Tunis and Paris Face Off: Images of the Jewish Home and Environment among Tunisian Jewish Francisés Émigrés in France

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Abstract

During the 1950s and 1960s of the twentieth century, many of the Tunisian Jews emigrated from Tunis to Paris. A significant number of them, especially those educated and raised in francisés environments, experienced difficulties resulting from feelings of loss, displacement, and disappointment, as expressed in the mental maps of their life stories. The study examines memoirs of four men and three women, who were educated and raised in a francisé environment and emigrated from Tunis to Paris during the studied period. It seeks to answer the question: "How do the francisés immigrants in Paris shape the memory of the Jewish home in Tunis, while referring to the space in Paris?" Based on memory and home space theories, the article tries to answer the research question by breaking down home space into Jewish and non-Jewish, and by comparing the home in Tunis with the one in Paris. A main conclusion: the pillar of support changed from the Jewish religious space in Tunis to non-Jewish education in Paris, which decreased the weight of communalism in the immigrant's life.

"Home is a very liquid side of human existence."

—the historian Guy Miron

"Home is body and soul. It is a person's first world."

—the philosopher Gastón Bachelard

Introduction*

As Tunisia's Jewish community left the country in the 1950s and 1960s, about 50,000 Jews who had lived in or near Tunis, chose France as their destination country. About 15 percent of these émigrés held French citizenship after completing secondary studies in French schools or working for the protectorate government that had run the country from 1881 on.[1] It is important to note that French citizenship was granted to Tunisian Jews already at the end of the nineteenth century, according to the naturalization decree from February 28th, 1899. It allowed citizenship to be granted to those who had served in the French

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[1] Doris Bensimon and Sergio Della Pergola, "Structures Socio-Demographiques de la population juive originaire d'Afrique du Nord," in *Les Juifs du Maghreb: Diasporas contemporaines*, eds. Jean-Claude Lasry and Claude Tapia (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1989), 184; Itzhak Dahan, *From the Maghreb to the West: Moroccan Jews between Three Continents* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2022), 26 [Hebrew].

army, to holders of public office whose salary was paid by the French treasury or to those who had rendered special service to France.[2]

Until the French Colonial Power came to Tunisia, most Jews in Tunis lived in the Jewish quarter, the Hara, alongside the Muslims. The majority belonged to the Twansa—the autochthonous—community, which was rooted in the local culture and Jewish tradition. The minority belonged to the Grana (Jews of Italian and Spanish origin who emigrated to northern Tunisia between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries) community and practiced culture and religious customs and beliefs imported from their communities of origin. When French protectorate rule ensued and Tunisia opened itself to the global market economy, social mobility developed that allowed Jews who had amassed wealth to move to European neighborhoods that were considered more prestigious. Coexistence with the Arab population, however, still prevailed in the markets, the street, commerce, and leisure.

In 1952, Habib Bourguiba, leader of the Neo-Destour anti-colonial struggle movement,[3] favored violent struggle against the French authorities. Throughout the process of liberation and during the first decade of independence, the Jews, seen by Muslims as collaborators with the French authorities, were victimized physically and discriminated economically, educationally, and professionally.[4]

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[2] Haïm Saadon and Paul Sebag, *Trends and Changes in North African Jewry in the Modern Era: The Transitional Years: From an Excluded Minority to a Preferred Minority* (Ra'anana: The Open University, 2021), 90 and 317 [Hebrew].

[3] The movement was established in 1934 as the successor of the Destour, itself established in 1920. It opposed French rule in Tunisia and aspired to independent statehood.

[4] Similar state of affairs happened in other Muslim countries during liberation struggles from the French Colonial yoke. One example is Morocco in 1954, when mob—inspired by the liberation movement to attack French targets—vented also against Jewish targets, a situation that immediately pushed Jews to emigrate (as told by the witness Makhlouf Turgeman and Ha'Ets Natan Pirio, *The Tree Gave its Fruit* (Tel Aviv: Bnei Shimon, 2011), 109-110 and 119-120, and appears in: Aviad Moreno and Haim Bitton, "The Moroccan 'Yizkor Book': Holocaust Memory, Intra-Jewish Marginalization, and Communal Empowerment in Israel," *Diaspora* 23, no. 2 (2023): 261-283.

Regarding anti-Jewish discrimination: Charles Haddad de Paz, *Juifs et Arabes au pays de Bourguiba* (Aix-en-Provence: Imprimerie Paul Roubaud, 1977), 26-27 (religious, judicial, and professional discrimination); Claude Tapia, "North African Jews in Bellville," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 16, no. 1 (1974): 5-23; 13 (economic discrimination). View also interviews of M. Bichi and Dr. Gugliemo Levi, in Gilat Brav, *All the Way to France: The World of the Jews who Emigrated from Northern Tunisia to France* (Amazon, 2024), Appendices [Hebrew].

This state of affairs triggered waves of emigration to France that surged whenever the fracas escalated. The first wave occurred in 1954-1956, when Tunisia gained its independence.[5] The second wave occurred in 1961-1963 with the Bizerte Crisis. It began in 1960, when Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba demanded that French President Charles de Gaulle leave Bizerte and he refused. In July 1961, Tunisia laid siege to the French naval base at Bizerte (which was strategically important to the French in their war in Algeria), hoping to force France to evacuate it (Tunisia's independence in 1956 was without Bizerte). The crisis culminated in a three-day battle (July 19-22) between French and Tunisian forces that left approximately 630 Tunisians and 24 French dead. On July 23, the French captured Bizerte. With the outbreak of the war in July 1961, rumors spread among the Arab public that the Jews had betrayed them and the hostility towards the Jews, as a result of which approximately 500 Jews were injured, led to a large wave of immigration to France. After the end of their war in Algeria in 1962, they handed the power in the city back to the Tunisian government.[6] Finally, the third wave occurred in the summer of 1967, during the Six Day War. Each wave delivered thousands of Jews to Paris. By 1967, some 21,000 Jewish émigrés from Tunisia had settled in the French capital.[7]

As these émigrés coped with the challenges of emigration, they experienced nostalgia for their homes in Tunis, a sentiment manifested for many years after emigration in the memorial books that they wrote.[8] Nostalgia, writes Svetlana Boym, is longing for a home that no longer exists, the sentiment of loss and displacement, and a defense mechanism.[9] It tempts us, Boym continues, into believing that the image of home is in fact the home and it builds a bridge between personal memory and collective memory. Following their emigration, Boym notes, emigrants are too busy surviving to allow themselves to wallow in nostalgia; therefore, nostalgia wells up only in memorial books and moves on from there to

[5] Bensimon and Della Pergola, "Structures socio-demographiques," 183.

[6] Colette Zytnicki, "Du rapatrié au séfarade. L'intégration des Juifs d'Afrique du Nord dans la société française: essai de bilan," *Archives Juives* 38 (2005): 84-102; 95; Samya El-Machat, "La crise de Bizerte: 1960-1962," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 87 (2000): 299-326.

[7] Bensimon and Della Pergola, "Structures socio-demographiques," 183.

[8] The corpus of memoir books written by 1st or 2nd generation Tunisian Jews immigrants to Paris contains at least a hundred books and is growing steadily.

[9] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Hachette, Basic Books, 2002).

posterity in order to strengthen the connection between posterity and the nostalgic pasture.[10]

In contrast to the broad occupation with nostalgia for the fields of the Tunisian past in the memoirs, the living environment in Paris attracts scant mention in the books and appears only for the purpose of comparing the domestic space in the new country with the image of the home back in Tunis. In this article, I focus on this comparison as a way to examine the mental maps that structure memory of the past in correspondence with the reality of emigration in France. By doing so, I ask: How did the francisés émigrés in Paris shape the memory of the Jewish home in Tunis relative to the Parisian space? I argue that Tunisian Jews who were torn from their traditional roots in Tunis, although raised in a French-oriented culture and education system, found it hard to sink roots in the foreign soil of Paris. Their emotional coping with the challenge of integration focused on the nostalgic empowerment of their past, manifested in creating mental maps of the home in Paris as against the one in Tunis, for a dual purpose: to sink alternative roots and to send posterity messages in reference to the Tunisian culture, tradition, and heritage.

Theory and Methodology

The transfer of cultural, traditional, religious, and educational values by Tunisian Jewish immigrants from Tunis to Paris has been examined by several researchers.[11] Additionally, several studies in various disciplines have been written about the image of the home, but none of them deals with Jewish émigrés from Tunisia. For this article, I will particularly consider the works of philosopher Gastón

[10] Ibid., 85-139.

[11] The following are a few examples of academic works: Claude Tapia and Patrick Simon, *Le Belleville des Juifs tunisiens* (Paris: Autrement, 2008); Zytnicki, "Du rapatrié au séfarade"; Brav, *All the Way to France*; Christine Balland Mounier, "Manières de table des immigrés. L'exemple de Juifs tunisiens à Paris," *Diasporas: Histoire et sociétés* 7 (2005): 106-118, www.persee.fr/doc/diasp_1637-5823_2005_num_7_1_1018, accessed April 1, 2025; Laurence Podselver, "Le pélerinage tunisien de Sarcelles," *Socio-anthropologie* 10 (2001), http://journals.openedition.org/socio-anthropologie/157, accessed April 1, 2025; Podselver, "De la périphérie au centre: Sarcelles ville juive," in *Les juifs et la ville*, ed. Chantal Bordes-Benayoun (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2000), 78-90.

Bachelard,[12] the historian Guy Miron,[13] the anthropologist Joëlle Bahloul,[14] and the anthropologist Mary Douglas,[15] among others. All of them researched the ways in which various aspects of the mental map of the domestic space in an individual's narrative are instructive of the collective narrative.

Research on Personal and Collective Memory in Memoir Literature

The memoir literature of the Tunisian Jews who emigrated to Paris will serve as the corpus of knowledge of this study. A memoirist's purpose is to mediate between the past and the future so that the personal history of the value, emotional, and ideological messages that they retain will constitute an anchor and a compass for posterity. These messages are influenced by a collective memory that, when passed on by the individual within a community framework, influences the collective memory of the generations to come.[16] These bisymmetrical relations sustain the mental maps of the domestic space. This research postulate leads to an investigation of the implications of the memoirists' mental maps for the image of the domestic space and, by implication, for the examination of their worldview. The study is based on the theoretical models of Pierre Nora and Maurice Halbwachs and the studies mentioned above in the literature review.

Memory, Pierre Nora claims, begins only after a person is displaced from a place that is dear to them. At that moment, the place ceases to be a *milieu* (a physical location) and becomes a *lieu de mémoire* (place of memory).[17] The personal lieu de mémoire intersects spontaneously with other personal places of memory, yielding a collective memory and allowing bisymmetrical relations between the personal and collective memories to take shape. Halbwachs also finds that personal

[12] Gastón Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France, 1958).

[13] Guy Miron, *To Be a Jew in Nazi Germany: Space and Time* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2022) [Hebrew].

[14] Joëlle Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937–1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[15] Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space," Social Research 58, no. 1 (1991): 287-307.

[16] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 51.

[17] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Zmanim* 45 (1993): 4-19.

memory is influenced by collective memory[18] but describes the relationship not as bidirectional, à la Nora, but unidirectional; that is, individuals are influenced by their dominant surroundings. According to both scholars, when the lieu de mémoire becomes a mental residue, it is written as a personal memory that reflects a collective memory.

The narrative of personal memory is told from the writer's angle and is subject to the influences of the surroundings and of subsequent memories.[19] It focuses on specific events, messages, and ideas that serve its writer's purpose. Thus, the memory of a Jew who emigrated from Tunis to Paris sometimes centers on their childhood home in Tunis and disregards their lives in Paris because they wish to emphasize their love of the birth country that they were forced to abandon, disregarding the fact that they are living in a place where they feel in exile.[20] This message runs like a crimson thread through the memoir literature of the Jews of Tunisia, such that the memoirists' successors—although they had never experienced life in Tunisia—continue to experience a rooted connection with their ancestors' land of birth, which serves them as an anchor of tradition, heritage, and culture.

This message manifests itself also in memoirs written in other Jewish and non-Jewish diasporic communities.[21]

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[18] Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, 46.

[19] Ibid., 125; Guy Miron, *From "There" to "Here" in the First Person* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2004), 103 [Hebrew]; Amia Lieblich, "On the Craft of Biography," in *Other Matters*, eds. Hanna Adoni and Yitzhak Roeh (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 1997), 31-45 [Hebrew].

[20] Ewa Tartakowsky, "Entre mémoire et histoire: Écrivains d'origine judéo-maghrébine en France: une approche sociologique," *Tsafon* 70 (2016): 61-81; 61.

[21] See for example: Moreno and Bitton, "*The Moroccan 'Yizkor Book'*" [Morocco]; Nissim Zohar, *Ha-Molokhiya shel Imma* [Mom's Molokhiya] (Tel-Aviv: Yediot Sefarim, 2006) [Egypt]; Tahar ben-Jelloun, *The Happy Marriage: A Novel*, trans.: André Naffis-Sahely (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing, 2016) [Morocco]; Assia Djebar, *Children of the New World: A Novel of the Algerian War*, Trans.: Marjolijn de Jager (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 2005) [Algeria]; Zafer Şenocak, *Gefährliche Verwandtchaeft* (Munich: Babel Verlag, 1998) [German].

Defining the domestic space

The Jewish émigrés' domestic space is typified by two main spaces in which they circulate, one Jewish (internal and external) and the other non-Jewish (Enlightenment and sociocultural relations), represented by a mental map that they create in their memoirs. Such a map is subjective because it represents the émigrés' point of view toward the geographic domain that surrounds them as they experience change in their lives. It gives them continuity in terms of space and time and re-creates the constituent elements of the home, the physical place and space, and allows them to compare their childhood home as they adjust to the new space.[22]

Here I focus on the concept of domestic space. I wish to characterize it in three dimensions: (a) *physical space*—the house and the piece of land on which it sits; (b) *home*—the emotional connection that a person maintains with the family members, close neighbors, and objects, customs, traditions, values, culture, and language that fill the physical space. Writing about this dimension, the geographer Tovi Fenster defines the home is "an emotional space identified with the 'I' and the order in which it reflects the emotional balance."[23] For Jews, writes the historian Guy Miron, home denotes "sites fraught with depth of history and consciousness."[24] It should be noted that some authors, contrarily, ascribe these characteristics to the concept of "space"[25]; (c) *time*—the dimension of time modifies the image of home in two ways: first, in special events that are observed in the domestic space (e.g., festivals) and, second, attitudes, outlooks, and aspirations that one changes over the years and that change one's way of viewing the home.[26] These three dimensions manifest in continual and integrated motion,

[22] Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory*, 28.
[23] Tovi Fenster, *The Global City and the Holy City: Narratives on Knowledge Planning and Diversity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 121.
[24] Miron, *To Be a Jew*, 61.
[25] Patrizia Violi, *Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Space, History* (Lausanne: Peter Lang, 2017), 13.
[26] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 25.

as Miron says: "Home is a very liquid place of human existence; it reflects and substantiates identities and values."[27]

The Research Corpus

Of a corpus of writers who documented their lives in Tunisia after emigrating to France, nine memoirists were chosen—six men and three women—who grew up in Tunis between the 1920s and the 1960s. All belonged to the Twansa community who received French education, lived in surroundings that were influenced by francophone language and culture to one extent or another, and emigrated to Paris at different ages in the 1950s and 1960s. Importantly, as far as I know, no memoirs have been written by Tunisian Jewish immigrants who initially settled in renewed community framework neighborhoods such as Belleville.
This set of criteria denotes the spatial complexity with which most of the Tunisian Jewish emigrés to Paris had to struggle in order to define a home.
Below are their biographical details (surnames in alphabetical order):

Berrebi, Franklin: born in the European quarter of Tunis in the late 1940s to a francophone mother who worked as a midwife and to a father of traditional orientation who was unemployed and a compulsive gambler. In Tunis, Franklin attended a French government school and emigrated in 1957 with his parents and one of his brothers to Paris, where the two brothers attended a government school while their three sisters remained in Tunis and lived with their grandparents. Shortly after emigrating, Franklin's father returned to Tunis because he did not wish to acclimatize in French society. He did not reclaim his daughters. Franklin's mother remained with the two boys in Paris and held sewing and white-collar jobs.

Kummer, Ida: born in 1950 in a prestigious part of Tunis and raised in a family profoundly connected with the West and weakly associated with Judaism. Her father was a surgeon; when young Muslim doctors crowded him out, he saw no

[27] Miron, *To Be a Jew*, 108, following Tiina Peil's definition, "Home," in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, eds. Nigel Thrift and Rob Kitchin (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 180.

further place for Jews in Tunisia and emigrated with his family to Paris in 1962. Ida was a scholar of comparative literature.

Memmi, Albert: born in Tunis in 1920 on the edge of the Jewish quarter. In his childhood, his traditional family moved to a building in the European quarter that was tenanted exclusively by Jewish families and had a synagogue next door. He attended an Alliance Israélite Universelle school and went on to the Lycée Carnot French government high school. After World War II, Albert migrated to Paris to study philosophy at the Sorbonne, married a Christian woman, returned with her to Tunis, taught at the Carnot school, and re-emigrated to Paris in 1956 after Tunisia received its independence.

Moati, Henri (Serge): born in Tunis in 1946 in Villa Jasmin, a mansion built by his father, Serge Moati (a journalist, playwright, socialist, and freedom fighter) in the middle of the European quarter of Tunis. He emigrated to Paris in 1957 with his sister Nine after his parents died and was enrolled in a prestigious but antisemitic residential school.

Moati, Nine: born in Tunis in 1937 and emigrated to Paris in 1957 with her brother. In her memoir, her mother occupies the middle of the mental map of the domestic space.

Nahum, Dr. André: born in the Jewish quarter of Tunis in 1921 to a traditional family and moved to the European quarter in childhood. André received his schooling at the Alliance school and the Lycée Carnot. After World War II, he migrated to Paris for medical studies, married a Christian woman, returned to Tunis, worked at a hospital, and re-emigrated to Paris in 1961 during the Bizerte crisis.

Nataf Gmach, Jacqueline Semha: born in Tunis in 1942 to an upper-middle-class family that combined traditional life with exposure to the West. Her father was the dentist Edouard Nataf, a well-known and -regarded personality in Tunis. She migrated to Paris in 1958 and thence to Canada and afterwards to the United States, where she wrote her memoirs.

Taïeb, Dr. Yves: born in Tunis in 1949 in the European quarter to a francophone family. His father owned a glass factory that had been in the family for several generations. Yves attended a French government school. In 1961, his family fled to Paris due to fear of the Muslims; there, Yves attended the prestigious Lycée Voltaire high school and endured antisemitic treatment. He completed medical studies.

Zarca, Bernard: born in Tunis in 1941, emigrated to Paris in the mid-1950s. His father was raised in the Hara of Tunis and invested in acquiring French education and attaining affluence in the European quarter of the city. Zarca shuttled between two houses in the European quarter: one belonging to his biological mother and the other owned by his older sister, whom he regarded as a second mother.

Tunis Space versus Paris Space: Jewish Space

Physical Space

"Only I, in my memoirs from another century, can open the deep wall closet that still retains, for my sake only, the special scent, the scent of raisins drying on the lattice...".[28] Thus Gastón Bachelard describes the way one's childhood home, with its various rooms, is etched into one's soul. The memoirists mentioned above, too, from their homes in Paris, open the wall closet to the reader, the closet preserved deep in their souls, and reveal nostalgically the physical space of the childhood home in Tunis, filled by the mother-character in most cases and by the father-character in only a few.

Mother in the center of the domestic space. Bernard Zarca grew up in the European quarter as a member of an affluent family. It was his mother who filled his world—not only one mother but two: his biological mother, Nelly, and his older sister, Maïsa, each of whom had a house of her own in the European quarter. Nelly lived modestly on a side street off a main boulevard; Maïsa lived on the main

[28] Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, 51.

boulevard. From his place of residence in Paris, Zarca gives a detailed account of Maïsa's ground-floor apartment,[29] a spacious dwelling flooded with light, equipped with a large kitchen and set in a beautiful stone building overlooking a broad boulevard that exited into L'avenue Jules Ferry (even after it was renamed L'avenue de Bourguiba) and onto a public park fenced with centuries-old palm trees. Maïsa habitually sat in an old leather armchair on the balcony, observing the scenery and exchanging greetings with passersby. Bernard often escaped to this house from Nelly's secluded and conservative dwelling.[30] Nelly shared the house with Amima, Aaron's sister, who was childless and therefore adopted Nelly's second son. The house was indeed "a very liquid place," as Guy Miron says. The mental map that Zarca drew teaches us, on the one hand, about his profound attachment to France and, on the other hand, about his yearnings for the unique sensation of being a francophone amid the Oriental ambience of Tunis.

Albert Memmi's home also centered around his mother, a traditional woman who protects her family and appears in every corner that her child occupies within the domestic space, which straddles the seam between local Jewish tradition and heritage and francophone influences—as reflected in its location, on Tarfoun Lane at the entrance to the Jewish quarter. There the large family packs itself into one room and shares the rest of the space and the yard with another family. Memmi, unlike Zarca, finds mother's love with every step he takes at home.[31] At the very beginning of his first book, *The Pillar of Salt*, his mother appears as a protective figure: "My mother would remove the two iron bars that protected our front door against thieves and pogroms."[32]

The Memmis' family life throbbed with joie de vivre and reflected the value of sharing and fraternity that underpinned the community's life and represented its rhythm and spatial and temporal organization.[33] The living space spilled from family to family and so, within it, the kitchen space—partly covered—tumbled from the house into the yard, "the womb of the mother's home," as Joel Bahloul

[29] Ibid., 17-18.

[30] Ibid., 41.

[31] Ibid., 4.

[32] Albert Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), 4.

[33] The structure of the Arab home and its reflection of the way of life practiced there. View Kobi Peled, *Architecture: The Arab Home as a Social Text* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2012), 28 [Hebrew]; Douglas, "The Idea of a Home," 293-294.

says.[34] Crossing the kitchen lengthwise, one emerged not only from darkness to light but also from domestic scents and sounds to those outside. The kitchen was shared only for preparing food; meals were taken in the privacy of the family room at a round table—the grandfather's sole estate—that stood between the wall, painted in blue-lime, and the beds.[35] The liquidity of home found further expression in the re-use of neighborhood children's clothing, which mothers handed to their counterparts.[36] When Mordechai Benilouche noticed a boy in the neighborhood wearing something that had been his, his mother explained to him that he himself was wearing the clothing of other neighborhood children.[37] This "liquidity," purposed as a vehicle of mutual assistance, symbolizes the unity of individual and collective that had come about. The "liquidity" of the home flowed not only from the interior outward but vice versa as well, in the sense of insecurity at times of pogroms. On these occasions, Muslim masses stormed the Jews' homes and the Jews' only defense was not the door but rather the iron bars installed on it.[38]

In contrast to Zarca and Memmi, those who experienced displacement from homes or parents introduce their mothers at that moment of displacement, which marks the collapse of the home. Thus, Yves Taïeb's mother stands in the center of the home at the moment his family is displaced from the home and its artifacts: the moment at which they have to escape from Tunisia. After setting in Paris, he recalls, with mixed feelings of nostalgia and pride of belonging to the West, the world that crumbled in one stroke before his eyes—a European world enveloped in Oriental atmosphere. He begins his memoir by describing the location of the childhood home on the rue de Marseille 11, in the heart of the European quarter, perpendicular to the Avenue de Bourguiba (formerly L'avenue de Jules Ferry) and parallel to L'avenue de Paris. It is important to note that, for the Jews of Tunis, Jules Ferry—Prime Minister and Minister of Education at the outset of French protectorate rule—symbolizes emancipation and enlightenment after centuries of

[34] Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory*, 41.
[35] Ibid., 4.
[36] Ibid., 63.
[37] Ibid., 9.
[38] Ibid., 253.

ignorance, in contrast to Habib Bourguiba, who epitomizes the return of the benighted years of Muslim rule.[39]

Taïeb spent his childhood in the bubble of the European zone, bounded by the Lafayette quarter and the public park of the Belvédère neighborhood, where his parents took their recreation on Sabbath.[40] Although the author specifies the location at the very beginning of the book, he describes the layout of the apartment and contents of special sentimental value only later, in the context of emigration to Paris.[41] The Jews, most of whom held Tunisian citizenship, were not allowed to take more than one dinar (approx. 500 French francs) and one suitcase per emigrant.[42] Therefore, they had to sell everything they owned for a pittance or surrender it to Muslims. The displacement from the home formed the memory of his mother selling a grand chandelier to a wretched-looking rag seller for pennies.[43]

For Nine Moati, too, the moment of displacement is the point in time when the mother appears at the center of the physical space of the home. In this case, the moment of displacement is her mother's death in Tunis. Moati commemorates her mother's physical presence in every possible way in order to transfer the childhood domestic space to the next generation of women of the family in Paris—including everything this space contains: the things, aromas, flavors, sounds, and touches that make it special and the love and warmth with which the mother fills it. For this purpose, Nine carries her deceased mother's clothing and adjusts them to her size.[44] She also keeps her mother's recipes and Tunisian Arabic sayings so that she can establish physical continuity with the world of the women who had carried this home on their shoulders. When her daughter will be born, Nine says, she will tell her "Tefrachn tfouje, tekbar, touli arroussa, fil karoussa" (grow, blossom, fulfill yourself, and marry in a horse-drawn carriage).[45] She also carries away contents of the apartment after her parents' death so that the next tenants

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[39] Miron, *To Be a Jew*, 18. Renaming a main street denotes a new era.

[40] Yves Taïeb, *L'enfant et la Boutargue: Souvenirs* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015), 15-16.

[41] Ibid., 30-33.

[42] View, for example, Claude Kayat, Mohammed Cohen, *The Adventures of an Arabian Jew* (Oxford: Bergh Publishing, 1989); André Nahum, *Tunis-la-Juive raconte* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000), 55.

[43] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 30.

[44] Nine Moati, *Mon enfant, ma mère* (Paris: Ramsay, 2006), 142.

[45] Ibid., 36 and 45-46.

will use nothing that belonged to her parents.[46] Thus, in writing her memoirs, Moati uses nostalgia to create a bridge between the personal memory and the collective one.

On August 25, 1955, Franklin Berrebi left Tunis together with his mother, his father, and his youngest brother, and emigrated to Paris. They intended to settle in and then bring over the other siblings. Shortly after they emigrated, however, his father returned to Tunis. He had become estranged from his children and did not see them again. It was at this point, which he experienced as the trauma of displacement, that Berrebi invoked nostalgia to create a mental map of the domestic space in Tunis, with his mother as the pillar of emotional support even though her husband tried to quash her aspirations and personality.[47] In the physical space of the home in Paris, too—a room in a paupers' hotel—his mother is the pillar of not only emotional but also physical and economic support. She gives her offspring a sense of home-ness that affords both privacy (corners to sleep in, corners to apply makeup) and sharing (the kitchen). They share the conveniences and the shower with the other tenants on the floor.[48]

Father in the center of the domestic space. Alone among the memoirists in this corpus, Henri Serge Moati places his father at the center of the physical space of the image of the home in Tunis. Together with his sister, Nine, Henri is torn from his home after his parents' death and his escape. With these events, the home, perched on a hill in the middle of Tunis and overlooking the seashore, became a ruin: "Sometimes the new owners of the house ripped out everything around and rummaged in search for goodies. An atmosphere of the end of the world or, at least, the end of an era."[49] Moati delivers this nostalgic account of a world that collapsed together with the home from the migrant's sense of loneliness. The memory of the home and its centerpiece, his father, Serge Moati— the heroic warrior against antisemitism[50]—draws Moati fils to his roots and thus helps him to surmount the hardships of his adjustment to Paris. Only after he gains mental strength does he turn, in his Le Vieil Orphelin, to comparing the physical space of

[46] Ibid., 143.
[47] Ibid., 18 and 54.
[48] Ibid., 73.
[49] Ibid., 25.
[50] Serge Moati, *Villa Jasmin. Roman* (Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 2003).

the home in Paris— the prestigious but antisemitic Lycée Michelet residential school[51]—with his childhood home in Tunis. The comparison reflects the change that has occurred in the image of the home under the influence of changes in place and the vicissitudes of time.

The Internal Jewish Space (Religion and Tradition)

The roots of the Tunisian Jewish community were engrained in its culinary traditions, which manifested in traditional food prepared in the kitchen and served at the dining table, around which the older generation labored to maintain the family's integrity and rootedness. In Tunis, the rituals of culinary tradition were observed in the community space and in the presence of the extended family; in Paris, in contrast, they unfolded in a space of scant Jewishness and within the narrow framework of the nuclear family, absent the grandparents who had been the family's traditional compass. The émigré, feeling unmoored, nostalgically reconstructs the image of the home as Jewish observances had been honored there. In his imagination, he dresses his childhood home, its inhabitants, and its objects in unique scenes, scents, and sounds that strengthen the connection between him and those around him and the domestic space, and between present and past.[52]
For Dr. André Nahum, the sublime flavor of the couscous that was eaten before the onset of the Yom Kippur fast mingles with the memory of the slaughtered chicken of the kapparot ritual, and the two of them build a bridge between the internal Jewish space and the external Jewish space, and between present and past:

> It was hard to endure the smell of the hot blood. Feathers flew in every direction, making us sneeze and cough. We remained motionless, riveted but feeling disgusted all the same. Mother and Grandma got to work right away. They had to cut, slice, and broil the chickens, knead the mixture, and prepare superb *haboush* with cloves for each of us; its aroma was thought to make the fast go easier. In the afternoon, long before nightfall, after we tasted the glorious High Holiday couscous, we went, my brother

[51] Serge Moati, *Le Vieil Orphelin. Récit* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013), 31-32.
[52] Peter Gould and Rodney White, *Mental Maps* (London: Routledge, 1993), 2; Bahloul, T*he Architecture of Memory*, 29.

> and I, took showers, brushed our teeth, combed our hair, got dressed, put on new shoes, and walked with our father to the synagogue.[53]

Franklin Berrebi also places couscous in the background of the complex and tortuous tableau of his childhood home, comparing the present, in a wretched room in a Paris hotel that he shares with his mother, his brother, and his mother's cousin—fragments of a family—and the past, in which he and his intact family dwell in their home in Tunis. In Tunis, alongside the couscous that festoons the dining table on Sabbath eve and the resplendently dressed family, stands his father in full glory, projecting an atmosphere of sanctity onto the household. He is the same father who caused the family so much sadness, a drunk who humiliated his wife, imposed rigid religious laws on the household, and tore the family apart.[54] In his nostalgic image of the past, Berrebi finds a flicker of light in the gloomy scene of his home in Tunis and uses it to create the illusion of an idyllic family, thus bolstering his morale in the exile that has been imposed on him as a member of a shattered family.

Central in the retrospective image of Albert Memmi's childhood home, too, stands the festive Sabbath table, bearing an opulent bowl of couscous and circled by family members in festive attire and the memoirist's father exuding an atmosphere of sanctity after a week of grueling labor. The picture emerges from mixed sensations of nostalgia and anger toward the father due to Albert's resistance to religious coercion tainted with hypocrisy: his father demands that his children treat the meals as religious events but pays a Gentile to turn off the electricity. The boy picks an acrid argument with his father, on account of which he experiences a profound crisis of faith.[55] Memmi reconstructs the occasion nostalgically because, from his point of view as an émigré in a non-Jewish environment, he understands the importance of communityness and religion, even if he has his criticism, and tries to make repairs.

Similarly, Jacqueline Nataf Gmach rebels against her father and alleges religious hypocrisy. This, however, happens after the family emigrates to Paris and amid another issue: intermarriage, her father refusing to let her marry a Christian. This

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[53] André Nahum, *Partir en Kappara* (Piranhas Éditions, 1977), 27.

[54] Franklin Berrebi, *Tunis, Paris, Ma Mère* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2019), 85-86.

[55] Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*, 141-142.

quandary was almost nonexistent in the traditional and homogeneous environment of the Jewish community of Tunis. Although in his daily life the Jew interacted with non-Jews, rarely would this connection continue within the home context. In these terms, there was an almost complete sociocultural and religious separation between Jews and non-Jews. The dilemma of intermarriage surfaces when religion and tradition lose their potency as pillars of support and are replaced in this role by Enlightenment (see below). Now older and more mature, Nataf Gmach understands her father's obstinacy and acknowledges the importance of the parents' role as adherents to tradition, and of the young generation's role in heeding them, given the centrality of the values of family and honoring parents in the Jewish heritage.[56]

The External Jewish Space (Synagogue and Community Activity)

Since the religious space among those who lead francophone lifestyle was maintained mainly for the purpose of family gatherings, the space that linked the childhood home and the synagogue is marginal in the émigrés' memory. One may explain this marginality by quoting Albert Memmi, who notes that the synagogue in its current form—a rundown institution relative to the church—turned Jews away from religion.[57] Memmi, the émigré, writes in this vein attempting to weave his personal memory into the collective one and thus help to strengthen the synagogue's status. Importantly, the thirty-two synagogues that populated the cramped area of the Jewish neighborhood demonstrate the profound connection of the Tunisian Jew with religion, even if Memmi criticizes it.

Jacqueline Nataf Gmach, unlike Memmi, forges a strong connection with the synagogue because her father prods her to function in a more masculine manner in society (wishing that she had been born male). Therefore, she takes part in synagogue services as the Sabbath approaches (as the only person in the women's gallery because the other women are busy cooking) and reads aloud from the prayer book as do the men—with emphasis on Sephardi intonation and Judeo-Arabic pronunciation—as the men stare at her as though observing a strange bird

[56] Hillary Selese Liber and Jacqueline Semha Gmach, *From Bomboloni to Bagel: A Story of Two Worlds* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2014), 66.

[57] Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*, 51-52.

who does not belong in the traditional landscape. From the point of view of an émigrée in three Western countries—France, Canada, and the United States—Nataf Gmach, much like Albert Memmi, sends a critical message about the social marginalization of women in the community's religious atmosphere and the ban on their participation in life as men's equals.[58]

After their emigration to Paris, the religious space outside the domestic one, with the synagogue at its core, is almost totally erased from the diarists' world.

Sometimes, as Franklin Berrebi reports,[59] parents enrolled their children in Sunday school programs at the synagogue (Merkaz de Montmartre, for example) trying to keep them in touch with the Jewish tradition. The Judaism preserved in these settings, however, follows the tradition of the Ashkenazi majority. Unlike Berrebi, Nataf Gmach—after her father refuses to endorse her mixed marriage—understands her social foreignness and seeks her roots. Thus, she enrolls at the Centre Universitaire d'Etudes Juives (CUEJ), where she receives instruction in Judaism and subsequently takes a combination of Biblical and Zionist studies and bonds with Eretz Israel. Her parents also frown on her connection with Zionism.[60]

Tunis space versus Paris space: The Non-Jewish Space

The Enlightenment Space

From the late nineteenth century on, secularism seeped into Jewish life in Tunis via two French education systems: that of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, its curriculum containing a small dosage of Jewish studies and a much larger dosage of general studies, and that of the French government, offering students in Tunis a curriculum identical to the French. This curriculum was based on the principles of the French revolution, itself influenced by the ideas promoted by the Enlightenment—an intellectual and philosophical movement during the 17th-18th centuries that featured social ideas centered on the value of knowledge by way of rationalism and empiricism, and political ideas centered on the values of

[58] Liber and Gmach, *From Bomboloni to Bagel*, 33-34.
[59] Berrebi, *Tunis, Paris*, 93.
[60] Liber and Gmach, *From Bomboloni to Bagel*, 67-68.

freedom, equality, fraternity, tolerance and morality.[61] The high interest that Jews showed in the European Enlightenment and the French revolution ideas did not arise in a vacuum. They were already exposed to and influenced by the European Haskala movement—through Hebrew newspapers such as Ha-Tsfira, Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides and authors such as Avraham Mapou. This movement aspired to both preserve Jewish uniqueness and revive it culturally and spiritually according to European Enlightenment values.[62]

Many lower- and middle-class Jewish children received their elementary schooling in the Alliance system, which thus became a traditional place of Jewish education in the early ages. Children from more affluent strata enrolled in government schools or French or Italian private schools; thus, they were more exposed to Western currents and drawn away from the Jewish tradition.

Among the memoirists examined in this study, Albert Memmi is the best example of the influence of the Enlightenment space on the émigrés' mindset and course of life. Memmi grew up with a mother who was illiterate, awash in folk beliefs, and disdainful of the importance of modern education; his father, in contrast, was a leather worker who aspired to give his son the modern schooling that he had been denied. Both parents, however, thought it very important to continue upholding religious values and rules, thrusting Memmi into an internal conflict between the values of secularism that underlay the French education system and the religious, social, and cultural values of the home. Memmi's inner struggle impacted the religious space from which he emerged, as manifested in an argument that Albert as a boy had with his father at a Sabbath meal about the meaning of the faith.[63] The clash placed him at a crossroads between choosing the path of Enlightenment or that of tradition and religion. It is true that he chose the former and considered himself a universalist. Still, he did not disengage from tradition, seeing the

[61] Denis Charbit, *The Emancipated Man: Anthology of Enlightenment and of the French Revolution* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2013), 14.

[62] Yosef Chetrit, "Hebrew National Modernity versus French Modernity: The Hebrew Enlightenment in North Africa at The End of the 19th Century," *Mi-Kedem U-Miyam* 3 (1990): 11-76 [Hebrew]; Tamir Karkason, F*rom Home and Abroad: The Jewish Haskala in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2024); Lital Levy, "The Nahda and the Haskala: A Comparative Reading of 'Revival' and 'Reform'," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 16, no. 3 (2013): 300-316.

[63] See above: "The Internal Jewish Space (Religion and Tradition)".

integration of universalism and particularism as the way Jews should implement their role as light unto the nations. At this point, it is worth noting that the rejection to folk beliefs was not only by enlightened Jews in Islamic countries but also by members of rabbinic elite. One example is Rabbi Saliman-Menahem Mani (1850 Baghdad-1924 Hebron), who, in his short story "The Valley of the Devils" (1885), a satirical confession of "Saliman", exemplified the fight of Sephardic rabbis against folk beliefs.[64]

For Jacqueline Nataf Gmach, unlike Memmi, studies were an inseparable part of the way of life, even when her family spent vacation on the seashore. In her subsequent life as a senior lecturer, she sketched a mental map in which she sat in a resort area, "shackled" to her homework under her father's heel and peering enviously through the open door at children at joyful play:

> Every day, even Sunday, we have to do our homework before we can play. The door is open and we can see our friends having fun on the beach, but we have to do our homework... We may not complain about the work. We may not ask to go play with our friends. Even pausing to glance at the sea and to observe the fun might result in a reprimand. My papa is very strict. Very, very strict. And we have to obey.[65]

Importantly, Nataf Gmach's domestic space does bond with European Enlightenment. However, she does not replace tradition but rather positions herself at its side.

If so, the Enlightenment space in Tunis was grounded in a high-quality French education system. Given that education was one of the main considerations in emigrating, many members of the community decided to emigrate to Paris because they, or their children, could continue to receive quality education there. The options of education in Paris were two only: the government system or a private school. The nonexistence of Jewish educational environment such as that of the Alliance further weakened the community members' traditional pre-emigration anchor. The role of the school expanded in Paris: it became the pupils' second

[64] Keren Dotan, *Form and its Discontents: Hebrew Mizrahi Writers in Eretz-Yisrael/Palestine in the Turn of the 20th Century* (Haifa: Pardes, 2022), 101-110.
[65] Liber and Gmach, *From Bomboloni to Bagel*, 7-8.

home, both because the youngsters spent most hours of the day there and because it was their space of integration into French society. Furthermore, the gap between the values imparted at home and those given over in school narrowed as parents tried to reconcile their domestic values with those of the surrounding society in order to facilitate their children's acclimatization. For this reason, they viewed manifestations of antisemitism as part of the acclimation process and instructed Jewish pupils to put up with such manifestations in school. This made the Enlightenment space a gear in the transmission from the sociocultural space, outside the community, to the Jewish space—and individuals' acclimatization depended on their ability to keep the three spaces moving in harmony.

The boy Yves Taïeb endured antisemitic manifestations in school and had to satisfy three necessities—to integrate, to maintain his Jewishness, and to excel—in a hostile environment. He wished to prove that he was truly French and that he accepted French values. He wrote his personal memoirs many years after having become a family physician who was immersed in his surroundings and identified with its competitive values. The influence of the collective narrative is well evident in his remarks:

> I was afraid of the unknown and thought only about my studies... When I told them that I had arrived from Tunisia, the first days were very difficult. First, it was two years after the Algeria War. Some of my classmates had seen their brothers wounded and resented anyone who had come from North Africa, and they did not distinguish among the three countries of the Maghreb... but it was no big deal. They asked me if I fetched water from a well or whether I could wash myself or whether there was electricity... Finally, they tired of it after a few days and stopped. They accepted me sympathetically but I wanted more, I wanted them to be aware of what they were for me: French! The real thing! The second matter that helped me a lot were my grades in school. I was first in my class and was respected because I had "come from a foreign country."[66]

[66] Taïeb, *L'enfant et la Boutargue*, 89-90. It is important to note here that according to Taïeb the Maghreb consists of three countries (Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco). Although Lybia is a Magherian country, he excludes it probably because it was an Italian and not a French colony, and

The Sociocultural Space

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Jewish families launched a process of moving from a residential environment adjacent to Muslims to a European one. A popular location was "Le Passage" (Place Anatole France), on the corner of Avenue de Paris and Avenue Roustan. They did this with two goals in mind: to climb the social ladder, and to fit into French society.[67] Centuries of life shoulder-to-shoulder with Muslims, however, could not be erased merely by moving house; some Jews aspired to combine their European (mainly, French) way of life with sociocultural and even ideological cooperation with the Muslims. The latter, however, wished to purge the common space of Jews, as attested in their anti-Jewish pogroms from the World War II era up to that of the Six-Day War. The cruel violation of Jews' personal space by a Muslim rabble prompted Jews to conclude that living cooperatively with Muslims could not be done. Several examples follow:

> Albert Memmi was already active in the socialist movement in Tunis as an adolescent, working arm-in-arm with Muslim activists to create creating inter-ethnic cooperation in establishing an independent Tunisia. Despite the stories he had heard as a boy about Muslim pogroms against the Jews and despite the metal bars that were laid across the door of his home at the approach of evening, he believed that by intellectual discourse Jews could live side-by-side with Muslims in relative safety. The perpetration of pogroms against the Jews of Tunis by Muslim soldiers in the French Army

its Jewry mostly emigrated to Israel and Italy. The origin for the viewpoint that the Maghreb is French goes back to his education in the French governmental system.

[67] The following are three examples of description of the move and explanations: Albert Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*, 60; Nine Moati, Les Belles de Tunis: roman (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1983), 171; Lucette Valensi and Nathan Wachtel, Jewish Memories, trans. Barbara Harshav (Oakland: University of California Press, 1986), 174 [An interview with Georges X and André, regarding a move from the Hara to the European Quarter].

For transcultural comparison regarding the move from the Hara to the European (Italian) Quarter in Tripoli, view Barbara Spadaro, "Remembering the 'Italian' Jewish Homes of Libya: Gender and Transcultural Memory (1967-2013)," *The Journal of North African Studies* 23, no. 5 (2018): 811-833; 812.

> during World War II, however, shattered his sense of confidence and his belief in the possibility of living side-by-side harmoniously. His best friend, Bissor, and the friend's family were murdered in the violence, causing Albert to experience a trauma for which he emigrated to France for the first time—the France that he had carried in his soul all his life, as reflected in his memoirs.[68]

The Kummer family, which tried to establish amicable relations with the Muslim surroundings—to the point of strongly downplaying its Jewish identity—also found itself disillusioned with the idea of coexistence. It happened twice: when Ida Kummer, then a girl, was kidnapped by a Muslim and saved by virtue of an American who had been nearby, and again when her father, a well-known surgeon, was crowded out by his Muslim students when Bourguiba rose to power.[69] The map that Ida draws is one of an upper-class family in the center of social and community life that hurtles to the margins overnight when a change in government changes the system of social values. Those moments of humiliation and fear were deeply imprinted into Kummer's soul, and her father's words, "Jews have no future in Tunisia," resonate inside her whenever she recalls her childhood home.[70]

This vain attempt to integrate into the Tunisian society and being rejected solely for being Jewish is not a unique case. The following is another example: Mr. Bichi was sent as a child to a public school to graduate with Arabic as a main language, in order to integrate into the newly established Tunisian state, but his family understood that Tunisia had no place for the Jews.[71]

Ambivalent relations with the Muslim population are not exceptional, but rather a recurrent pattern across the Islamic world. The following are a few examples:

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[68] Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*, 253.

[69] Ida Kummer, "La mauvaise affaire: Tunis, Belvédère," in *Une Enfance Juive en Méditerranée musulmane: Textes Inédits*, ed. Leïla Sebbar (Sain-Pourçain-sur Sioule: Bleu Autour, 2012), 195-202.

[70] Ibid., 198.

[71] Mr. Bichi, interview by Gilat Brav, December 9, 2015, interview 44, transcript, Gilat Brav, "The Figure of the Jewish Immigrant from Northern Tunisia to France between the Thirties and the Seventies of the Twentieth Century as Expressed in Memoirs, Testimonies, Journals and Letters" (PhD diss., University of Haifa, 2020); view also: Brav, *All the Way to France, Appendices*.
Brav, *All the Way to France*, Appendices.

Moreno and Bitton show that Muslims in Morocco, on the one hand protected Jews during the Vichy regime and on the other hand attacked them during the riots in 1952;[72] Bashkin shows that at the same time that Muslim men attacked, raped and looted Jews during the Farhoud (1941), Muslim women helped Jewish women;[73] and lastly, Tachjian demonstrates how, the Armenian genocide during World War I was done not only by Ottomans, but also by ordinary inhabitants, who were a moment ago their friends and then—perpetrators and murderers.[74]

Unlike the disengagement of the extra-community social space from the religious space that typified Jewish life in Tunis, in Paris the two spaces interacted. That is, in Tunis Jews could integrate into the French social space while leaving their intra-community roots intact, whereas in France they had to displace themselves. This phenomenon has been also observed by a few researchers, for example: Colette Zytnicki, who observed that the Tunisian Jewish immigrants "suppressed their culture for the sake of a successful integration;[75] and by Patrick Simon and Claude Tapia, who observed that "In the process of social ascension, the Tunisian Jews risked severing their roots, forgetting their origins, betraying their identity."[76]

As a result, in the 1960s Jews from Tunisia experienced high intermarriage rate.[77] The subjects of our study give evidence of this: both André Nahum and Albert Memmi intermarried during their terms of study in France. Given their deep rootedness in the Tunisian Jewish tradition, however, they devoted their lives to commemorating the legacy and history of Tunisian Jewry. One of the issues that both personalities take up in their writings is intermarriage, and their conclusions are different, as I show presently.

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[72] Moreno and Bitton, "The Moroccan 'Yizkor Book'."

[73] Orit Bashkin, "Saida's Farhoud: Jewish Women in the Farhoud – Survivors, restorers, heroines," *Ha-Mizrah He-Hadash* 62 (2023): 141-164.

[74] Vahé Tachjian, "Depicting the Past and its Diversity in the Age of Nationalisms: The Armenian Memory Books (houshamadyan)," *Diaspora* 23, no. 2 (2023): 160-182.

[75] Zytnicki, "Du rapatrié au séfarad," 96.

[76] Simon and Tapia, *Le Belleville*, 143.

[77] Bensimon and Della Pergola, "Structures Socio-Demographiques," 189. It should be noted that the initial acclimatization period in Paris was characterized by a high percentage of mixed marriages among Jewish immigrants from the Maghreb, especially in areas that were sparsely populated by Jews. View, for example: Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun, "Une histoire d'intégration, les Juifs d'Algérie et la France," *Les Nouveaux cahiers* 116 (1994): 69-76.

Memmi devotes his book Agar (1955) to discussion of the intermarriage issue and concludes that life within the framework of a mixed marriage is untenable when set in the rooted environment of one of the spouses. Therefore, living in cosmopolitan Paris allows each spouse to maintain their roots and the other spouse to impart their roots to posterity. André Nahum, in addition to the many books he wrote about Tunisian Jewish folklore and historical personalities, dedicated a book to the problem of assimilation. In his Juifs de France: la tentation de la assimilation (2007), he contends that assimilation is the product both of antisemitism and of an Ashkenazi haredi ("ultra-Orthodox") hegemony that allows no flexibility in religious observance. Therefore, the Jew struggles to integrate into surrounding society and French Jewry is doomed to disappear.

Conclusions

The story told in the memoirs of francisés Jews who emigrated from Tunis to Paris conveys the image of home and its surroundings as a personal memory that interacts continually with collective memory.

From the works examined in our research corpus, which are based on the personal memories of francisés Jews who emigrated to neighborhoods of Paris where they constituted a minority within Christian population, we find the individual in Tunis shuttling between two spaces, one Jewish and the other not. Given the anchoring of the Tunisian Jewish world in religion and tradition, the religious subspace served the domestic space as a pillar of support. The internal Jewish space revolved around the kitchen and the dining table and was orchestrated by women; the external Jewish space centered on the synagogue, foremost a place of social encounter but also an anchor for the creation and continuation of tradition. This space, a meaningful one in Jews' lives, also affected the Enlightenment space, either by clashing with it or in a harmonious flow. The two spaces, the Jewish and the socioculturally non-Jewish, in contrast, moved along parallel paths because each revolved around social life in a different community. That is, whereas the religious space was central in preserving the Jewish way of life in Tunis, the non-Jewish sociocultural space rose to centrality at times of distress, when the buffer that

protected the Jew's world was breached and Jews emigrated to Paris in order to continue their lives there.

Upon their emigration to Paris, francisés Jews aspired to maintain their old-country way of life and integrate into secular life. They managed to do both by stepping into the Enlightenment space, that is, the space in which they acquired—via their French-oriented education—their sociocultural and political values. This space continued to provide important support in creating the Jewish home, but while Jews in Tunis felt secure in that space—because their world was planted in tradition and religion—they "lost their way" in Paris due to the loss of the communityness that had underlay their lives in Tunis. They first experienced this loss in the religious space because they needed a new anchorage in Christian society. Thus, while in Tunis the Jewish space at large was also the community space and individual Jews could exist in it alongside the non-Jewish space, in Paris the familiar religious space contracted and did not ensure communityness. Therefore, Jews strove to create a religious space that would square with living conditions in Paris and often found it in assimilation.

In sum, the image of the Jewish home and its surroundings in the past is an emotional and mental construct that typifies émigrés' nostalgia and allows them to cope with the complex reality of emigration. Central in this image is the Enlightenment space, which built a bridge between Tunis and Paris and thereby allowed Jews to create continuity and adopt a pillar of support for their domestic space in lieu of the Jewish space that had provided this service in Tunis. Thus, the émigrés, despite sometimes "losing their way," could cling to familiar contents and strengthen their grip as they settled into their new space.

Appendix: Tunisian Jewish Memoirs

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Fig. 1. Illustration by Zohar Gannot, 2025

Gilat Brav focuses her research on the communities of Tunisia and Egypt. The topic of her doctoral dissertation (at Haifa University) is: "The Figure of the Jewish Immigrant from Northern Tunisia to France between the 1930s and the 1970s, as Expressed in Memoirs, Testimonies, Diaries and Letters." Dr. Brav is conducting post-doctoral comprehensive archival research, at Bar-Ilan University, on the topic "Prisoners of Zion in Egypt in the years 1948-1970: The Red Cross as the mainstay of international rescue efforts," under the supervision of Prof. Yaron Harel. She is a research fellow at the Center for the Study of The Jews of Spain and Islamic Lands: Past and Present, at the University of Haifa (headed by Prof. Tamar Zvi) and a member of the research group "Israel: Communities in Motion" at the Azrieli Center for Israel Studies [Ma'ali] at Ben-Gurion University. Dr. Brav's publications include *All the Way to France: The World of the Jews Who Immigrated from Northern Tunisia to France*, and *Between Enlightenment and Xenophobia: Past Images of the French Government Secondary School in Tunis and Paris Between the Thirties and the Fifties*. Dr. Brav is also a speech therapist, with a Master of Science degree from the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, USA.

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