became norms through which social life was organized and more importantly, continued to perpetuate in Afghan society with or even without the

physical presence of the Taliban. Bakhtay’s naïve ways of questioning the order in which life around her is structured, and the context in which her actions find meaning, enables the viewer to ruminate on the schemes upon which these values are normalized. The film, in other words, portrays how social patterns inherited from Taliban years which govern a regime of understandings fill in the physical nonexistence of the Taliban in Afghan geography—hence reverberating the spirit of the Taliban in everyday Afghan interactions. The striking aspect of the film, apart from its climactic ending, is its focus on children’s “innocent” games as the casual representation of the everyday imaginary. These games are representative of not only a child’s imagination, but also of the ways everyday realities interfere with this imagination. They are mimetic representations through which social imaginaries are portrayed and “institutions” are formed.

This paper is an attempted study of the social imaginary. Through this endeavor, I aim to understand the social dynamics sanctioning actions such as the demolition of the Buddha statues. In order to accomplish this task, I will evaluate my arguments on comparative grounds and bring in another relevant and more recent example: the destruction of the Statue of Humanity in Turkey. However, as I do so, I will refrain from repeating the often heard secularist argument—that the dismantling of the statue is yet another example of Turkey’s Islamization or the enchantment of social and political life, and therefore reveals, once again, the governing party’s “true”, “authoritarian” and “Islamist” nature. Religion may be a motivating factor for the destruction of a monument in Turkey, and the current government may act in an authoritarian manner in its ways of dealing with criticism. However, blaming only Mullah Omar/the Taliban, or Recep Tayyip Erdoğan/the Justice and Development Party for the destruction of monuments means to evade the latent and socially embedded roots of the issue. Taking this claim as a point of departure, I problematize factors pertaining to social dialogue, namely reflexivity and toleration. The very fact that these components are missing in public discussions in Turkey, I argue, helps to establish the moral and ideological base that legitimized the destruction of the Statue of Humanity. Is not the Prime Minister’s command for the dismantlement of the monument but a vocalization of what many in Turkey wished for, and had already consented to either through words and actions, or through indifference and silence? The following pages tackle this question.

A Contested Dialogue on Turkey’s Past

Only a decade after the Buddhas of Bamiyan were destroyed, the Prime Minister of another country with a Muslim majority, Turkey, ordered the demolition of a statue that was commissioned in 2006 to be built in the city Kars, which borders Armenia. The statue depicted two halves of a man, each reaching to hold the other’s hand, and symbolized, according to its sculptor as well as the former Mayor of the town, peace and friendship between Turkish and Armenian people. For a country accused of conducting a genocidal act during the First World War, and cleansing itself of its Armenian population, the

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3 I refer to “institution” here is not as an objective reality, like an organization, but rather as an established regime of understanding and sociability that is built on an accumulation of interactions, emotions and understandings. For more on processes of institutionalization, see Andreas Glaeser, Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, The Opposition and the End of East German Socialism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 30–35.

4 For an example of this line of argumentation, see Daniel Steinvorth, “Turkey and Pornography: We are Becoming Islamicized”, Spiegel Online, January 17, 2011, http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,739923,00.html.
building of the statue was a gesture of good intentions. When I visited the town in late 2006 and conversed with the then Mayor, he talked about this statue as “his dream,” through which he would be able to bring the “brothers and sisters” of the two nations together, ameliorate past grief, and, most importantly, prepare the necessary political grounds for the opening of the border between the two states—thus allowing the continuation of trade relations which were suspended in 1993. My brief conversations with the townspeople during my stay in Kars showed me that the opening of the border was also the cardinal wish of the people of Kars—the citizens of one of Turkey’s poorest cities.

The statue, moreover, symbolized the very nascent hopes for the Turkish state and society to face its past, and discuss the crimes committed during the First World War. Such an action would require ambitious steps to be taken by both political leaders and social actors. However, in a country where nationalism and conservatism are found to be on the rise, confrontation with the past can prove to be a strenuous process. For example, when a group of academics and journalists launched a civil society initiative named “Özür Diliyoruz” [We Apologize], and started gathering signatures from participants who argued to “empathize with the feelings and pain of [our] Armenian brothers” in 2006, a counter-initiative was formed within days under the name “Özür Dilemiyoruz” [We Do Not Apologize]. Moreover, the website for the first initiative was hacked on numerous occasions.

What is problematic in this case is not the presence of the counter-protest. In fact, having opposing lines of thought communicating in the public sphere is hypothetically the building block of (a Habermasian ideal of) deliberative democracy. What is problematic, however, is the nature of the communication itself. Dialogue is blurred through the ways the state sides with one group while downplaying the other, which means that power relations among the parties of this dialogue are skewed from the start. Power is channelled both through the sovereign’s right, and naturalized through its disciplinary apparatus. Hence, what we call civil or social dialogue is not free from institutional constraints, thus leaving little space for marginalized communities and suppressed voices to be seen or heard. And in instances where the addressee of a discourse is silenced, or is not given a chance to respond, dialogue loses a reflexive character so vital to its existence: heteroglossia, the existence of manifold voices and viewpoints on a given topic or simply put, having multiple perspectives of seeing and hearing. In response to the online apologetic movement (petition) in 2008, the Prime Minister Erdoğan stated: "I neither accept nor support this campaign. We did not commit a crime; therefore we do not need to apologize… It will not have any benefit other than stirring up trouble, disturbing our peace and undoing the steps which have been taken." What is troublesome here is the way that the hegemonic discourse on “Turkishness” and the hegemonic narration of Turkish history invents its own ways of dealing with (or governing) its marginalized other. Through the dismissal of one of the actors to join a communicative platform, that is,
through the utilization of “politics of disablement,” discussions on Turkey’s past continue to lack reflexivity, and therefore remain limited and one-sided.

The Prime Minister’s remarks, however, were not always dominant enough to suppress dissident sounds rising from the streets of Turkey in response to hegemonic discourses regulating “the management of meaning” on the issue of genocide. As a reaction to what the Turkish academic Ahmet İnsel called “absolute truths uttered by the Prime Minister and a majority of the population in Turkey,” certain initiatives have been taken by the “liberal” segments of the society. Some academics joined forces and brought discussions on Turkey’s past and the events of 1915 under scrutiny in academic platforms. Nevertheless, such initiatives are few, and similar to the above-mentioned Internet platform, often come under great strain by both the state and conservative and ultranationalist groups.

One of the first attempts in September 2005 to have the very first academic conference on Ottoman Armenians (take note that the conference was not even on genocide and/or problems that the non-Muslim minority in contemporary Turkey faces) was prevented by the judiciary in Turkey. The then Minister of Justice Cemil Çiçek argued that what the academics were trying was an attempt to backstab Turkey; an act that he called “treacherous”. The speaker of the main opposition, the Republican People’s Party, agreed with Çiçek and added that the academics were acting in disloyal ways under the rubric of academic freedom. In response to these comments, approximately 30 non-governmental organizations asked Çiçek to step down from his ministerial position. However, Çiçek did not step down. The conference, on the other hand, switched locations, from the confines of a public university (Boğaziçi University) to a private university (Bilgi University) and finally took place. Due to security reasons, only those with invitations attended the conference. Outside the campus, protests by conservative and ultranationalist student groups and political activists continued.

Calls for the Turkish state and society to face its past and discuss the ineffable have also been raised by prominent authors and journalists in the last decade. Nevertheless, such calls have either ended with lawsuits filed against these figures, or their immediate imprisonment. The most prominent among the trials was that of the Nobel Prize-winning author Orhan Pamuk who was convicted for “insulting Turkishness” (Article 301) after claiming that “about 30,000 Turks and one million Armenians were killed in Turkey.” According to a recent OECD research study, Turkey tops the list of the highest number of

10 Glaeser, Political Epistemics, 48.
12 Ahmet İnsel, “Erdogan’ın Mutlak Doğruları [Erdogan’s Absolute Truths],” Radikal 2, June 13, 2010. In his op-ed, İnsel responds to a number of the Prime Minister’s past speeches in which he rejected the possibility of a Turk ever attempting a genocidal act, by arguing that genocide is not a part of Muslim-Turkish culture (and by implying that it is a Christian practice). Such a dogmatic approach to evaluating the past, İnsel argues, leads the Prime Minister, as well as the majority of the Turkish population, to approach alternative accounts of history with absolute truths—hence leaving no space for dialogue.
14 “STKlar Çiçek'i Istinaya Davet Ediyor [NGOs invite Cicek to Step Down],” Bianet, May 27, 2005.
imprisoned journalists and authors: 57 imprisoned, and 700-1000 ongoing proceedings to date open to the possibility of imprisonment.\textsuperscript{16}

Relations between Turkey and Armenia have also seen considerable improvements in the last couple of years, although few and often short-lived. The state officials of the two nations, for the first time in almost two decades, congregated to watch a soccer match between the national teams of Turkey and Armenia. Further meetings were also conducted under the auspices of the European Union. The Armenian Cathedral of Holy Cross in the Akdamar Island (located in the eastern Anatolian city of Van), which served as an Armenian Apostolic Church in the tenth century and continues to have religious importance for Armenians, was restored by Turkish authorities in 2005. Moreover, the Turkish government granted permission for a liturgy on the island, which was held for the first time in 95 years.

Despite these friendly gestures, relations have remained lukewarm. Although the Turkish government has taken steps to welcome new ways of communicating with its Armenian other, it has, at the same time, continued dismissing alternative and marginalized narratives of the past. The government’s dedication to “deafness” on the issue was also hailed by the conservative and nationalist segments of the Turkish population.\textsuperscript{17} Prime Minister Erdoğan, who attended the ceremony in the town of Van, and stated that this gesture by the Turkish government was in fact an “expression of the Turk’s tolerance,”\textsuperscript{18} at the same time, argued at a speech given at a conference in Munich that “our society and culture has never embraced anything even resembling the concept of genocide. We cannot accept such a claim.”\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, in 2010, following the resolutions in Sweden and the U.S calling the events of 1915 “genocide,” the irate Prime Minister stated: “of 170,000 Armenians living in Turkey 70,000 are Turkish citizens... We are turning a blind eye to the remaining 100,000... Tomorrow, I may tell these 100,000 to go back to their country, if it becomes necessary.”\textsuperscript{20} The Prime Minister who expressed Turkey’s tolerance in 2010 also expressed the very limits of his (nation’s) tolerance the same year.

The final comment on this topic came once again from Prime Minister Erdoğan, who, when asked to share his views on the Statue of Humanity, argued: “I called the statue a freak ["or monstrosity, depending on the translation"]. One does not need a degree from a

\textsuperscript{16}“OSCE Report Finds Turkey Is Holding 57 Journalists in Prison”, \textit{International Press Institute (IPI)}, April 4, 2011. The latest journalist added to the list of imprisoned journalists in Turkey is Nedim Sener, a PEN award-winning journalist who was tried for the research he pursued (which culminated in a book in 2010) on the Dink murder. He was acquitted from his charges in 2010. Yet he was brought back into court under new charges relating to his most recent research on the transnational Islamic community known as the Gülen/hizmet movement. Please see “TURKEY: PEN Free Expression Award winner, Nedim Şener, and writer Ahmet Şık formally charged,” \textit{PEN International}, March 7, 2011, http://www.englishpen.org/turkey-pen-free-expression-award-winner-nedim-sener-and-writer-ahmet-sik-formally-charged.

\textsuperscript{17}In the wake of a counter-demolition press conference organized by a group of artists and journalists, one of the organizers, a prominent Turkish artist who is known for his criticism of the current government, Bedri Baykam, was stabbed by a radical activists. The person who committed the assault argued that he was disturbed by the artist’s work and statements.


\textsuperscript{19}Speech given by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 44th Security Conference in Munich, February 8, 2008; available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMml1Bm0JDU

Fine Arts Institute in order to appreciate good art.” He also added that the height of the statue was overshadowing another ancient Islamic structure in the area, the Seyyid Hassan El Harakani enshrine.

The deconstruction of the Statue of Humanity has been the latest step taken by the government. But at the same time, considering previous attempts to ameliorate relations with the Armenians, how could the government’s ambivalent mood be explained? In line with the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, which, as I argued, was more than just a simple Taliban operation, the demolition of the Statue of Humanity tells us more than just a governmental move. It points to complications with Turkey’s confrontation with its past, and how a majority of Turks who are haunted by their past continue to postpone their encounter with these “ghosts”. It reveals the impact of “affect,” that is, the ways emotion come into play in the political realm and the roles they play in “reordering worlds of meaning.” Moreover, the Turkish state and its representative government may be one of the main actors in discussions over the Armenian genocide; yet one cannot also see it as the only actor in play. Considering that the current government was repeatedly elected by landslide wins in 2002, 2007 and 2011 (winning 34.8, 46.6 percent and 49.8 percent of the votes respectively), the utterances of the Prime Minister cannot only be seen as mere demagogical play, but should in fact be considered as representative of the attitude of the majority of constituents in the Turkish Republic. In other words, Erdogan’s actions are partially representative of the cultural organization of the debate on Turkey’s past and its treatment of the Armenian Genocide. Those who approve of the Prime Minister’s actions through their silent consent play the other part in this role.

**Theoretical Premises**

In order to understand the socio-political implications of the construction and demolition of the Statue of Humanity, I find it necessary to revisit some of the arguments central to the literature on collective memory. What do we mean by collective memory and how is it constructed? How does remembering work, and what do we remember (and what do we omit)? And how does what we remember and what we learn to forget reorient our world of meaning? Ever since Durkheim coined the term “collective consciousness,” theorists have been anxious to understand the dynamics that bring members of a community under the same imaginary. Since Durkheim did not necessarily explicate the reasons why individuals become members of a collective such as a society, but rather argued that we all are parts of a social organism where each of us serve a specific function to keep the organism alive, it was the task of other scholars to make the links explicit. Two tenets of theorization—social/collective and psychological/individual—dominated earlier attempts to explore the notion of collective remembering/memory. For Maurice Halbwachs, who was inspired by the structural functionalist tradition, collective memory existed outside the domain of the individual (memory). Similar to Durkheim, Halbwachs saw collective memory as having a life of its own, and argued that in order for a group to

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22 Verdery, The Political Lives of Dead Bodies, 32–34.
establish psychic unity, it had to be situated within a social setting. The process of remembering was a social one; what we remembered of the past and how we remembered it was related, if not conditioned by social/group interactions.

The individual/psychological approach, on the other hand, focused on the individualistic dynamics that structure the remembrance of which Halbwachs speaks. This approach took the “group” as a psychological unit. According to Frederic Bartlett, our ways of remembering are conditioned by the ways we make present narratives meaningful. Remembering is a “high-level process” and what we remember of the past is what is relevant to our current schemata that we construct through repetition; what defines the things we recall are “an organism’s way of keeping up an attitude towards the environment which it finds or feels to be adequate or satisfactory,” thus making remembering a matter of construction, rather than “mere reproduction.”

My reading of the two stories from Afghanistan and Turkey provided in the introductory section of this paper are informed by both Halbwachs’ and Bartlett’s approaches to collective memory. Nevertheless, there are elements that the social functionalist and individual/psychology oriented approaches leave out, which are taken up by more contemporary practitioners of social memory, such as Pierre Nora and Paul Connerton. In order to explain the ways we remember, and make our memories meaningful in narrative format, Connerton points to the role of rituals and commemoration. Adding a performative dimension to memory, Connerton argues that memory is constructed through lived, bodily experiences, “bodily automatisms,” such as shared commemorative ceremonies and events, as well as other social practices, habits and gestures. “Images of the past and recollection of the past” proposes Connerton, “are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances.”

Pierre Nora, on the other hand, points to the ways our recollection of the past are symbolized in sites of (national) recollection and heritage today. Accordingly, what we live is not the memory of the past but what remains of it; and what remains of it are the fragments that are attached to sites. Nora further argues what we are left with are “sites of memory” which can be found in the form of spatial entities (a mausoleum for example, or a museum), as well as commemorative events or historical figures (war generals, leaders, etc.)

**Encounters with the Ghosts**

Let me now qualify my arguments in light of these more contemporary theories on social memory and forms of remembering. The dominant narrative of the First World War among Turks today is one of ambiguity that symbolizes both destruction and subsequent

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25 Ibid, 189.
26 Schemata, according to Bartlett’s paraphrasing of Head, is an “appetite, instinct, interests and ideals that are chronologically transmitted.” Ibid, 210.
27 Ibid, 203.
28 Ibid, 205.
31 Ibid, 7.
resurrection, and embodies feelings of despair and hope. The Turks, similar to the myth of
the Phoenix, were born from their ashes; the collapse of the Ottoman Empire is therefore
simultaneously remembered with the foundation of a new Republic. However, this
transformation has also necessitated many sacrifices to be made, ending in a great number
of civilian deaths. Within this narrative, the death toll on the Armenian side, which is
another contested issue in the collective memory of Turks and Armenians, is seen as
collateral, and countered with numbers of Turkish casualties. This rhetoric, which
continues to prevail uncontested to date, legitimizes the terrors of the past committed by
the founding fathers of the new Republic. Up until very recently, very few have dared to
ask the question: What happened to the minorities living in Anatolia; where have they
gone? What happened to all the different dialects and languages spoken in Anatolia; how
did they vanish? In the last couple of years, similar to Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame,
Turkish films directed by young and critical directors as well as books written and music
composed have started to focus on these issues, offering alternative narratives and
approaches to the discussions on collective memory. These new channels of visual imagery
not only help to contest the dominant narrative but also help to unveil issues forgotten in
the sands of time.

However, another way to approach the issue is by asking the following question:
Were the massacres of the First World War ever forgotten? It seems to be taking the easy
way out to argue that any community is prone to being or becoming socially amnesiac.
What needs to be explicated, however, are the conditions that implement a regime of
forgetfulness, or, as a Turkish academic working on narratives of religious minorities in
Turkey calls it, “remembering to forget.” This is a repetitive process that is instilled in
the consciousness of a collectivity through commemorations and bodily experiences that
Connerton proposes. And it is found embodied in “sites of memory” as noted by Pierre
Nora. It is also a process that draws the boundaries of subjectivity: what sorts of narratives
get to be remembered, and what others are to be forgotten are learned pedagogically and
performatively in various settings ranging from classrooms to commemorative
celebrations.

Therefore, we have to question the applicability of “amnesia” to Turkey and look
for alternative “sites,” such as the Statue of Humanity, that force people to face their
ghosts. Alexander Etkin in “Post-Soviet Hauntology” challenges the very notion of
“amnesia” by transforming dead into undead and bringing terrorized memories of the past
to the present. Based on statistical information obtained from sociological polls, Etkin
states that Russians do remember the Soviet terror, though in varying interpretations. In
his explanation of the ways remembrance of the past takes place, Etkin offer us a three-
fold categorization consisting of “monuments (hardware), texts (software), and specters
(ghostware).” Specifically focusing on the last component, which he sees as a “vehicle of
memory” complementary to (and interconnected with) the first two, Etkin explains how
Russians today are learning to communicate, “mingle” and live with the ghosts of the past.
Similar to the attempts by Turkish intellectuals to open new and alternative
channels of dialogue involving the past, Etkin argues that “in a land where millions

32 Leyla Neyzi, “Remembering to Forget: Sabbateanism, National Identity, and Subjectivity in Turkey,”
33 Alexander Etkind, “Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror,” Constellations: An
34 Ibid, 198.
remain buried, the dead return as undead. They do so in novels, films, and other forms of culture which reflect, shape and possess people’s memory.”

Following Etkind’s line of thought, one could argue that the construction of the Statue of Humanity created the “hauntological” effect where the survivors of the massacres of 1915, that is, the “specters” haunting consciousness (as well as conscientiousness) of many Turks in the present, have been set free in order to face the living. Parallels can also be drawn between the two examples Etkind offers: the Solovetsky Stone and the Bronze Soldier Statue, and the Statue of Humanity. “The real and practical events that happen to monuments, such as their removal, destruction, vandalism, or renaming, also provoke strong responses in the observers” argues Etkind. The vandalism and removal of the Solovetsky Stone, or the Bronze Soldier Statue in Lubyanskaya Square led to civil responses and brought about the competition of different actors over cultural memory. The construction, and more so the demolition of the Statue of Humanity, established the same dialogical environment over the construction and control of memory. The decision to demolish the Statue of Humanity was made, people started to talk and as they did, they not only shed light on Turkey’s present, but also its past. The statue, returning back to where we began, “challenged the entire national genealogy.”

The negotiations between the Prime Minister and the anti-demolition coalition have shown the limits to what can be recollected and tolerated. There were, in other words, things that could be remembered and things that needed to be kept forgotten.

Despite the growing literature and film archive (soft memory) on Turkey facing its past, much still remains to be debated. And more importantly, many actors either continue to remain completely silent (and indifferent) or are overly provocative in their ways of participating in this discussion, hence rendering any sort of dialogue impractical. Similar to the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, the destruction of Statue of Humanity tells us something about the Turkish social fabric today. It drives us to survey the genealogy of Turkey and explore the context, that is, a set of institutions and symbolic processes through which “worlds of meaning” are “signified” and “reordered.” And such an endeavor impels us to think how widely accepted and state-sponsored nationalist and conservative narratives on “Turkishness” and Turkish history continue to dominate Turkish society and social memory. The construction and more so the destruction of the Statue of Humanity has set the ghosts free and brought them into the public scene. The decision that awaits the government and society now is whether to listen to the stories that they tell or find new ways to silence and govern. And this decision will serve as a litmus test for not only the Turks’ ambition for democratization or liberalization, but also their conscience and humanity.

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36 Ibid, 195.
37 Verdery, The Political Lives of Dead Bodies, 41.
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Throughout the Algerian resistance to and overthrow of the French colonial powers, Islam played a major role in unifying what was otherwise an ethnically and ideologically fragmented culture. Yet the religion itself was fragmented in Algerian society; in no one period had a monolithic Algerian Islamic ideology come to dominate. Rather, individualistic and mystical marabouts, nationalist groups masquerading as conservative Muslims, and secular reactionaries each utilized Islam differently, hoping to advance, but in some cases impeding, the struggle for Algerian self-determination.

Perhaps one of the most useful keys to interpreting the role of Islam in this complicated history is a statement by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd bin Bādīs (1889–1940) that was to become the slogan of Algerian resistance, “Islam is my religion; Arabic is my language; Algeria is my homeland.” While the slogan relies on the complementary relationship among religion, language, and homeland to form a resulting Algerian national identity, the reality is much more divided, and much more complex.

The values and precepts of Islam were useful tools for anti-colonial organizers in the ordering and mobilization of the Algerian people, with charismatic individuals emphasizing the commonality of religion as opposed to the divisiveness of tribal affiliation. However, the frequent use of an ideological instrument does not necessarily assure its success in promoting a specific movement. As we shall see, the roles of Islam in the Algerian resistance are myriad, each with varying degrees of success.

Initially, resistance to the French colonial occupation was quite violent; indeed, the French did not completely succeed in their attempts to pacify and dominate Algeria until 1870, forty years after their original taking of the city of Algiers. Following the period of violent resistance, Algerians and the French turned to less obvious, but equally powerful means of resistance and colonization. Common to these subversive movements was a reluctance to assimilate to French principles. The role of Islam can be inferred as prominent in this refusal; by defining themselves as practitioners of Islam, those who would resist French colonialism created a dichotomy between themselves and the non-Muslim French. The French were determined not only to possess Algeria as a colony, but to treat its départements like any other; one of the simplest means to effect this transformation was to instill French values in the Algerians, specifically through education. Essentially, the French colonial program aimed to Gallicize Algeria as much as possible, from governmental organization to the civic outlook of the populace, and as a corollary to this transformation, to disregard native Algerian systems and practices.

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Thus, a subtle though simple means of resisting the colonial power consisted of merely maintaining one’s “Algerian” values, contrary to the new “French” ones.

The French did not overtly employ this second-wave of cultural colonization; indeed, after the original conquest of 1830 they made clear that they would not denigrate Islam or Muslim personal status. However, some accuse the French of having demeaned Algerian culture as a whole, especially through the medium of public education. This “disrespect” primarily took the form of replacing Algerian values (if it is proper to speak of unified Algerian values at this time) with French, chiefly in the attempted removal of Islam from the national consciousness of the Algerians. Ergo, those resisting this mode of cultural replacement were in a sense forced to adopt Islam as the counter-ideology with which they could fight French colonialism.

Some, most notably ‘Abd al-Qādīr ibn Muḥyiddīn⁴, (1808-1883) intentionally utilized Islam as a means of uniting Algerians against French colonial rule. During the first few decades of French occupation the devout Amir got himself recognized as a commander of the faithful, gained tribal support, and waged a long armed resistance against the French,⁵ with the apparent final goal not only of expelling the colonial power, but also of an independent Algeria with an Islamic government.⁶ In order to accomplish his goal, he united many from among the disparate groups of the Algerian populace, recognizing that his potential state would find its strongest support, if possible, in uniting both the religious orders and the tribes of the country.⁷ This policy was effective, frequently leaving the French invaders not only in difficult terrain, but terrain occupied by forces united against them. Eventually, however, French forces gained the upper hand, driving the Amir to Morocco, where the Sultan, refusing to give sanctuary, forced him back to the Algerian border, where he surrendered to the French.

Regardless of the efficacy, or lack thereof, of ‘Abd al-Qādīr’s resistance, his movement indicates the potential for the use of Islam as a unifying force in Algerian society. Had ‘Abd al-Qādīr been unable to manipulate a common religion for his purpose of uniting the tribes, it is unlikely his campaigns against the French would have been as successful as they were. ‘Abd al-Qādīr was essentially able to combine two factors many Algerians had in common, the religion of Islam and resistance to French rule, in order to advance his own personal goal of an independent Islamic Algerian state.

Despite the successes of a seemingly organized resistance, not all segments of Algerian society were united in their opposition to the French; indeed responses ranged from ‘Abd al-Qādīr’s armed resistance to cooperation with the French. One reason for this range of reactions was that some tribes and religious orders saw ‘Abd al-Qādīr as more of a threat to their power than the French.⁸ Regardless of the unifying influence of religion, there remained Algerians who preferred the prospect of French presence rule to

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³ Heggoy and Zingg, “French Education”: 571.
⁴ Known to the French as Amir Abdelkader.
⁷ Metz, “Country Study”.
domination by another Algerian, even if it entailed a united resistance to colonization. It is likely that many of these were the leaders of the tribes and brotherhoods 'Abd al-Qādir was attempting to unify, or, from their perspective, attempting to take over and remove from power. Tribal leaders, already powerful in their own right, likely resented the imposition of unification, and therefore subjugation, by another, regardless of his goals. This trend would continue throughout the period of Islamic resistance; although many would make appeals to a common religion, the responses were often limited by pragmatic concerns of those involved.

During the period between the two World Wars, Algerian resistance took on a less violent but more organized form. The French had been in Algeria for nearly a century at this point, and their superior technology and resulting increased control of the territory made organized military resistance no longer possible. More and more, Algerians were organizing, forming different political and religious action groups in order to vocalize their complaints about and to the French government. As Heggoy and Zingg describe,

Muslim discontent with the French policies led to the formation of anticolonial groups. Messali Hadj's Etoile Nord-Africane, founded in 1926, combined aspects of Marxism with a Pan-Arab point of view and reflected the dissatisfaction of the Muslim community with the inadequacy of postwar French reforms. The Association of Elected Muslims, originated in Algeria in 1934, expressed more conservative views and demanded more accessible assimilationist policies. The Association of Reformed Ulema (sic), founded by Cheikh Abdel-Hamid Ben Badis in 1931, concentrated on Muslim resistance to French cultural penetration in Algeria.\(^9\)

The three groups mentioned above each have very different histories, and went about achieving their goals by a variety of means. What they each have in common is nothing more than a general dissatisfaction with French management of Algeria. The Etoile was the most extreme among these three groups, advocating not only independence from France, but also the creation of a united Maghreb, an independent North African state. While Islam would certainly play a role in such a project, the role was unclear. The Association of Algerian Muslim [AUMA] 'Ulamāʾ, in contrast, focused exclusively on Islam as a means to resist the French.

'Abd al-Ḥamīd bin Bādīs was a respected member of the reformist 'ulamāʾ, the primary goal of which was not so much expulsion of the French as an Islamic revival. Based as it was on religion, rather than politics, the AUMA attracted much more support from the Algerian public than other explicitly political nationalist groups.\(^10\) This was a novel approach to the use of Islam in uniting the Algerian populace; whereas the Etoile, which, although containing elements of Islamic ideology, was primarily a political movement, the reformist 'ulamāʾ managed to reach a broader section of Algerians by appealing to a more basic ideology, that of the religion common to nearly all.

But again, this use of a unified Islam was not without its drawbacks. A key goal of the reformist 'ulamāʾ was purification of Algerian Islam, which to them meant breaking

\(^9\) Heggoy and Zingg, “French Education”: 574; The Association of Reformed Ulema is the Association des Uléma Musulmans Algériens, or AUMA.

\(^10\) Metz, "Country Study."
the power of the marabouts, as they were practitioners of an impure or degraded form of the religion; a mission in which they were largely successful. Bin Bâdîs’ project of a monolithic, reformed Islam had the effect of uniting certain segment of the populace at the expense of others, in this case the various heterodox independent brotherhoods, in a manner not dissimilar to that of ‘Abd al-Qâdir nearly a century earlier.

Now, the great irony of the Algerian resistance to French colonialism is that despite the uses of Islam in its formation, the nationalist movements contributed substantially to the declining importance of religion in the political sphere. Essentially, by the end of the conflict with France, the project of nationalism replaced the prevalence of religious ideals in the Algerian state, the socialist elements of the parties in control gaining the upper hand over the reform Islam intended by the ‘ulamā’. Though the ‘ulamā’ were capable of reaching a broad cross-section of the Algerian populace, in the end it was the more limited political movements which more readily gained and maintained power.

One cannot speak of Algerian Resistance without making reference to the National Liberation Front, or FLN (founded 1954), of the War of Independence (1954–1962). It was this group that finally forced the French withdrawal from Algeria, and members of this group that would form all subsequent Algerian governments. They also represented a novel use of Islam in the rhetoric of resistance, one less spiritually focused and more pragmatic. The FLN used Islam in wholly different manner than the reform ‘ulamā’, ‘Abd al-Qâdir, or any other resistance group; in the hands of the FLN, the ideology of Islam became more than a unifying force. It became a weapon.

The French, in colonizing and attempting to control a Muslim society, found themselves fighting not only a nationalist movement, but one based in an alien ideology, a fact various resistance fighters, including the FLN, used to their advantage. Unfamiliar with the mores and social customs of Islam, the French found themselves unable to contain the resistance movements during the War of Independence in any traditional sense. For example, the success of the use of veiled women to transport explosives from quarantined zones, or the use of the veil to disguise revolutionaries as women so that they might more freely move about, each stem from an inability of the French to comprehend and therefore control the issue of Islam during the resistance. Had they unveiled women in order to search them, the French would have disrespected Islamic customs and thereby placed themselves in a difficult position, alienating the majority of Muslims and empowering the FLN on the grounds of not respecting the religion; instead, they perhaps gave too much credence to the religious rules and allowed their security to become lax, again to the advantage of the FLN. Islam was as much a part of the cultural topography as the winding streets of the medina were part of the physical; each was the home turf of the FLN and the native Algerians, and each was a tripping point for the alien French.

Indeed, in a radio broadcast the FLN made their purposes clear, although the “restoration of the Algerian state – sovereign, democratic and social – within the framework

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12 Ibid., 230.
13 For an excellent example of these tactics, see Gill Pontecorvo’s 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers*
of the principles of Islam\textsuperscript{14} might not so much have emphasized faithfully respecting a privileged position for Islam as promoting the independence of the Algerian state. One must recall that prior to the revolution, there was no entirely politically sovereign Algerian state; rather, it had passed from the Ottoman to the French Empire. In any case, the resulting claim that the state would be constructed within Islamic principles may not indicate a desire to build a new religious state; here Islam is employed as a practical solution to the problem of guiding the new and heterogeneous society the FLN hoped to create within social principles accepted by most.

Resistance, however, was once again not universal among the Algerian people. For some revolutionaries, resisting the French was less an expression of Algerian identity and more a means by which they could increase their own power. The FLN returned to armed insurrection to achieve their goals, and proclaiming the ideal of Algerian unity, killed not only the French, but also native Algerians, either indifferent or of differing nationalist inclinations.\textsuperscript{15} This tripartite structure of nationalist ideology, religious expression, and violent control of opposition forces largely defined the Algerian War. As one can see in this formulation, Islam, along with terrorism, plays the role of winning the hearts and minds of those Algerians who would resist and collaborate or side with the French, partially by appealing to something which, theoretically, all Algerians would have in common and partially by threat of violent reprisal if the Algerians did not side with the revolutionaries.

Regardless of intra-Algerian violence, the FLN did manage to succeed in restoring the sovereignty of the Algerian state. The better armed and financed French were defeated by a group of Algerian revolutionaries, inspiring other revolutionary movements worldwide as well as to the Algerian people themselves. The role of Islam, in this case, is a relatively minor one. Indeed, religion gave way to politics as the major focus of the new Algerian state. For the most part cut off from the capital and resources of the French and the pieds noir, Algeria had to go about the business of rebuilding itself alone. While religion continued to play a major role in the personal lives of everyday Algerian people and continues to this day, in the period immediately following the ultimate success of the resistance movement, it was, for the most part, officially neglected due to more pressing social, governmental, and political, in other words, pragmatic concerns.

The role of Islam, then, specifically as it was construed, constructed, manipulated, and utilized by the resistance movement and revolutionaries as opposed to its everyday presence in Algerian society, varied greatly in the period between 1830 and 1962. The common underlying factor seems to be that regardless of the resistance entity, each realized that Islam was a means by which one could advance one’s own goals. Abd al-Qādir utilized Islam as a means of unifying various groups that would not have otherwise joined his cause; Bin Bādis called for Islamic reform as a means of distinguishing, and separating, a form of Algerian culture from that which had become so intertwined with French culture; Hāj played up the importance of Islam in the creation of a new political entity, being a common factor among Moroccans, Algerians, and Tunisians, otherwise disparate groups\textsuperscript{16}; the FLN realized the potential for Islam as a weapon to defeat the


\textsuperscript{15} Brett, “Anglo-Saxon Attitudes,”: 255.

French, who did not fully understand the intricacies of the religion and who could therefore not formulate an appropriate response to its use as a tactical tool in the War of Independence. ḌAbd al-Qādir failed because he simply could not unite enough Algerians under his banner, regardless of his appeal to religion. Bin Bādis failed because he focused too strongly on the religion, neglecting the political and social concerns of the Algerian people. Hāj would not see a united Maghreb, but religion was never really a main focus of his mission. Then, among the groups resisting the French occupation, only the FLN was successful in achieving its goals.

One must then wonder exactly how important Islam itself was in the process of resisting the French. In the only successful case, Islam was important, as in most other cases, in that it united groups of Algerians from differing backgrounds and who would otherwise have been unable to present a united front, but in this case the use of religion was combined with the threat of violent reprisals for failing to act in line with the FLN’s policies. It was also a means to combat the French, not ideologically, but physically, a novel use of Islam in the history of the Algerian resistance. Rather than being limited to ideological, rhetorical, or theoretical applications, the FLN used Islam to hide their bombs, to smuggle their members, more as a weapon than as a religion. A key result of this usage was the general decline of the importance of the religion in the new Algerian state; Islam, like the bombs and the weapons of the revolution, was in a sense discarded from the national political sphere, at least for the period immediately following the expulsion of the French.

The role of Islam in Algerian resistance is then one of theoretical failures and pragmatic successes. For its own sake, as in the case of the ʿulamāʾ, it was unable to effect any real change. When utilized as a tool, and only a tool, in part of a greater political and social framework, as in the case of the FLN, Islam proved itself to be remarkably useful. The French, therefore, were not defeated in Algeria because of the power of religion to unite society or any other similar formulation; rather, they lost their war because their opponents were savvy enough to weaponize their religion, a practice which would later have severe implications for the Algerian State they created.

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17 Islam would violently return to the political arena 29 years later in the decade long Algerian Civil War, in which the stubborn FLN savagely battled the FIS, or Islamic Salvation Front.
Bibliography


Translation of
Abu –l-Qāsim Maḥmūd Ibn ‘Umar Al-Zamakhsharī’s Qaṣīda sīniyya
By Leopold Eisenlohr

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Al-Zamakhsharī’s Qaṣīda ʿArabiyya, Rhyming in S

Abu al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī’s (1075–1114) poem, known as al-ʿarabiyya, is taken from his diwān and is the third poem in the collection of 312. It is in the meter of ṭawīl, which in its basic form is a syllable pattern of short-long, short-long-long-long repeated four times (two for each half-line, as the lines in Qaṣīdas are in two halves). The diwān is ordered by meter and begins with specimens from the ṭawīl labeled maqṣūd al-darb, meaning that the penultimate syllable in the second half-line is shortened. The majority of his poems are not named as this one is, but those that are clustered at the beginning, and the first fourteen are explicitly devoted to either Muḥammad, Mecca, Arabness, or his friend al-Sharīf ibn Wahḥās ʿUlāyya ibn ʿĪsā whom he often patronized; in addition, one has his extensive travels as its subject and one is called al-ḥakīma, “the wise.” The ʿarabiyya is presented here for its prominence at the beginning of the diwān and for the inherent interest in the cultural politics behind its composition.

Al-Zamakhsharī, himself not an Arab, was active in promulgating pro-Arab, anti-Persian sentiment in his poetry. Born in Khwarazm, in modern-day Turkmenistan, he studied in central Asia before moving to Mecca where he lived for many years. He lived after al-Jāḥiẓ - interestingly, another scholar not of Arab lineage - wrote his anti-shuʿūbiyya polemic warning of dangers to the unity of the Islamic world should it divide more dramatically on ethnocultural lines. Three reasons given by Enderwitz regarding the shuʿūbiyya (the populist non-Arab reaction against Arab cultural dominance) argue for why Arabic learning outlived the shuʿūbiyya movement: the literary commingling of religion and belles-lettres via adab (a word that indicates a wide range of writings, but was defined by highly refined, elegant style), the rise of strictly logical Muʿtazilism (a form of Islamic rationalism which had currency at the time), and the foundation of the bayt al-ḥikma (the House of Wisdom, founded in Baghdad by the Caliph Harun al-Rashid) which countered heretical fringe ideas.¹

In fact, al-Zamakhsharī is one of the scholars whose Muʿtazilism is most renowned, though it is unclear why Muʿtazilism is believed then to have been so necessarily pro-Arab. The poem here presented is probably the best example of his co-opted Arab fakhr (‘pride;’ a poetic style in which the author boasts of personal and tribal glories) though many other anti-shuʿūbiyya passages occur in his poetry. One modern Arab author describes him:

¹ EI2, art. al-Shuʿūbiyya.
Al-Zamakhsharī was truly a man of deep culture, pure understanding, and clear discernment who stands out for his critical insight and unique originality. Much favor is due to him for painting a fine image in pen of the Arab Muslim individual of the time in which the shu‘ūbiyya and the shu‘ūbī were current. His pen, compositions, and poetry are all directed at refuting them, while acknowledging that he himself was Persian of origin, birth, and development. Al-Zamakhsharī fell in love with the Arabs with an acute passion that took control of his heart and overwhelmed his intellect and his blood. There are many reasons for the source of this sentiment, the most important of them being that God had not made the best of his prophets and books to appear ʿajamī (foreign, or Persian) in its language, but Arabic.\(^2\)

Whatever the reasons for the scholar’s sentiment, it was quite pronounced. As in line 39:

\[\text{Say to those who scorn the Arab greatness:} \]
\[\text{your misguided ḥadīth-s have but your Satan} \]
\[\text{and evil whisperings, as their source.} \]

Here the phrase used is ahl al-shuʿūbiyyah – the proponents of non-Arab populism. In the poem, noteworthy for its status as a crystallization of idealized traditional aspects of the Arabic classical tradition, al-Zamakhsharī begins with the theme (familiar to the classical canon) of the effaced encampment. He then transitions into an interesting merger of fākhr and madhī (panegyric): though the language is similar to what one would use to boast about himself, he speaks as an adopted son of Arab glory which he panegyrizes. The title of the poem itself, al-ʿarabiyya, is noteworthy and should be understood here as referring not only to the Arabic language, but as Arabness, and might be appropriate to call it “The Qaṣīda on that which is Arab.” The loyalty to Arabness sometimes reaches a level that amazes, as in line 23:

\[\text{They rained down blows without mercy} \]
\[\text{upon the sons of Persia, all of them,} \]
\[\text{with their fangs of thrusting spears.} \]

It may be that when he mentions the Arab conquest of his own people he glorifies and exaggerates it because the Arab audience he is addressing is Meccan, where he spent a large part of his life.

The poem opens in the traditional style, with a wistful musing on a desolate tract of land which in the poet’s happier times had been the scene of excitement and romance. Another typical feature is the presence and semantic importance of wildlife – here, the girls are likened to deer and contrasted with the gazelles that now roam the encampment. The clumps of musk falling as the girls play are compared to doe droppings, a wildlife metaphor likely unfamiliar to the metaphoric scope of European poetry, but common in the classical style al-Zamakhsharī adopts. More elements appear that fulfill standardized functions in the style: a thunderstorm described in evocative imagery, the mentioning of place-names which had significance to anyone familiar with the geography (here, al-ʿUdhayb and Rākis, two valleys near ʿUkāz). After describing the generosity of the former inhabitants, the

\(^2\) Al-Husni, 23.
poem moves off into the next section, usually the raḥīl, or journey, but here the poet launches into the fakhr section and spends the rest of the poem extolling Arab militaristic virtue, as well as their prestige for having been the origin of Islam for the benefit of the world.

1
`a-yā ʿaraṣāti –l-hayyī ʿayna –l-ʾawānisū
raḥalna wa-ḥallat-ki –z-zbekū –l-kawānisū

أبا عرصات الحي أين الأوانس رحل وحلت الطباء الكواسيس

Oh village courtyards, where have all your beauties gone? Gone away, gazelles now your only residents, hiding among the trees.

2
`a-ʾāmiratun bi-l-ʾamsi tahtazzu naḍratan
maghānīka wa-h-ya –l-yasuma qafrun basābisū

أعامرة بالآمس نتزر نضرة معانك وهب اليوم فقر بساس

Is it this the place - only yesterday buzzing with lively beauty, today a ghost town laid to waste - where you used to dwell in perfect contentment?

3
bulayti bi-shayʾin lam ʿazal mubtalā bilā
fā-rasmuki min-hu mithlu rasmiya dārisū

بيت بشيء لم آزل مبتلى به فرسنك منه مثل رسمي دارس

You have been tormented with something which never ceases to torment me, and so your countenance, as mine, is desolate.

4
jafat-ki ʿa-kānat min maha –l-ʾinsi rabraban
na[wāʾšī ʿu fi burdi-sh-shabābī nawāʾišū

جفلك وكانت من مها الإنس ربرابا فراسي في برد الشباب مواس

They gathered you up of your herds of doe-eyed beauties, young maids wrapped round in the spritely vigor of youth, swaying in their graceful steps.

5
mahā li-futātī –l-miskī fi kulli malʾabin
bi-tajrīrī ʾadhyālī –l-mirāṭi kawānisū

مها لفقات المسك في كل ملعب بتجري أذال المراتك كواسيس

Doelike, clumps of musk dropping at play,
skittish deer dragging their skirttails along sweepng from side to side like brooms.

The gazelles you got in exchange don’t sweep like those did - their dresses not even long enough to reach the ground.

After that, what will soothe the anguished heart back to patient endurance of loss except sight of the wādis of Al-ˁUdhaybu and Rākis?

Both are places for the whole community to settle, utterly now effaced: parchment gone under the eraser.

Thunderclouds arrived, rank upon rank, weeping and far-reaching; pouring over the hills, bringing tremendous lightning and all-effacing winds.

Bounteously did those people receive the guest’s provision blown in on the North Wind; wine they had
for drink, and water sparkingly cold.

11
lī-‘ahdī bihim wa-d-dahru mughḍīn jufūnahū
wa-ṣarfu –n-nawā ‘an ṣad’ātī –sh-shamlī ẓāyasū

وصرف النوى عن صدعة الشمال أيس

Such was my stay with them - now dread fate darkens its eyelids. Setting out for my destination brings despairing at the splitting of a union.

12
tunāfāsuhum fi-l-‘azzi kullu qabīlatin
wa-yaḥbā ‘alayhim ẓizzuhum ‘an yunāfasū

وتباد عيونهم عزهم أن ينافسوا

All tribes vie with them in majesty, though it is their very majesty which denies them from vying with any other.

13
‘idhā jalasū ḥawla –r-riyādī bahiṭjatan
fā-‘abhaju min tilka –r-riyādī –l-majālisū

إذا جلسوا حول الرياض بهيئة

If seated joyously in verdant tracts, then those seated are even happier than the green meadows around them.

14
wa-ṭābat la-hum ‘a‘rāquhum wa-l-maghārisū

وطاعت لهم أعراقهم والمغارس

Among the lion-Arabs with proud heads raised are those who defended the noblest of men. Their roots and sowing-fields have been good to them.

15
ghaṭāraṣfatun shummun tarabbū ‘a’azzatan
fā-mā shamma rīḥa –dh-dhilli minhum ma‘āṭisū

فما شم ريح الالINTEGER_1_{1}ظهم ماعتاس

Manly-magnanimous, with fine noses, proud and ruling mightily; not a nose among them ever caught a whiff of the wind of weakness.
And truly, the purest of Arabs have the firmest origins. Can the teeth of him testing the arrow’s hardness ever put a dent into the wood of the nabū tree?

(The nabū tree is famous for its extreme hardness, and its wood was used to make arrows. Biting the arrow to see if the teeth left an impression was a way of testing its strength.)

Oh Ummah, if stone could but sense your effort and triumph, it would cry out in despair at what you have exerted and mastered.

An obstinacy the obstinacy of a steed in a stubborn mood; a patience the patience of a camel stricken with the tremens of thirst.

And among all their domestic animals which they would urge on with song there always were war-mounds and lions to be ridden into battle.

(Mentioning the use of song to drive animals may be in response to Bashshār ibn Burd’s well-known shu‘ūbiyyah poem, Is there a Messenger, in which he ridicules the Arabs for this custom.)

Kindlers of the flames of war who built a blaze
against their equals in combat - if one steeped in battle were to behold the heat of their sword-thrusts.

21
fa-kam ṭa'natin bikrin yuṭīru rashāshuhā
li-fityānihim wa-l-ḥarbu shanṭā'u 'ānisū
فكم طعة بكر يطرر رسهاها لقتباهم والحرب شمتاء عانس

And how many a deathblow did they send of strikes flying at their youths; while War - she was a gray-haired old hag.

22
wa-yakfīka min 'ayyāmihim wa-ḥurūbihim
bi-mā jarratt -l-ḥabrā'u 'aw jarra dāhisū
بما جرت القراء أو جرحهم ويكفك من أيامهم وحروبهم

You are sufficed by their ayyām and wars, whether incited by Al-Ḡabrāʾ or incited by Ḍāḥis.

(Al-Ḡabrāʾ and Ḍāḥis: this is a reference to the war between these two tribes that lasted from around 608-650.)
(ayyām: lit. “days,” meaning “battles.”)

23
wa-hum farasūʾābnaʾa fārīsa kullahum
bi-ʿanyābihim wa-h-yār-rimāhu -l-madāūsū
بأتيهم وهي المرما المحداعس وهم فرسوا أبناء فارس كلهم

They rained down blows without mercy upon the sons of Persia, all of them, with their fangs of thrusting spears.

24
wa-muṣlatatin mā zāla yuṭlā biyāduḥā
bi-māʾi -t-ṭulā mā jāraqatha -l-madāūsū
وباء الظلى ما زال يطلى بياضها ومصلتة ما زال يطلى يباضها

Unsheathed, their swords’ whiteness stained forever with the liquid that rains down from necks – as long as they are separated from the grinding stone.

25
wa-hum salabu -t-ṭjāna ʿāma mulūkuhum
wa-lam yaqfulū ʿanhum wa-fārisu fārisū
وهم سلوا النيجان عام ملوكوهم ولم يقفوا عنهم وفارس فارس

وهم سلوا النيجان عام ملوكوهم
They carried off the crowns whose kings wore them high, who never reclaimed them lion though Persia be.

26

wa-‘ayyu sakhāʾin yudda’ā ka-sakhāʾuhum
bi-mā malakāʾ wa-l-jawwā ’aghbaru ṣābiṣū

وأي سخاء يدعى كسخانهم

Who can pretend to magnanimity the like of their magnanimity in what they gained dominion over, while desolation lies out in the dust-covered backwater.

27

bi-‘ayyāfihim yamrūna sūqa ʾishārihim
ʾidhā nazala –l-ʿadyāfu wa-d-ʿarū yābiṣū

باسيافهم يمرون سوق عشاؤهم

They use their swords to cut the udders of the camels rich in milk ten months delivered of their young if the udders are dry when guests arrive.

(Images of the generous host slaughtering a camel to feed guests, without a second thought to his own welfare, are common.)

28

wa-ʾin tastaʿidh minhum bi-ʾaʿżumi mayyitin
fā-dhālika ḥiṣnun māniʿun laka ḥārisū

فلذلك حصن مناك لك حارس

If you seek protection from them, along with the greatest of those now dead, then you face an impenetrable fortress standing against you alert.

29

ʾidha ʾ-ʿalaqat kaffāka minhum bi-dhimmatin
fā-khaṣmuka fallyn nākiṣun ʿanka nākiṣū

إذا اعتتلت كفلك منهم بذمة

If you turn to love them, they requite you with dhimmah; your adversaries then are put to flight, shrinking away from you with heads hung low.

(dhimmah: the protection afforded to conquered non-Muslims who paid a takh to the rulers.)

30

wa-ʿa’rāḍuhum ṣaʾrāqhum wukilat bi-hā
muḥaymanatan ḥatta ʾ-taşqathā ʾ-ḥ-madānisū

واعراضهم أعراةهم وكلت بها مهيمنة حتى انقفا المدائين

60
Their lands are those given to them in lordship by ancestral right; vigilant therein until the vile populations feared [them].

31

wa-šan šihri kisrā šadda nu’māna ba‘wahu
fā-khannaqahū fī khāniqīna –l-fawārisū

واعن صهور كسرى صد نعمان باوه فخته في خانقين الفوارس

Nu‘mān’s conceit turned him away from the sacred tie of friendship with Kisrā, and the horsemen strangled him in the city of Khāniqīn.

(A reference to the battle of Dhi Qar in 609.)

32

wa-hāna ʿalayhi yawmah qabla sāʾatin
yukābidu fīhā šihra man lā yujānisū

وهان عليه يومه قبل ساعة يكابد فيها صهور من لا يجاهس

His day was eased unto him before that hour in which he strove against the sacred bond of friendship of one who then returned him no love.

33

wa-qul hal fashā fī –l-ʾardī ghayra lisānahum
lisānun fashuwwa –d-dawʾi wa-l-yawmu shāmisū

وقل هل فشا في الأرض غير لسانهم لسان فشو الضوء واليوم السامس

Tell me – has there spread in the land a tongue other than theirs – a tongue which shines forth bright even in the full light of midday?

34

bi-hi ʾajja fī ʾamsārihā kullu minbarīn
wa-ṭannat bi-hī fī –l-khāfiqaynī –l-madārisū

بى عج في امصارها كل منبر وطلبت به فى الخافقين المدارس

Every minbar thundering with it in their great cities, It fills the ears ringing in the madrasas in the east and in the west. (Minbar – pulpit in a mosque.)

35

ʿalā ẓahrihā lam yakhlqa –l-lāhu ʾummatan
 tunāṣibuhum fī ḱhaslatin ʾaw tulābisū

على ظهرها لم يخلق الله أمة تتاحبهم في خصلة أو تاسي
Upon their appearance God did not create
an *umma* alike to them in either
social custom or in choice of dress.

36
*yuqāyasu bayna –n-nāsi ḥattā ʔidha –n-tahā ʔila –l-`arabi –l-qayyāsu ṣāḥa –l-maqāyisū*

The people were measured against each other
until finally, when it came to the Arabs,
the scale failed, useless to gauge them.

37
*wa-wāḥidatun takfīka hāʾika hujjatan bi-sāṭīrī hā tanshaqqu ʔanka –l-ḥanādisū*

With one sufficing you, giving you proof
of superiority; with the dawning and spreading its light,
it splits the darkness from around you.

38
*ʔajalla rasūla minhumū wa-bi-lisnihim ʔajallu kitābin fā-ʔtabir yā munāfisū*

He exalted from among them a prophet
and the most glorious of books in their tongue –
reflect hard on that, you creature-owners of souls.

39
*wa-qul ʔi-h-sh-ṣuʿūbiyyīna ʔin ḥadīthakumū ʔi-d-dālīlu min shayṭānikum wa-wasāwisū*

Say to those who scorn the Arab greatness,
“your misguided ḥadīth-s have but your Satan
and evil whisperings, as their source.”

40
*la-kum madhhabun fallun yugharru bi-mithlihi ʔashāʔibu ḥamqā la –r-rījālu –l-akāyisū*

Yours is a barren mode of belief through which
fools in error might deceitfully be allured -
but not real men whose intellects are acute.
Bibliography


Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the nation and its various institutions have faced the incredible difficulty of addressing a question central to Israeli politics and national identity: namely, what is and what should be the role of Judaism in the democratic State of Israel? This dynamic question has been raised and addressed in a multiplicity of forms over time, as a brief sampling of Zionist (religious or political) texts, international media, academic analysis, or sampling of Israeli and Jewish institutions will quickly reveal. However, an analysis of Israeli theater provides particular insight regarding the function and formation of Jewishness as representative – and moreover, the personification – of Israeli society. This study will address the problematic situation of Jewishness as representative of Israelis, beginning with a brief historical investigation of Habima, the National Theater of Israel, originally founded as a “biblical theater.” I will then examine Habima’s current production of Hillel Mitelpunkt’s play, *A Railway to Damascus*, which reframes the Biblical figure of Sarah in modern context as the embodiment of problematic Jewishness and the instigator of multidimensional conflicts within the Jewish community and beyond. Analysis of controversy surrounding the play’s content and performance will provide insight regarding public conception of the capacity and appropriate form of Jewishness as representative of their lived experience. The three stages of this study will address the former predominance of Jewishness as the embodiment of the nation, investigate a contemporary attempt to redefine this relationship through theatrical personification, and suggest the future of this discourse in the public sphere.

Deriving inspiration from the reimagining of Judaism’s cultural forms in the Haskala and Zionism, Habima’s concern with Jewishness is of historic centrality to the institutional structure and choice of repertoire. Founded in 1917 in Moscow, Habima’s

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4 1917 was a particularly important year in the development of the Zionist national project: the proclamation by the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs that his government would “favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” (known as the Balfour Declaration) was seen as a promise and an inspiration to many Jews and Zionist organizations. Friedman, Isaiah. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. "Balfour
Hebrew language productions utilized the Bible as a source of Jewish collective memory to express “the national revival and cultural tradition of the Jewish people.”

Realizing the Zionist dream and establishing their permanent location in Tel Aviv, Habima continued to produce “distinctly Jewish” plays “as a means of creating and strengthening a sense of national solidarity and consciousness”, a brand of nationalism sanctioned by the Israeli government upon the consecration of Habima as Israel’s National Theater in 1958.

However, due to rising competition among the large Israeli playhouses in the 1960’s Habima began to favor a “flexible, popular, and opportunistic repertoire,” causing “Habima’s secularization on the ideational level to be reflected in the gradual decline in the salience of specifically Jewish (biblical, Messianic, and national) ideas.”

A desire to attract the predominantly secular, cosmopolitan, and ethnically diverse Tel Aviv population prompted Habima to shift from their previous mission of creating Israeli national identity through emphasizing Jewish content to simply reflecting it with a “universal” repertoire.

Tension arising from Habima’s concurrent desires for a marketable, mainstream repertoire while maintaining fidelity to the theater’s Jewish roots is cited by Emanuel Levy as the cause of Habima’s steady decline in popularity.

Yet, as previously suggested, the problematic role of Jewishness within Israel is not a problem exclusively confronted by Habima, but by the Israeli population and her corresponding social apparatuses at large. As the National Theater, Habima states that it is their mission and responsibility to “reflect the… aspirations and problems that epitomize Israel,” such that Habima continues to stage productions concerning Jewishness and the Bible despite their institutional ambivalence to these topics.

Habima’s current production of Hillel Mitelpunkt’s A Railway to Damascus provides an example of the manner in which Habima continues to engage in representing Jewishness without selecting overtly “Jewish” or “Biblical” material. While the only undisguised Biblical reference in A Railway to Damascus is the selection of the name “Sarah” for the play’s main character, the play is structured as a subversive re-imagining the Biblical narrative of Sarah in a (semi)modern context. Mitelpunkt’s reappropriation of Sarah hence enters a popular discourse in which “Biblical myths are [employed as] a recurring motif in the self-interpretation of Israeli culture, reflecting this culture’s perception of its unique plight.”

The reasons why Sarah (in comparison to other Biblical figures) assists Mitelpunkt and the Israeli theater-goers as a representative of the problematic nature of Jewishness


Levy, 23.

Ibid, 270.

Ibid, 266.

Emanuel Levy describes this shift as “Habima’s secularization and transformation from an ideologically oriented and specifically Jewish theater into a universal, modern one” (282). Levy defines a “universal” play as one of foreign origins (non-Israeli or non-Jewish) (129).

While Habima’s production of “specifically” Jewish plays has declined, Habima’s repertoire continues to display more interest in Jewishness than other large, popular Israeli playhouses, such as the Cameri or Beit Lessin (271).


While I have previously suggested that Biblical references pervade Israeli culture, the teaching of the Bible in all strata (secular and religious) Jewish (non-Arab) Israeli schools has made it such that the majority of the Israeli population is well acquainted with Biblical myths. Hence, it is not a stretch to suggest that
are numerous. With the rise of the Zionist movement, the reclamation of Jewish masculinity through the rejection of the “passive” and “effeminate” practice of Torah study meant that “Jewish women acquired a new role that was ostensibly highly valued, the role of transmitters of Jewish culture to their children. They were now held responsible for the maintaining the integrity of the Jewish family as the locus of the formation of Jewish identity.”

The selection of a woman to personify the role of the Jewish religion in modernity aptly follows, and makes Sarah the prime choice, as the Biblical mother of the Jewish people. As the Jewish national matriarch, Sarah is essential to examining the birth of the nation, as well as the role of women or mothers therein. Sarah’s years of barrenness, her mocking disbelief in response to her God-granted pregnancy, and her absence at the near-sacrifice of her son Isaac, complicate her maternal qualities. Further, Sarah’s original kinship with and eventual endangerment of Pharaoh, King Abimelech, and Hagar make her an important symbol concerning the origins of the Arab/Israeli conflict and the role of religious difference within the conflict. Sarah also complicates the territorial aspect of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, as her burial place in Hebron may be interpreted as legitimizing Jewish ownership of this area. The problematic nature of Sarah and her portrayal in Mitelpunkt’s play thus follows from this question: what can contemporary secular Israeli society do with the Jewishness that looms in the background of their national identity, especially when this Jewishness is a key source for fractionalization within the people and a cause for violence against them?

Mitelpunkt’s *A Railway to Damascus* opens in 1942 in Haifa, where Sarah, a Russian born Jewess, is searching for a peaceful cosmopolitan life in what she hopes will become the Land of Israel. Sarah exemplifies the integration and modernization of the Jewish community: Sarah is employed by Fathi, an Arab lawyer, befriends British soldiers, and structures her happily single life according to the mantra “unless we learn to live with one another, we’ll have to kill each other.” All begins to disintegrate as the threat of Nazi invasion pervades Israel and the occupying British Army considers leaving the Jews to fend for themselves. Sarah becomes the epicenter of this many-sided conflict: her brother Shlomi joins the Lehi (a militant Zionist faction); the son of Sarah’s boss sides with an anti-most audience member (generally of the educated classes) would be familiar with the Bible, and particularly knowledgeable regarding the character of Sarah as the Jewish matriarch. For more, see: Shimony, Tali Tadmor. “Teaching the Bible as a Common Culture”, *Jewish History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2007), pp. 159-178.

Editors note: With the permission of the author, this piece has been reformatted to include the full spelling of the word “God.” The original manuscript utilized the spelling “G-d,” according to Jewish custom regarding the sanctity of the Divine.

According to Genesis 23.1-20, Abraham purchased the land in Hebron as the burial place of his wife Sarah from Ephron the Hittite. Hebron is currently populated by Muslims and Jews, for whom the Cave of the Machpelah (The Tomb of the Patriarchs, the presumed resting place of Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Isaac, Jacob, and Abraham) is considered to be holy. Following the renewal of Jewish inhabitance of Hebron initiated by religious Zionist Rabbi Moshe Levinger in 1987, the Jewish population of the city and its surrounding areas has continued to grow. In 1994, Jewish doctor Baruch Goldstein opened fire in the Machpelah during Muslim prayer, killing 29 and wounding 100. Violence by both Muslims and Jews remains a frequent occurrence in this area. For more, see: Avi-Yonah, Michael, et al. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, “Hebron.” Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 8. (Detroit: MacMillan Reference USA, 2007), 744-749. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*, accessed January, 29 2012.

Jewish Arab nationalist movement; and Sarah’s friend Nini becomes dependent on her while pregnant with a child fathered by a British solider, whose family’s anti-Semitic sentiments stop him from marrying Nini.

As the play’s main character, Sarah is the crossroads at which obstacles arising from religious nationalist ambitions collide. Sarah is the symbolic representation of the railway to Damascus, a cooperative effort between peoples and nations critical to the Ottoman project of the Hejaz Railway.18 The reference of the play’s title to the Jezreel Valley section of the Hejaz Railway that connected Haifa to Damascus suggests that Sarah and the Jewish community are transient and constituted by their relationships with others (like the journeying and hosted Sarah and Abraham of the Bible), while foreshadowing the separation and grounding of Jewish community through the Night of the Trains (or the Biblical consecration of the Land of Israel).19 On November 1st, 1945, the Hagana, the Lehi, and the Irgun (three Zionist paramilitary groups), joined forces to sabotage British and Arab interests by attacking railway tracks and stations, focusing their effort on the main railway switch in Haifa. The Night of the Trains operation inaugurated the cooperation of the three groups under the Jewish Resistance Movement, as well as the unification of the Jewish community and Jewish communal interests in opposition to the Brits and the Arabs.20 Mitelpunkt portrays Sarah as the figurative switching station, the site facilitating either the perseverance of peace or the disintegration of the multiethnic community through religious national differentiation.

Sarah does not identify as “Jewish,” situating herself in a humanist community founded “in co-existence, in brotherhood, in common national interests of all, in cosmopolitanism.”21 Emblematic of this potential for harmony, Sarah “will probably bring peace between Jews and Arabs in Palestine,” just as the Biblical Sarah originally enables peace between Abraham and his foreign (Arab/non-Jewish) hosts.22 It is exactly Sarah’s project of extra-religious and extra-national peace, both in the play and in the Bible, which eventually forces her identification as Jewish and incites conflict between the Jews and Arabs.

In A Railway to Damascus, Sarah is simultaneously wife/sister/mother to her brother Shlomi and her orphaned friend Nini, just as the Biblical Sarah is wife/sister to Abraham and mother to the Jewish nation.23 Widowed and childless – a condition akin to barrenness – Mitelpunkt’s Sarah chooses to “take care of” Shlomi and Nini as she did her husband, providing them with housing, economic, and moral support.24 Both in the Bible and Mitelpunkt’s play, Sarah must provide for her family because of the threat of the Arab/Other: in the Bible, Sarah protects Abraham from Arab violent jealousy by pretending to be his sister (an act that gains Abraham much material wealth), while Mitelpunkt’s Sarah provides for Shlomi while he fights the British and for Nini, whose

20 “British Mandate Armed Resistance.”
21 Mitelpunkt, 19.
23 JPS, Genesis 12.13, 17.16.
24 Mitelpunkt, 13.
parents were murdered in the Arab Riots. Sarah’s sense of responsibility for this pseudo-family prompts her to protect her brother from a threat by the Hagana at the expense of her boss Fathi, providing the Hagana with information that leads to Fathi’s death. This decision leads Sarah to recognize that “when it comes to life, I choose my own sector. It figures that in the end of the day, I am of ‘our own,’ the daughter of the clan, or the nation. I am everything I used to believe I was not.” Sarah is no longer the vision for co-existence, as her role as protector/sister/mother/wife has forced the affliction of the Arab “household with mighty plagues on account of Sarai [Sarah].” Sarah’s agency in choosing is little; her social identification as a “daughter of the clan, or the nation” demands that she protect her “own,” revealing an ambivalent and unavoidable relationship to Jewishness that permeates modern Israel.

However, it is because of this externally imposed Jewish identification that both Sarahs are able to become mothers, effectively terminating and reversing their former personification of peaceful co-existence by making them the source for the reproduction of Jewishness. In Genesis, Sarah’s identity is transformed when God changes her name from Sarai to Sarah (meaning “princess”) and proclaims that “she shall give rise to nations; rulers of peoples shall issue from her,” such that the re-identification of Sarah as the princess of the Jewish nation also qualifies her to be the mother of it. With God’s decree, Sarah receives a new Jewish identity and the exclusive imperative to reproduce her Jewishness; her enterprise of co-existence with the Arab/Other is replaced by the need to preserve the uniqueness that is central to her and her offspring – their Jewishness – through the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael.

Similarly, Mitelpunkt’s Sarah was first coerced into identifying as Jewish to protect her brother, and then again when Nini and her baby’s lives are threatened by members of the Lehi, who represent an exclusionist definition of the clan/nation. Because of her affair with a British officer, the Lehi find Nini “guilty of treason to the Jewish people and cooperation with the British enemy” and murder her along the tracks of the railway to Damascus, signaling the end of Sarah’s dream “that one day Jews, Arabs, British– everyone will be able to go to any place in the world from here.” While Nini is accused of an inadequate display of belonging to the clan/nation by the Lehi and yet is “too Jewish” for her British boyfriend and his anti-Semitic family, Sarah’s essential Jewishness persists despite her desire to reject it. Sarah’s recognition of her Jewishness and her desire to protect her “clan” is dually affirmed by her survival and the passing down her Jewishness through her adoption of Nini’s child. Sarah abandons her prior attempts to forge peace between the Jews and their neighbors, allowing motherhood to constitute her completely, or as Sarah proclaims, “[Dalia] is all my life now.” Displaying the reversal of her stance, Sarah speaks as a member and leader of the Jewish people when she proclaims: “[W]e shall all fight for this country to the end of days.”

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25 Mitelpunkt, 21; JPS Genesis 12.11-20.
26 Mitelpunkt, 59.
27 JPS, Genesis 12.17.
28 Ibid, 17.15-16.
29 Ibid, 21.10.
30 Mitelpunkt, 65.
31 Ibid, 66; 67.
32 Ibid, 69.
33 Ibid, 5.
It is important to note that, for both Sarahs, motherhood, like Jewish identity, is conferred through external agents: God grants Sarah and Abraham a child, and only because of Nini’s death does Mitelpunkt’s Sarah become a mother. The fact that neither of the Sarahs becomes a mother on their own accord – and can do little but accept it – suggests ambivalence concerning their desire or ability to reproduce their (involuntarily imposed) Jewishness.\footnote{According to the Mishnah (Kiddushin 3.12) and Talmudic interpretation (Kiddushin 68B), Jewishness is passed down through the child’s mother. Hence, the identification of the Sarahs as Jewish is reproduced in their children (as it would be for any future offspring of Daliah’s, as the child of a Jewish woman).}

Furthermore, the children of the Sarahs appear to belong more to the clan/nation than to their mothers. Isaac may be said not to be the property of Sarah, but rather of Abraham or God,\footnote{In Genesis 22.1-19, Abraham heeds God’s request and offers to sacrifice Isaac to God, who granted Isaac life and nearly takes it away.} while Dalia is figured as belonging to the unified Jewish community. In the play’s final scene, Dalia finds a suitcase containing sheet music of a song sung by her mother at the play’s beginning. While Nini sang this song to attract attention from British officers and prove her talent to a London talent scout, Dalia is rehearsing her audition for the school choir, directing her aim within her insular Jewish circle. The lyrics of “We’ll Meet Again” are no longer a salutation for fellowship, but a valediction spoken on behalf of her exclusively Jewish community, as Dalia’s entrenchment necessitates that she “say goodbye with a smile, dear/Just for a while, dear, we must part.”\footnote{Mitelpunkt, 72.}

The juxtaposition of mother and daughter marked by the song’s repetition, along with the removal of the music from the suitcase that recalls the failure of co-existence represented by Nini’s death along the train tracks leading to Damascus, indicate the grounding of the previously transient Jewish identity through Dalia; she models the new Jewish independence from the Other (British/Arab) through the primacy of her relationship with the Jewish clan/nation.

In two recent events, Israel’s complicated relationship to Jewish identity that \textit{A Railway to Damascus} illustrates has echoed in controversy arising from Habima’s production of the play. In August 2010, several theaters agreed to exhibit their productions at a newly opened cultural center in Ariel, a Jewish settlement in the West Bank;\footnote{Founded in 1978 as a secular settlement – an anomaly, as the majority of Jewish settlements were founded and populated by religious Jews – the current population is 10-20% religious, 50% traditional (identify as Jewish and practice most customs), and the remainder secular. Settlement beyond the Green Line finds ideological justification in claiming a historical and/or divine Jewish right to lands in the Biblical areas of Judea and Samaria and disregards Palestinian territorial claims. The fourth largest Jewish settlement in the West Bank, Ariel has been named “The Capital of Samaria”, and consequently holds iconic status in the Israeli/Palestinian territorial dispute. The religious population of Ariel is rapidly increasing, thanks to efforts to attract this population via the construction of 15 synagogues and religious schools, and the establishment of businesses facilitating observant lifestyles (kosher restaurants, etc.) For more, see: \url{Go.ariel.muni.il, “Ariel, Capital of Samaria”}. Ariel Municipality and Ariel Development Fund, 2012, accessed January 30, 2012, http://go.ariel.muni.il/ariel/en/index.php} as their contribution, Habima selected \textit{A Railway to Damascus}. Regarding the implicit political implications associated with consenting to perform at this contested site, a Habima spokesperson proclaimed, “Habima is a national theater, and its repertoire is supposed to suit the entire population.”\footnote{Levinson, Chaim. “Major Theaters Raise Curtain Across Green Line.” \textit{Haaretz.com}, August 25, 2010, accessed November 2, 2011, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/major-theaters-raise-curtain-across-green-line-1.310040.} This statement highlights Habima’s desire to represent all factions of the Israeli population and thus (passively) participate in vigorous controversies dividing the secular and religious, as well as the Jewish and Arab, populations. \textit{A Railway to Damascus}
Damascus is hence figured as appropriate for Habima’s inclusive aim, emphasizing the value of its narrative of religious conflict as crucial to all strata of the Israeli public.

One day after the announcement of this project, Yousef Sweid, a prominent Arab-Israeli actor and A Railway to Damascus cast-member, informed news sources of his refusal to perform at the Ariel location, stating: “I would be glad to perform in settlements in several shows that have messages I’d like to deliver in many communities. But settlers and settlements are not something that entertains me, and I don’t want to entertain them.”39 Sweid’s comments emphasize a conception that both the play’s “message” and Habima are treading on dangerous ground in their attempts to address – and perhaps unintentionally – approve of a particularly Jewish conception of the State and the Occupied Territories. In claiming that there are plays with messages he considers appropriate to address the settler population, Sweid suggests that the loss of the hope for co-existence and the emergence of a unified Jewish collective facing only external enemies which concludes the play may lend support to (misguided) settler ideology. While settlers may perceive themselves as upholding the Jewishness of the Land of Israel and her people through their attempts to restore the entirety of the Biblical lands, for Sweid this presumed correlation between Jewishness and Israel (or conflation of “the clan” and “the nation”) fails to include him and poses a threat.

In January 2012, the play became a matter of public concern again when the Lehi Veterans Organization wrote a letter to Habima and A Railway to Damascus playwright Hillel Mitelpunkt demanding the script be changed because its “false and offensive” depiction of the Lehi.40 The veterans claim that the portrayal of the murder of the innocent Nini at the hands of the Lehi is intended “to denigrate, scorn and mar [their] image,” and fundamentally misrepresents the Lehi’s enterprise as they “focused on fighting the British” and not on interpersonal relations.41 The veterans perceive the play as desecrating the image of the Lehi in the Israeli national master narrative as heroic protectors of the Jews in Palestine (i.e., “members of the clan/nation” par excellence). The veterans further allege that the inclusion of the offensive scenes in the current tour of A Railway to Damascus at England’s Royal National Theater “could increase anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment.”42 By extending the threat of the misrepresentation of the Lehi to include all Jews and Israelis, the veterans have reaffirmed their position as the exemplary form of the Jewish Israeli. This expansive interpretation effectively recreates the “offensive” model offered by Mitelpunkt’s play, though now it is Mitelpunkt and Habima who are “guilty of treason to the Jewish people and cooperation with the British enemy” because of their betrayal of the Jewish collective, and must be silenced for the good of the entire clan/nation.43

We can now see a recurring pattern, both in the play and in public responses to it: each individual both holds and represents the “appropriate” ideological position regarding

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
the Jewishness of Israel, such that clashes between these representatives endangers the very existence of the clan/nation as they see it and their existence in it. Sweid’s refusal to perform proves his desire to speak for a population for whom there is no direct correlation between Jewishness and Israeliness, the settlers have chosen to live in Ariel to prove the reverse, and the Lehi Veterans proclaim that they so typify Jews and Israelis that a distortion of their image will reflect on the entire clan and/or nation. With such personification of the problematic role of Jewishness in Israel, it follows that a theatrical representation of this dilemma in which characters embody an ideology may be interpreted as so similar to reality that misrepresentations found therein threaten these real representative bodies. However, if Israeli individuals feel that they personify specific ideological perspectives regarding the Jewishness of Israel, then theater, with its emblematic characters, is granted a unique capacity to reflect and affect reality.

With this expanded understanding of the form Israeli identity discourse, we can now extend our original question regarding the function of Jewishness as representative of Israeli society to include the uncomfortable challenge that Mitelpunkt’s play provokes: Can there be an Israeli identity which includes Jewishness, but is not based off of negation or opposition? Every account we have examined exposes the creation of a national or religious identity in opposition to an Other: Jewishness/Israeliness arises against the British/Arab Other in the play and the Bible, Sweid opposes the settlers, the Lehi resisted the British in the past and currently challenge Mitelpunkt and Habima. Mitelpunkt’s play demonstrates that now, in pre-State Palestine, and in the Bible itself, Jewishness – like all identities – necessitates the negation of or opposition towards Others. We are now left with new questions: is it possible represent ourselves, in art or otherwise, without causing harmful differentiation? What is the role of identity and its representations in the present when one is aware of the problems created by these demarcations in the past? Is co-existence contingent on the loss of identity, and hence a loss of representation in art, or can co-existence be a form of identity itself, fostering new forms of artistic representation?

While Mitelpunkt does not provide answers to these questions, by calling attention to their timelessness, he has made the challenge to Israel, and the global community, remarkably clear.
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http://208.84.118.121/pf_mandate_attacks_jewish.php


Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb, commonly known to the Western world as Saladin, was an intriguing and polarizing figure throughout his life, and has remained so to generations of scholars, writers, and historians. A Kurd, he overthrew the Fatimid caliphs of Egypt, supplanted his patron Nūr ad-Dīn as master of Syria, recaptured Jerusalem, and swept away the Latin Kingdom. He has perhaps enjoyed a privileged status in the Anglophone world though his battles with, and chivalrous conduct towards, King Richard I of England. In the 14th century, an epic poem about him circulated in Europe, and Dante Alighieri mentions him as one of the virtuous pagans in Limbo in his *Inferno*. His reputation among early European historians was also informed by his appearance in Sir Walter Scott’s *The Talisman*, which portrayed him as an enlightened and chivalrous warrior for his faith.

His status as the most prominent, perhaps the only, Muslim “heroic” figure widely accepted in the West begs the question, however. Is this absence of figures in the Muslim world admired by the Western historical canon simply a matter of ignorance or does it reflect a pervasive belief that the world of Islam has nothing admirable to offer? The simplest explanation for the hero-worship that has infused the study of Saladin is the observation that he is the antagonist most appropriate to the story of his times and his enemies. To fight a pure villain to a draw is hardly a success at all; to fight a brilliant general infused with the light of his religion and produce some kind of gain must be rated a major success. The disaster at Hattin and the modest gains of the Third Crusade may both be excused so long as the reputation of Saladin is as an unbeatable warrior. The traditional depiction of Saladin as a chivalrous Muslim warrior and a model for cultured and urbane opposition suited the Europeans smarting from the checks he administered to them, and has likely rekindled interest in him for historians and observers of the Middle East. More recently, modern historians, in a vigorous debate, have reevaluated Saladin, his methods, and his motives. As a result, Saladin’s historical reputation has undergone a seismic shift in recent decades. It is ironic that modern scholarship appears to be re-litigating the issues that were hotly debated during Saladin’s life, which were gradually forgotten with the passage of time.

The traditional view of Saladin is well represented by Sir H.A.R. Gibb’s posthumously published *The Life of Saladin* (1973). A brief biographical sketch of Saladin drawn primarily from a chapter he contributed to the *History of the Crusades* in 1958, Gibb’s Saladin is a remarkable man. Gibb offers comparatively little analysis of Saladin’s early life, his family relations and political positioning. There is mention of his service as military governor of Damascus, from which he resigned quickly “in protest against the fraudulence of the chief accountant,” demonstrating from an early age his strong moral character.\(^1\) He seems to spring into being, fully formed, as a part of Nūr ad-Dīn’s expedition to remove

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the Fatimid Caliphate and unite Egypt and Syria. After the conquest, he is swiftly elevated
to vizier of Egypt, and after the death of Nūr ad-Dīn, expeditiously gains control of
Damascus and much of Syria. All of this, Gibb hastens to inform us, is done in the pursuit
of the Holy War with the Frankish crusaders. A fractured and disorganized collection
of Muslim states could have little chance of destroying the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, but a
united umma, under a powerful leader (acting theoretically in the name of the caliph in
Baghdad), could succeed. Four years of jockeying for position among the princes of Syria
and Iraq are outlined in twice as many pages, and with the preliminaries dispensed with,
the focus shifts to the central struggle between Saladin and the Latin Kingdom, followed
by the armies of the Third Crusade.

How to explain the short shrift given to the early years of Saladin’s life and his rise
to power? In his book, Gibb spells out his approach to his sources immediately. The bulk
of his information is drawn from the surviving portions of professional diaries of ‘Imad ad-
Dīn al-Isfahani, Saladin’s private secretary in his later years, and a narrative of the last five
years of Saladin’s life from Bahā’ ad-Dīn Ibn Shaddad, his Judge of the Army, confidant,
and friend. Juxtaposed to these is Ibn al-Athir’s al-Kamil fī al-Tarikh, which, though
perhaps the most noted historical work of the Age, Gibb finds fatally compromised by “the
malicious twist, the perversions and propagandist ascriptions that he introduced in many of
the passages about Saladin.” Indeed, on no less than fifteen occasions, Gibb comments,
usually in his footnotes, but occasionally in the body of the text itself, on what he considers
a distortion, altered anecdote, or biased statement in Ibn al-Athir’s narrative. In one
footnote, he laments the frequent uncritical reliance on al-Athir’s account by historians,
describing this account as “derivative and partisan… [which] places events in a false
light.” This arrangement of sources naturally unbalances Gibb’s work. His main sources
begin their personal and professional relationships with Saladin at the height of his power,
and though he argues that neither is a hero-worshipper or panegyrist, a prudent reader
might choose to approach them with more skepticism than Gibb.

The remainder of his narrative (approximately two-thirds of his work), focuses on
his war with the Frankish crusaders, interspersed with lengthy paeans to the greatness of
Saladin and his remarkable qualities. Rather than seeking power, Saladin has it thrust upon
him through his devotion to Islam and his burning desire to recover Jerusalem, and he
“himself [was] completely indifferent to the material rewards of power.” Gibb comments
that “his victories were due to the possession of moral qualities which have little in
common with those of a great general. He was a man inspired by an intense and
unwavering ideal, the achievement of which involved him necessarily in a long series of
military activities,” again emphasizing his disinterest in power for power’s sake or the
pursuit of dynasty building. Gibb finds Saladin’s only fault to be his excessive trust in
family members, assuming that they, like him, lacked the taste for those material rewards
and would act solely in the best interests of the faith. His views are clearly informed by
those of ‘Imad ad-Dīn and Bahā’ ad-Dīn, whose writings are in some senses an Islamic
manual for princes, emphasizing Saladin’s devotion to Islam, his generosity, and his moral
rectitude for posterity at the expense of a full picture of the man. In the dark moments of
the Third Crusade, Gibb notes that “it was by sheer force of personality, by the undying

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2 Gibb, 1.
3 Gibb, 55.
4 Gibb, 46.
5 Gibb, 57.
flame of faith within him, and by his example of steadfast endurance that he inspired the dogged resistance which finally wore down the invaders.”

Florid prose aside, to Gibb he is the protagonist of Islam, a warrior-monk so consumed with an idea that it guided his every move, a romantic vision well in keeping with the traditional literary conception of the man.

Though published in 1973, Gibb’s work was reflective of an older tradition of scholarship in the study of the Middle East and the Crusades. In contrast, Andrew Ehrenkreutz’s *Saladin*, published in 1972, turned the traditional paradigm on its head. It is instructive that 9 of 11 chapters in Ehrenkreutz’s book concern Saladin’s rise to power in Egypt and Syria, and only one focuses on his extended war with the Latin Kingdom and the Third Crusade. While Gibb took fairly little interest in Saladin’s origins, Ehrenkreutz focuses intently on the milieu from which he emerged. Rejecting the romantic notion of him as the scion of Kurdish shepherds, he properly places Saladin in a family heavily involved in the shifting power politics of Nūr ad-Dīn’s Syria. His father and uncle’s careers are traced in some detail, as Ehrenkreutz points to the fluidity of alliances and loyalty remarking, that “the Kurdish brothers knew how to profit from serving two masters.”

While Gibb mentions only one anecdote about a pre-Egypt Saladin, Ehrenkreutz produces less flattering tales, including a note that, in 1169, Saladin “gave up drinking wine and turned away from the sources of pleasure.” Throughout his work, Ehrenkreutz portrays Saladin as merely man of his time, manipulating the Holy War and Islam to cover dynastic expansion.

To arrive at this conclusion, Ehrenkreutz redeployes many of the same historical sources as Gibb, though he finds Ibn al-Althir rather more compelling than Gibb had, and goes so far as to dismiss Bahā’ ad-Dīn as “the consistent idolizer of Saladin.” His work is more than just a biographical sketch though; it is a systematic appreciation of the change Saladin had wrought in his domains, the costs resulting from his pursuit of dynastic expansion, his military and administrative records, and the eventual fate of the state that he left to his progeny. To do this, he draws not only on the classic documents, but on modern scholarship. A perusal of his bibliography shows items ranging from “Size and value of the ‘Iqta in Egypt 564-741 A.H./1169-1341 A.D.” from *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (1970) to the then-recently discovered materials from the Cairo Geniza.

Given that the concluding chapter of his book is titled “Saladin in Historical Perspective: A Dissenting View,” it is not strange to note that Ehrenkreutz disagrees with Gibb’s interpretation of Saladin. He questions Saladin’s commitment to the Holy War, positing that many of his victories (most notably Hattin, the crushing defeat of the Latin Kingdom’s field army) owed more to blunders by his opponents rather than to any particular skill on the battlefield that Saladin possessed. He surveys Saladin’s administration and finds it wanting, noting that the harnessing of Egypt to his dynastic ambitions in Syria and against the crusader kingdoms “reduced Egypt to a quasi-colony with the usual adverse consequences: economic exploitation, increased taxation, interference with freedom of trade, promotion of European commercial interests in Egypt.

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8 Ehrenkreutz, 32.
9 Ehrenkreutz, 66.
and a disastrous increase in military expenditure.”

Perhaps most damning to Gibb’s conception of Saladin is the contention that the latter’s “alleged moral and religious attributes neither influenced the course of his public endeavors nor the conduct of his contemporaries.” He writes, he admits, with the hope of being a corrective for the romantic notions of Saladin’s life, career, and faith that had dominated scholarship on the period.

The demolition by Ehrenkreutz of the romantic paradigm for understanding Saladin was thorough, and clearly influenced the scholars who considered Saladin in its aftermath. Malcolm Lyons’ and D.E.P. Jackson’s *Saladin: The Politics of Holy War* (1982) follows the lead of Ehrenkreutz in devoting the majority of its efforts to Saladin’s rise to power in Egypt and Syria. However, it rebalances the structure of the narrative, giving the Holy War, the Battle of Hattin, the reconquest of Jerusalem, and the battle with the Third Crusade the prominence they deserve. They make frequent efforts to judge Saladin’s actions by the rules that he seeks to enforce and invoke when it suits him, Islamic law. Frequently, they find that his political behavior does not meet the ideal. In one episode, they comment that “Saladin’s position…was so weak in terms of any possible Islamic justification, that Ibn Shaddad [Bahā’ ad-Dīn] preferred to ignore the whole episode.”

The great innovation in Lyon and Jackson’s work is a fundamental re-appreciation of their sources. ‘Imad ad-Dīn, Bahā’ ad-Dīn, and Ibn al-Athir continue to comprise the trinity of historical writings on Saladin, though the authors apply a welcome skepticism for all their sources. Rather than Gibb’s constant dismissal or Ehrenkreutz’s usual acceptance, al-Athir in particular is considered critically: at one point while evaluating a discrepancy between ‘Imad ad-Dīn and al-Athir, they comment that “admittedly, Ibn al-Athir’s anecdote has the hallmark of invention.” The scope of these sources remains the same, but their value is increased by the interpolation of both crusader sources, most notable William of Tyre’s chronicle of the Latin Kingdom, as well as the extensive use of archival materials, particularly surviving contemporaneous letters between many of the principal actors. In one fascinating case, on a subject where both ‘Imad ad-Dīn and Ibn Al-Athir are in agreement with each other (the reasons for the arrest of Saladin’s vassal Keukburi), the examination of the archival sources shows a new facet in a letter between Saladin and his administrator, the Qadi al-Fadil. In general, the letters do not expose enormous new areas of understanding, but are supplemental material which can be used to verify information from the histories or provide context.

Beyond the letters, Lyons and Jackson at times incorporate remaining poetry and satire produced during the reign of Saladin, which they use compellingly to take the pulse of those not won over to Saladin’s cause inside his domains. Criticism of Saladin’s administration (“run by pompous weaklings and petty criminals”), racially-charged verse, both with respect to the Kurdish dominance of the Ayyubid state and to the Egyptian character of many of its troops and retainers, and challenges to the Muslim character of both Saladin and his government were all subjects for satire within the state. These met

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10 Ehrenkreutz, 235.
11 Ehrenkreutz, 238.
12 Ehrenkreutz, 148.
13 Lyons & Jackson, 7.
14 Lyons & Jackson, 225.
with greater and lesser degrees of repression, and providing valuable insights into the internal dynamics of Ayyubid administration.\textsuperscript{15}

The extensive use of these archival sources presents a problem for Jackson and Lyons, because there is frequent disagreement between their main sources. Having adopted a more moderate position than Gibb or Ehrenkreutz, faced with irreconcilable sources or problematic material, their solution is frequently to say, for instance, “whatever the truth of the story…” and move on.\textsuperscript{16} This problem looms even larger, though, when trying to fashion an appraisal of Saladin personally. Gibb, engaging with ‘Imad ad-Dīn and Bahā‘ ad-Dīn, accepted the best things that were said about him at face value. Ehrenkreutz, having meticulously detailed Saladin’s rise to power and willingness to manipulate and kill to expand his power base, can accept that Saladin was a bare-knuckled political brawler in the mold of his family, hypocritically manipulating Islamic sentiments to solidify his rule. But the sheer weight of Saladin’s correspondence, and its consistent tone and character seem to create a problem. Throughout Jackson and Lyon’s work, Saladin remains something of a cipher. The persuasive work of Ehrenkreutz, expanded on by Jackson and Lyons, makes it clear that Saladin was a man who was willing to do what it took to accomplish his goals, even if it meant operating outside the strictures of Islamic law, and as a result his constant appeal to Islamic solidarity and calls to unite in pursuit of the Holy War against the Franks are called into question. But at no point in his voluminous correspondence does the mask drop: Saladin is always concerned to appear a faithful servant of Islam, justifying his every action even on the flimsiest of Islamic pretexts.\textsuperscript{17} There is no evidence, fundamentally, that he did not believe what he said. What is a historian to do with someone whose actions and words seem nearly irreconcilable?

It is with some irony that modern scholarship has reopened the question of Saladin only to find that it no more capable of answering the question of who he was and what drove him than his contemporaries. His friends and confidants describe a remarkable man, driven by an idea and faith. His detractors saw a ruse, the use of Islam as a cloak to justify naked ambition. The sources show both a noble prince and cruel tyrant, and both positions still have their adherents in the modern academy. Lyons and Jackson were able to square this circle by arguing that Saladin “was not concerned to question the relevance of his ideals or even, apparently, to check how far he was guilty of distorting them. They were part of the heritage of Islam, to be accepted emotionally, not intellectually.”\textsuperscript{18} Synthesis, of a sort, has been reached by Lyons and Jackson, but it fails to satisfy. Saladin remains both the cynical politician and the idealistic visionary; chivalrous and generous, ruthless and calculating.

\textsuperscript{15} Lyons & Jackson, 118-120.
\textsuperscript{16} Lyons & Jackson, 101.
\textsuperscript{17} Lyons & Jackson, 394.
\textsuperscript{18} Lyons & Jackson, 374.
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Introducing the Mystical Poems of Shaykh Bahāʾī
By Maryam N. Sabbaghi

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Shortly after the investiture of Shah Ismāʿīl (r. 907-30/1501-24) in Iran as the first Safavid monarch, Twelver Shiʿism was declared the religion of the new empire. Shah Ismāʿīl and succeeding monarchs seemed determined to convert Iran from Sunnism to a literate urban version of Twelver Shiʿism. The process of conversion to Shiʿism is best understood within the larger political framework of Ottoman-Safavid relations, as an attempt to demarcate Safavid territory against Ottoman encroachments and insulate its inhabitants from Sunnite leanings. To disseminate the Shiʿite creed and apply Islamic law in accordance with the Shiʿi school, the shahs invited the Shiʿi clerics from Arabic-speaking territories such as Iraq, Bahrain, and Jabal ‘Amil (in present-day Lebanon) to reinforce their counterparts in Persia. The contribution of the scholars from Jabal ‘Amil became important as they successfully cultivated Safavid patronage and reaped unprecedented socio-economic power. Shaykh Muhammad b. Husayn Bahāʾī, also known as Shaykh Bahāʾī, today in Iran remains the most well-known of these scholars from Jabal ‘Amil—not only for his numerous theological and scientific opuses but also for his profound mystical poems on Divine Love. The content of Shaykh Bahāʾī’s poems has been compared to a number of notable Persian poets1 such as Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ‘Irāqī2 (d.1289) and sometimes to that of Khwāja Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Hāfiz Shīrāzī3 (d.1390).

Shaykh Bahāʾī was born in 953/1547 and moved with the rest of his family to Isfahan and from there to Qazvin in 966/1558. His family’s first official association with the Safavid court began when Bahāʾī’s father was appointed by Shah Ṣaḥmāsb I (r. 930/1524-984/1576) to serve as shaykh-al-islām4 to educate the populace about Twelver Shiʿism.5 Subsequently, Shaykh Bahāʾī’s father became shaykh-al-islām of Isfahan after the

2 Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ‘Irāqī was born in the Kamajan near the city of Hamadān about 610/1213. ‘Irāqī was highly educated in both theology and literary disciplines, and famous for memorizing the Holy Qur’an, hadith, and commentary from an early age. He was well versed in Islamic theology (kalām), but ‘Irāqī was also a gnostic who often spoke in the language of love. For him, as well as many other Sufis, love was realized knowledge. ‘Irāqī’s writing Lamaʾīt (“Divine Flashes”) fits into a genre of Sufi writings which expresses certain doctrines in the language of love. (William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson. Fakhruddin ‘Irāqī: Divine Flashes. New York: Paulist Press, 1982, 37-40)
3 Hāfiz-i Shīrāzī was one of the finest Persian poets. He received a classical religious education, lectured on Qur’anic and other theological subjects (“Hāfiz” designates one who has learned the Qur’an by heart), and wrote commentaries on religious classics. As a court poet, he enjoyed the patronage of several rulers of Shīrāz. Hāfiz’s principal verse form, one that he brought to a perfection never achieved before or since, was the ghazal. Hāfiz is most famous for his Dīwān; among the many partial English translations of this work are those by Gertrude Bell and H. Wilberforce Clarke. (Bahāʾī-al-Dīn Khorramshahi, “Hāfiz” Encyclopedia Iranica Online. http://www.iranicoonline.org/articles/hafez-i).
4 shaykh-al-islām: a title or superior authority for issues of Islam. Hourani states that the Safavid court sometimes appointed non-Iranians to this position. (Hourani, From Jabal Amil to Persia, 136).
death of the previous incumbent, Bahāʾī’s father-in-law Zayn-al-Dīn ʿAlī Minshar Ṭāmilī. By a fortuitous coincidence, Shaykh Bahāʾī obtained the post of shaykh-al-islam of the city destined to become the next capital of the empire. When it did, he retained his post and became the most important figure of religious authority in the empire.

Iskandar Beg, a Persian historian at Shah ʿAbbās’ court writes that, “Wherever he (Bahāʾī) went, he conversed with theologians, scholars, Sufi leaders, and hermits. As a result, he became the foremost scholar of his age. The Shah kept him constantly at his side; both when he was in the capital and when he was making a journey somewhere, the Shah would visit his dwelling to enjoy his company.” Bahāʾī’s career has, in large part, been closely associated with the patronage of Shah ʿAbbas I. During his years in Isfahan, Shaykh Bahāʾī befriended Mīr Dāmād and counted brilliant students such as Mulla Ṣadrā as his own. While serving the Safavid state, it is said that Shaykh Bahāʾī advocated the expansion of the powers of the ʿulamāʾ supposedly after his resignation from his post as shaykh-al-islam of Isfahan in 1015/1606 (during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās I).

In his Kashfūl, Bahāʾī writes, “Had my father—God bless his soul—not come from the land of the Arabs to the land of the Persians, and not frequented kings, I would have been one of the most pious, devout, and ascetic of men. But he—may he rest in peace—brought me out of the former land, and settled me in the latter, so that I have frequented the rich and powerful and taken on their vile morals and base attributes.” Bahāʾī spent a number of years traveling outside Iran. After performing the hajj he went to Egypt (where he is known to have been in 992/1584, associating with Shaykh Muḥammad b. Abu al-

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6 It has been difficult to determine the exact death date of Minshar. Shaykh Bahāʾī probably became shaykh-al-islam of Isfahan during the reign of Shah Ismaʿīl Ii (984-85/1576-77), soon after the death of Shah Ṭahmasb in 1576. This happened twelve years before Shah ʿAbbās ascended the throne, and approximately twenty years before Isfahan became the capital of the Empire. (Devin J. Stewart, A Biographical Notice on Bahāʾī al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 111, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1991), 563-571).


8 Also known as Mir Mohammad Baqer Asterābādī (d. 1631 or 1632), he was an Iranian philosopher in the Neoplatonizing Islamic Peripatetic traditions of Ibn Sinā and Suhrawardī, a scholar of the traditional Islamic sciences, and foremost figure (together with his student Mulla Ṣadrā), of the cultural renaissance of Iran undertaken under the Safavid dynasty. As such he was the central founder of the School of Isfahan, noted by his students and admirers as the “Third Teacher”, after Aristotle and al-Farābī.

9 Mulla Sadrā (d.1640) was a Persian Shiʿī Islamic philosopher and theologian who led the Iranian cultural renaissance in the 17th century. Though not its founder, he is considered the master of the Illuminationist School of Philosophy, and a seminal figure who synthesized many of the tracts of the Islamic Golden Age and Andalusiug philosophies into what he called the Transcendent Theosophy.

10 Andrew Newman has argued that Shaykh Bahāʾī did not shun involvement with the Shah in his later years, and did much to bolster the authority of Shiʿī jurists and strengthen their ties with the Safavid government. (Andrew Newman, “Towards a Reconsideration of the Isfahan School of Philosophy: Shaykh Bahāʾī and the Role of the Safavid Ulamāʾ Studia Iranica 15 (1986): 165-99). Iskandar Beg’s account claims that Bahāʾī abandoned his post to perform his pilgrimage to Mecca and adopted an ascetic way of life upon resignation, although he also mentions the subsequent development of a close relationship between al- Bahāʾī and the Shah. Many scholars, over-reacting to the topes of pious rejection of the government, portray his resignation as a complete and final break with the Safavid administration. Hourani, expressing this common view, states that al- Bahāʾī gave up his post “for a life of poverty and travel.” (Hourani, From Jabal Amil to Persia, 138). Arjomand claims that Bahāʾī refused to accept any post after his resignation (Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 206).


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Shaykh Bahāʾī was a prolific writer, composing perhaps as many as one hundred works in both Arabic and in Persian. Among the best known are the two anthologies, Kashkāl and the earlier Meklāt. He composed works on tafsīr, hadith, grammar, and fiqh. His interest in the sciences is evident in Arabic works such as the astronomical treatise Anatomy of the Heavens. Shaykh Bahāʾī is well-known for his two allegorical mathnavāsī, Bread and Halwā and Milk and Sugar (both published, together with other works, in Cairo [1928-29] and later in Tehran [1931] under the title The Persian Poems of Shaykh Bahāʾī-al-Dīn Mohammad al-ʿĀmilī.13 To date, these two significant literary works of the Persian mystical tradition—as well as the majority of Bahāʾīs poems—have not been translated into English. This paper introduces to the English-speaking audience four ghazals, serving as a starting point for more translation and analysis of Shaykh Bahāʾī’s poems.

While he did profess to Twelver Shiʿism, Shaykh Bahāʾī’s distinct Sufi leanings can be read in his numerous poems and prose, for which he was severely criticized by Muḥammad Bāqir Maḥlisī.14 An important question is whether Shaykh Bahāʾī composed these poems to appeal to “mainstream” Shiʿi circles as well as the Sufi circles of 16th century Iran. Interestingly, Shaykh Bahāʾī appears in the chain of both the Nūrbaḵshī and Niʿmatallāḥī spiritual genealogies15 but further research is needed examine the exact nature of his contact with such prominent Sufi groups considering the social and political circumstances of the time.16

In the Treatise on the Unity of Existence, Shaykh Bahāʾī speaks of the Sufis as true believers, calls for an unbiased assessment of their utterances, and refers to his own mystical experiences.17 His Persian rubāiyats18 and ghazals19 are replete with a wide variation of images and metaphors as well as shifting, introspective: the winehouse and the cupbearer, veiled criticisms against institutionalized religion, and a powerful reference to

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13 2,552 lines of poetry written in Persian have been attributed to Shaykh Bahāʾī, the majority of which can be found in Kashkāl.
14 In 1678, the Safavid shah Sultan Husayn appointed Maḥlisī as shaykh-al-islam (Chief Religious Leader of the land, BahāʾīTs former position) in Isfahan, the capital of Iran during the Safavid era. In this influential position he was given a free hand by the Sultan to encourage and to punish as he saw fit. The three inter-related areas in which Maḥlisī exerted his efforts were: the suppression of Sufism, mystical philosophies, philosophic views seemingly contrary to Islam and the suppression of Sunnism and other religious groups. See Moojan Momen, Introduction to Shiʿi Islam (Yale University Press, 1985), 115.
16 His student Husayn ibn Haydar al-Karakhī states, “He had a great propensity for mysticism.” (Newman, Reconsideration, 172).
18 Rubāʾī: a Persian quatrain, four lines of poetry.
19 Ghazal: a lyric poem of 6 to 15 couplets linked by unity of subject and symbolism rather than by a logical sequence of ideas.
himself as a human capable of being a believer, disbeliever, a Zoroastrian or a Jew.\textsuperscript{20} Although modern day scholars contest the nature of Shaykh Bahāʾī’s resignation from the court and his relationship with the ulamā, and whether the variation of images and metaphors suggest whether he actually composed them—nonetheless we can trace the path of Shaykh Bahāʾī’s orphic journey away from the outside world towards the Divine Union beyond.

Abandon conventional teachings, which is all worthless oratory.
I and the erudition of Divine Love, O Beloved! That is all ecstasy and jubilation.

One cannot forego hope for Divine Misericordia
Don’t listen to the ascetic’s narration, for listening to it is tribulation.

You said longing for Divine Union is forbidden in our religion
Tell me, in which faith is shedding the lover’s blood licit?\textsuperscript{22}

In answering the afflicted, part your lips O sweet-voiced one!
Or with a benign glance, the answer to one hundred questions.

O the sorrow of separation! Bahāʾī\textsuperscript{23}, the oppressive idol
Speaks with the expression of commotion, for the language of the tongue is mute.

\textsuperscript{20} Shaykh Bahāʾī is also famous for a poem praising the Twelfth Shiʿi Imam, a stark contrast to the “winehouse” found in his other poems.
\textsuperscript{21} Original Persian text in Nafīṣī, \textit{The Divan of Shaykh Bahāʾī}, 7, 120.
\textsuperscript{23} “Bahāʾī” refers to Shaykh Bahāʾī himself. The Persian \textit{ghazal} gives at the end of the poem the name of the poet, providing the impetus to combine all the experiences in one holy name.
Those who ignited the candle\textsuperscript{25} of wishful Union in the banquet of Divine Love
Upon seeing me agonizing in bitterness, they ceased being in Divine Love.

Yesterday I taught theological matters to the muftis of the town,
And today the dwellers of the winehouse learn roguery from me.

Because the disbelievers saw the thread of my faith broken
They sewed a thread of their \textit{zenār}\textsuperscript{26} onto my cloak.

O Lord! How propitious, content are those who in the market of love
Bought pain and sold the sadness of the world.

What did the Bahāʾī of the night say to the ears of the learned?
That today the wretched burned their papers.

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\textsuperscript{24}Original Persian text in Nafīṣī, \textit{The Divan of Shaykh Bahāʾī}, 121.

\textsuperscript{25}In the Islamic mystical tradition, one of the most famous references to the candle as a symbol of Divine Love can be found in Farīd ud-Dīn Ṭūṭīr’s \textit{The Conference of the Birds}: “Approaching the candle, the butterfly touched the flame with its wings for a moment. The candle was victorious, and the butterfly was completely vanquished and singed. Returning to its friends, it tried to explain the mystery to them….another butterfly sprung forward, intoxicated with love, and flung itself with violence into the flame of the candle.” See Farīd ud-Dīn Ṭūṭīr, ed. Andrew Harvey \textit{The Conference of the Birds: A Seeker’s Journey to God} (York Beach: Weiser Books, 2001), 53.

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{zenār}: belt, particularly a cord worn around the middle by Eastern Christian priests.
I am the mirror of the One Most Beloved of Existence
From His reflected face, I am the theophany\textsuperscript{28} of divine lights.

Iblis did not prostrate and became rejected for all eternity
At that moment when all angels prostrated before me.

So long as one finds a way to know my essence
At times I am a believer, at times a disbeliever, at times a Zoroastrian, at times a Jew.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{27} Original Persian text in Nafīšī, \textit{The Divan of Shaykh Bahā’ī}, 126.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{28} The term “theophany” refers to the appearance of a deity to a human or other being, or to a divine disclosure.}
The heart grew black from the crepuscule of night,
So black that even the morning appeared like the night of separation.

So black that if the sun lifted its head,
It will appear black like the beauty mark of moonlit faces.

The sigh of the dark-hearted ones has bedimmed all over,
Sleep cannot find its way to the four pillars of the universe.

The time of the heart will become a black day
When I finish telling my tale of woe.

If I were to complain about the cruelty of the beloved it would be fitting
For I have made a covenant last night with the firmament.

What a thorn am I caught in the valley of tribulation
What a ship am I sunk in the depths of Oman.

I am the one who has seen the blade of oppression in failure
I am the one struck with time’s arrow of calamity.

I am the one whose mind has not seen benevolence from afar
I am the one whose nature was fearful of joy.

I am the one whose morning is darker than the evening of separation
Even though rays of the candle are shining upon my heart.

29 Original Persian text in Nafīṣī, The Divan of Shaykh Bahāʾī, 127.
Bibliography


Hamid Olimjon possesses a prominent place in Uzbek Soviet literature. He was born in the city of Jizzax, in the Zarafshon valley, in 1909. His grandfather was mulla Azim, a high-ranking religious leader. At the age of four, his father passed away, leaving Olimjon in the care of his mother. His mother, Komila opa, raised him with historical tales and folk stories, or ertak, instilling in him a talent for creative expression. Olimjon completed his higher education at O‘zbek Bilim Turti (1923-1928) and Samargand Pedkademiyasi (1928-1931), rendering him a masterful poet. Upon completing his education, he transferred to Tashkent to work as an executive for the newspaper Yosh leninchi (Young Leninist). During his time at the paper, from 1931-1932, he cultivated his expertise as a literary critic, a scholar of Uzbek literature, and a journalist. He also married Zulfiya in 1931, another Uzbek author, who edited some of his works. In 1939, he became the executive secretary of the O‘zbekiston Sovet yozuvchilari soyuzi (Union of Writers of Uzbekistan). Unfortunately, his life was cut short at the age of thirty-five when he was tragically killed in a car accident in 1944.

He published his first collection of poems, Ko‘klam (Springtime), in 1929. Though its level of literary skill and intellectual depth was criticized for its immaturity, the passionate, youthful romanticism it expressed and the sincerity with which he wrote about personal experience earned him notoriety. In addition to poetry intended to show the moral composition and mentality of his people, the collection also includes pastoral pieces such as “oydinda” (In the Moonlight) and “Qish ko‘rinishlari” (Winter Scenes). His next four poetry collections, Tong shabadasi (Morning Breeze, 1930), Olov sochlar (Fire-Hair, 1931), Poyga (The Race, 1932), and O‘lim yovga (Death to the Enemy, 1932), came out at a time of heightened political activity for Olimjon. He was engaged in panegyrizing Moscow and penning works such as the poem “Nima bizga Amerika?” (What is America to Us?). In it, he contrasts a Soviet worker, earning his own benefit and contentment by the work of his own hands, with an American factory worker who is enslaved and poverty-stricken by his imperialist, capitalist overlords.

Olimjon’s poetry is primarily lyrical, consisting of two major elements: the romantic perception of life and politics. Though some of his work discusses Lenin and Stalin, as well as alluding to socialism, his lyricism never fails. It is his earlier works, however, that serve to showcase his mastery over poetical lyricism. “O‘rik gullaganda” (When Apricots Blossom) is one such poem. Translated below, it comes from his 1937 collection Oygul blan Baxtiyor (Aygul and Bakhtiyor). This translation is, to our knowledge, the first direct translation completed from Uzbek to English. His description of spring in the countryside is the type of lyricism for which he is best known.

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1 Hamid Olimjon, Tanlangan asarlar, (Toshkent: O‘zSSR fanlar akademiyasi nashriyoti, 1951), 10.
2 Olimjon, Tanlangan asarlar, 11.
3 Khamid Alimdzhan (Hamid Olimjon), Izbnans, trans. Zhirmunskii (Tashkent?: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1944), 5-12.
4 Olimjon, Tanlangan asarlar, 17-19.
5 Olimjon, Tanlangan asarlar, 53.
“When Apricots Blossom”

In front of my window a sole apricot tree blossomed pure white…

at dawn in the East, buds adorning the branches spoke the name of life, but the damned breeze at dawn stole away with the delightful flavor of the flowers.

This repeats each spring, each spring it happens just the same, however much I suffer, still those shameless winds deceive me with lies.

I say ‘so be it’ and will not get angry, I wrap my thoughts around the flowers; whenever I walk out into the spring, I ask whether I have any good fortune.

Caressing and brushing against my face, ‘you have good fortune,’ blows the wind; as if they were wishing me well, ‘you have good fortune,’ chirp the birds.

Everything greets me, each bud tells me a secret, while I walk in the garden only a voice praising my good fortune sings:

“Here is an abundance of flowers for you, take as much as possible into your satchel, fortune is more abundant than all else here, reside in this place until death comes.

Those who passed crying for never seeing flowers, their share of flower gazing is yours, Those who passed welcoming each spring crying, their share is also yours.”

In front of my window a sole apricot tree blossomed pure white.

“Ўрик Гуллаганда” (1937)

Теразамнинг олдида бир туп Ўрик оппок бўлиб гуллади…

Новдаларни безаб ғунчалар Тонгда айтди ҳаёт отини, Ва шаббода қурғур ил сахар Олиб кетди ғулнинг тотини.

Ҳар бахорда шу бўлар такрор, Ҳар бахор ҳам шундай ўтади, Қанча тиришсам ҳам у беор Еллар менни алдаб кетади.

Майли дейман ва қилмайман ғаш, Ҳаёлмини гулга ўрайман; Ҳар бахорга чикканда яккаш, Бахтим борми, дея сўрайман.

Юзларимни силяб, сийпалаб, Бахтинг бор деб эсади еллар, Этган каби ғўё бир талаб, Бахтинг бор, деб қушлар чийиллар.

Ҳамма нарса менни қаршилар, Ҳарбир куртак менга сўйилар роз, Мен юрганда боғларга тўлақ Факат бахтни мактаган овоз:

«Мана сенга олам-олам ғул, 랫ангта сиққанича ол, Бунда толи’ ҳар нарсадан муўл, То ўлгунча шу ўлқада кол.

Ўмрида хеч ғул кўрмай, йинглаб Ўтганларнинг ҳакки ҳам сенда, Ҳар бахорни йинглаб каршилаб Кетганларнинг ҳакки ҳам сенда.»

Теразамнинг олдида бир туп Ўрик оппок бўлиб гуллади.
Bibliography


Current Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, when pressed about his views on the United States, frequently harkens back to the 1953 coup as the event that stained America’s image in the eyes of Iranians. Nearly six decades later, the consequences of the coup still reverberate throughout the country as the regime portrays its nuclear ambitions as the same sort of national struggle faced by Mohammad Mossadegh when he nationalized Iranian oil in 1951 against the wishes of the British. Hence, the current Western imposed sanctions on Iran are viewed by some as a rerun of Britain’s 1951 trade embargo on the purchase of Iranian oil. Amid recent speculation that an attack on Iran may be imminent in order to prevent the country from developing nuclear weapons, let us not overlook the “blowback” suffered by the United States following its deposition of Mossadegh in 1953. Stephen Kinzer’s All The Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror provides readers with a context for the attitudes of disdain towards American foreign policy current among both moderate and right-wing Iranians.

The 1953 Iranian coup is widely regarded as a watershed moment in American-Iranian foreign relations. In a plot organized by the American CIA and the British MI6, the western powers desperately sought to overthrow Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh and reestablish the despotic Mohammad Reza Shah as the foremost authority in the country. Through bribes, assassinations, clandestine meetings, and other devious means of undermining Mossadegh, Operation Ajax, as code-named by the CIA, proved to be a success as American and British operatives succeeded in ousting Mossadegh in August 1953. In a subsequent trial, Mossadegh would be found guilty of treason by a kangaroo court and sentenced to house arrest for the remainder of his life. Kinzer’s work reconstructs the series of events that led to the coup in a manner that resembles a thrilling novel more so than a standard historiography. Recalling the tense atmosphere of the 1950s, Kinzer emphasizes the significance of the Cold War in terms of drawing the United States into Operation Ajax. Mossadegh, whom the author portrays as a heroic figure with some apparent flaws, was pitted against his antithesis, the Shah, as well as the conniving officials of the CIA. Kinzer asserts that the coup’s consequences eventually resulted in the 1979 Islamic Revolution, yet his conclusion, which suggests a causal relationship between Operation Ajax and Middle Eastern terrorism, has raised the eyebrows of some pundits.

The effects of the 1953 coup resonated strongly throughout Iran in the form of political repression by the Shah, government concessions, and the emergence of the feared secret police known as SAVAK. However, the most caustic outcome was the Iranian perception of being betrayed by the United States. In the aftermath of World War I, the Iranian public viewed America with admiration — instead of exploiting Iran’s lucrative oil fields and crucial geographical position, American officials voiced their support for Iranian sovereignty. But following the overthrow of Mossadegh, appreciation of American integrity quickly dissipated as “Operation Ajax taught tyrants... that the world’s most
powerful governments were willing to tolerate limitless oppression as long as oppressive regimes were friendly to the West and to Western oil companies.” Kinzer argues that following America’s betrayal of Mossadegh’s democratic values, Iranians began viewing the United States with constant suspicion. Therefore, Iran’s reputation for disliking the United States should not be rationalized simply as a clash of cultures; Kinzer attributes the hostilities to the coup, which tainted America with a shade of dishonesty.

Kinzer avoids offering a definitive answer on whether the coup was an essential step towards thwarting the Soviet Union or merely the byproduct of Western imperialism, but he willingly recognizes the drastic consequences that emerged from Mossadegh’s overthrow. According to Kinzer, the coup’s “most direct result was to give [the Shah] the chance to become dictator… but his oppressive rule turned Iranians against him. In 1979 their anger exploded in a shattering revolution led by Islamic fundamentalists.” While Kinzer offers an explanation for the Islamic Revolution by fixating on the Shah’s cruelty, he fails to elaborate on the correlation between Operation Ajax and the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Instead, he provides a generalized explanation by chalk ing it up to the dastardly deeds of Mohammad Reza Shah, one of the many villains depicted in his book. Even if the Shah had been the sole catalyst for the revolution, Kinzer could have clarified how the ruler’s repressive actions managed to alienate Iranian citizens and ultimately pave the way for Islamic fundamentalists to overthrow the government.

Kinzer’s boldest and certainly most contentious assertion suggests that the consequences of Operation Ajax laid the foundation for Middle East terrorism. He contends that following the Islamic Revolution, “Iran’s revolutionary leaders became heroes to fanatics in many countries… [including] Afghans who founded the Taliban… [thus] it is not far-fetched to draw a line from Operation Ajax… to the fireballs that engulfed the World Trade Center in New York.” Kinzer’s claim raises doubts not because of the correlation formed between the 1953 coup and the September 11th attacks, but rather it is his conclusion of causality that appears dubious. It is plausible that the masterminds behind the World Trade Center attacks were influenced by the Islamic fundamentalists who consolidated their power in Iran after 1979. However in the years following the coup, there were boundless possibilities that could have thwarted the Islamic Revolution, which in turn would have halted the emergence of the Taliban, according to Kinzer’s logic. The Shah could have turned over a new leaf and rescinded his oppressive laws or perhaps the United States could have forcibly demanded more equitable reforms in Iran. Between 1953 and 1979, a variety of factors could have prevented the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty.

Mohammad Mossadegh, portrayed by Kinzer as the foremost champion of anti-imperialism, is ostensibly engaged in a David versus Goliath battle against the western superpowers. The prime minister is depicted as a man with both admirable qualities as well as prevalent flaws. On the one hand, Mossadegh possessed a pristine sense of honor as he passionately fought for Iranian sovereignty without once kowtowing to British demands. But Kinzer also views Mossadegh’s unwavering refusal to submit as a double-edged sword, arguing that “the single-mindedness with which [Mossadegh] pursued his

1 Stephen Kinzer, All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 204.
2 Ibid., 202.
3 Ibid., 203-204.
campaign against [AIOC] made it impossible for him to compromise when he could and should have.” Kinzer does not hesitate to blame Mossadegh for failing to recognize the tense environment of the Cold War, which undoubtedly swayed the Eisenhower administration into supporting plans to oust the prime minister, but for the most part the author takes a compassionate stance towards the controversial Iranian figure.

Despite Kinzer’s attempts at objectivity, he takes a sympathetic tone when writing about Mossadegh. The most telling evidence of this lies in the book’s epilogue, which diverges from Iranian history and instead focuses on Kinzer’s journey to Mossadegh’s home in the modest village of Ahmad Abad. The section deviates from traditional historiographies by adding a personal touch to the work as Kinzer interviews residents of the village and encourages them to share their stories about how Mossadegh’s influence still reverberates throughout the community. Furthermore, he provides a look into the legacy of Mossadegh through the eyes of the prime minister’s family. From these conversations, it is abundantly clear that the characteristics that made Mossadegh such an endearing figure among his countrymen have not been forgotten despite Iran’s foray into the 21st century. As the prime minister’s great-grandson succinctly articulated, “I want to practice honesty, generosity, and the other qualities that people associate with the name Mossadegh [but] public life is not for me. It’s too great a responsibility.”

Stephen Kinzer’s All The Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror provides a glimpse into the series of events that would eventually result in the 1953 Iranian coup. While Kinzer utilizes copious sources, none of them are Persian texts, which presumably may have influenced his arguments. Some of the claims made are coherent and well-supported, such as placing partial blame on Mossadegh for the collapse in negotiations with AIOC and arguing that the coup set the precedent for overthrowing uncooperative governments by means of covert CIA missions. Despite these solid points raised by Kinzer, he does occasionally jump to irrational conclusions. For example, Kinzer’s assertion of a cause-and-effect relationship between the coup and Middle East terrorism is supported by dubious reasoning. Regardless, that shortcoming does not prevent the book from being an informative and enjoyable read. Putting American rhetoric aside, Kinzer exposes how the United States, a country based on “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” forcibly removed an admired official in favor of a repressive tyrant, all in the name of combating communism—a tradeoff that has ultimately resulted in grave consequences.

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4 Ibid., 206-207.
5 Ibid., 228.
Last February, after a long day of apartment hunting in smoky offices and moldering lofts, I returned to the hostel in Sultanahmet where I was staying; on the way in, I somehow managed to severely cut my hand on the classicizing doorjamb and—since the Spanish medical students sharing my room were out for the afternoon—I spent about an hour attempting to dress it myself. Hoping to sit for a while, sip tea, and collect my thoughts, I made my way to the terrace when, images of the unfolding Egyptian Revolution playing on the BBC, I decided to calm my nerves by taking a walk instead.

Following the neighborhood’s slope away from its eponymous mosque toward Kennedy Avenue and the Marmara, I found a street devoid of all tourist accommodation, made a left turn under some train tracks, and passed the Akbıyık Mosque, supposedly the city’s oldest. Just across, a beat up door was adorned with a paste-up of a geisha. While the palimpsest of graffiti, as it were, was on its own aesthetically-pleasing, there was something uncannily familiar about the female figure, so I took a picture to look into it another time.

That photograph, reproduced on the back cover of this journal, potentially raises a number of questions or possible objections. One may have a sudden reaction to deem it “orientalist” through any number of associations—such as fetishizing the geisha, geographically collapsing Japan and Turkey into a collective “East,” or the photograph itself as an artifact of my gaze. Of course, these and related issues here operate at multiple levels, since they represent choices made and unmade by the street-artist, photographer, publication review board, and viewer in sequence, each of which I will touch on below.

If the paste-up was made by a European, then many of these questions are subject to the traditional critique; if instead it was posted by a Turk, and represented still an Orientalizing or Japanophilic impulse of the part of that artist, then the artwork also represents a deferred east—shifting the notion of “oriental” to something further east than itself. This ambivalence is always already in motion: the anonymity of street art (to the uninitiated passerby) is here hardly relieved in its practice by both Turks and foreigners in the city. One of the most visible instances of graffiti in Istanbul are a series of yellow fists dotting various buildings in Beyoğlu, which were supposedly left in 2006 by Kripoe,1 an artist active in Berlin. An annual street-art festival began the following year, which features local and sometimes international artists. Then, in 2010, the European Union named the city a “European Capital of Culture.” Interrogating that designation, Routledge published an edited volume entitled Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?, whose cover was the roof of the Büyük Valide Han, a historic building which supposedly some

French students tagged (circa 2004) with a spray-paint interpretation of the Istanbul skyline.\(^2\)

As it turns out, after researching, this image—like Kripoe’s fists or the painted skyline—was imposed on the wall by a foreigner; here, a Spaniard working under the name Olivia, whose oeuvre recasts Olive Öyl (girlfriend of Popeye the Sailor) into various guises, that of the geisha being referred to as either Oligeysha or Madame Olifly.\(^3\) Under our above criteria, then, the standard critiques will apply.

That the question at stake, as I have framed it, rests on a(n un)shared (sub)culture which is “European or not” rather than “Middle Eastern or not” is perhaps in tension with the editorial concern of a journal whose geographic stake is more in Anatolia/Asia than Thrace/Europe—though such a position itself privileges a particular orientation of subjecthood. Thus, those who nod in agreement at my potential self-incrimination from the outset might have themselves pre-commitments which circumscribe viable documentary photographic encounter—which overlooks both the moment’s aesthetic choice (beside which lie, perhaps, these other interests under discussion) to point my lens at a year’s-old paste-up rather than the half-millennial mosque just behind. In short, while we may remain concerned with the visual ethics of Olivia’s geisha, we cannot discount our encounter with it as relevant to the negotiation of visual culture in urban Istanbul.

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\(^3\) Among others, see http://www.flickr.com/photos/justin_case/sets/72157623167214658/