

Editor's Note

The bloody struggle that has raged in Syria for the past year and a half has taken tens of thousands of lives. Media coverage of the uprising has emphasized the support of the 'Alawite ethnic group for the tyrannical rule of the Assad family and their disproportionate share of power—the last prominent remnant of colonial involvement in the country and its regime. But the conflict also shows signs of a class struggle and of the antagonism between the rural rebels and the city dwellers, some of them Sunni, who are reluctant to harm the old regime and the “citizenship contract” on which it rests. This is an interesting case that allows for an investigation of the ways in which hegemony, in its Gramscian sense, influences society via the indoctrination of the people into the belief that bourgeois values are natural and correct.

Although the struggle in Syria is undoubtedly the most dramatic and brutal of all, it is worth noting that in the four countries bordering Syria—Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Lebanon to the west, and Israel to the south—processes with similar characteristics have taken place. The Shi'a have challenged the Sunni and Christian hegemonies in Iraq and Lebanon, respectively, and have demanded their place and proportional representation in those governments and their various institutions.

In Israel and Turkey quiet, nonviolent struggles have been taking place for some decades to overthrow the hegemony of the old secular elites. Disenfranchised social groups in both countries—with various religious traditions or with distinctive ethnicities—are beginning to garner power, object to their place on the social and cultural ladder, and aim their criticism at the hegemony. These changes find political expression in the creation of parties, such as the Turkish Justice and Development

Party or the Israeli Shas Party, that carry the burden of representing the subaltern. Journalists, academics, and artists play a central role in this process and take up the burden. Their writing serves as testimony, and they become cultural paragons in the eyes of many.

Hannan Hever's "We Are Fragments of Rhymes: The Poetry of Erez Biton between East and West" opens this issue with a discussion of Biton's poetry, which challenged the hegemonic literary repertoire of the founding generation of the State of Israel. His poetry constitutes a complex cultural model in which Hever sees the rebellion against the Ashkenazi hegemonic response to the trauma of migration and the posttraumatic manifestations of being Mizrahi (Eastern). According to Hever, Biton stands as a posttraumatic witness in opposition to the Ashkenazi literary and linguistic hegemony that acts as a mechanism of power. Biton proposes a path that differs from that of the poetry of the founding generation, one that enables his testimony to be heard. The Moroccan migrant's exile encourages him to develop a faltering, shattered poetic language and a practice of colonial mimicry in which the oppressed imitates the oppressor while highlighting his distinctiveness.

Poetry and other artistic expressions are cultural practices that make possible the reinforcement or undermining of civil norms. What is perceived as art and high culture is considered legitimate and is situated high on the social prestige ladder of cultural consumption. Ownership of it yields immense symbolic capital. Hence the importance of studies that expose the mechanisms of the hegemony in the area of culture, as well as the strategies that challenge it. Some adopt the strategy of faltering language or make up a new one, and some create "textual cuts," as does **Sami Berdugo** in an original piece written for the dock-ument section of this issue. Berdugo uncovers different levels of knowledge as he walks through the city. In each of his textual cuts he measures the distances between himself and different cultures and different places located between East and West. Berdugo's special language and cuts are a testimony to those living with the duality that characterizes the people of the Levant.

Strategies for coping with the cultural hegemony are varied. Some surrender to it, and some emphasize the contrasts. Some adopt what Homi Bhabha calls "colonial mimicry," and some flee to the global village or regional entities beyond the local borders, entities that blur the boundaries between urban and rural, between East and West, and between popular and high culture. But in all of them, there is a salient sense of the burden of representing the voice of the subaltern.

Yaron Shemer examines this "burden of representation" in the realm of film. In his article "The Burden of Self-Representation: Reflections on *Shohur* and Its Legacy for Contemporary Mizrahi Films in Israel," he follows the discussion that the film

and its maker, Hannah Azoulay-Hasfari, have generated. Instead of focusing on the relationship between self-representation and production, he looks at the dilemmas of representation in the context of the reception of the film—as experienced by Israeli film critics and by the filmmaker herself. Shemer decodes Azoulay-Hasfari’s strategy of sidetracking the criticism aimed at her and of refusing to shoulder the burden of the moral and representational responsibilities as is expected of those who portray their own ethnic group. He argues that although subsequent Mizrahi films continue to suffer from the burden of self-representation, *Shhur* helped in that it “modified that burden’s modes of operation.”

Influenced by Gramsci, scholars in the humanities and the social sciences view culture as an arena of power and competition and try to expose its overt and covert mechanisms. In this issue we have translated a chapter from *A Great Joy Tonight* by the late sociologist **Inbal Perlson**. In this book Perlson focuses on the musical institutions of migrants from the Islamic countries during Israel’s early years. She surveys the cultural mechanisms responsible for the eradication of Jewish-Arab identity components and the creation of a set of hybrid and blurred identities under a new category known as “Mizrahiness.” We have chosen to translate the third chapter, “Musicians between the Hegemonies,” in which Perlson gives examples of how the mechanisms of the Orientalist hegemony ensured that the Arab element would not dominate or impinge on the Western-Jewish culture.

To provide a broader context for the discussion and to shed light on it from a different angle, we asked ethnomusicologist **Martin Stokes** to respond to the translated chapter from Perlson’s book. Stokes has written many studies about Arabesque music in Turkey and about the Turkish government’s policy regarding it. We turned to him both because of his expertise and because Israel and Turkey bear similarities. In both countries a great effort has been made to de-Arabize the culture and to further its uncompromising Westernization. The world of sounds is considered the last cultural bastion of every civilization. Perhaps that explains why the struggle of the disadvantaged against the hegemony of the elite began precisely in the musical sphere.

In his response Stokes analyzes the lines of comparison between the Turkish case (Arabesque music) and the Israeli case (Mizrahi music). Despite the similarities, and perhaps because of the differences in disciplines, Stokes tends not to accept the Gramscian analysis that sees culture primarily as an arena for the expression of power. Also, as he explains in his essay, despite the attempts to marginalize Oriental music, it has flourished. In his view “musical practices can rarely be ideologically ‘sound-proofed.’” People with musical intelligence will hear what they are not

meant to hear, and this has many interesting cultural ramifications. He points to some of those ramifications and to new directions and questions that have not yet been studied.

In “Unrest at the Gates of Aleppo: British Perspectives on the Bedouin Challenge to Public Security in Northern Syria, 1848–1913,” **Michael Kreutz** examines the British perspective on the unrest and security problems in Syria with which the central Ottoman authority had to contend. The Bedouin way of life, the constant movement of nomads, was seen as a threat to Europeans as well as to the central Ottoman power. Like Oriental music in the previous articles, the Bedouin way of life was viewed as having neither rules nor standards; rather, it was seen as an improvisation. However, as Kreutz demonstrates, in Aleppo, in northern Syria—the focal point of the power struggle between the Janissaries, the local elites, the Ottoman court, ethnic leaders, tribes, and European commercial interests and representatives—what may have been seen as an improvisation and a security threat was in fact a clever strategy on the part of the Bedouin tribes aimed at enlarging their share of power in the Ottoman system.

Ari Varon’s article “Being Muslim and European without Contradiction—Myth or Reality?” deals with one of the burning issues in the study of East-West relations: the question of the integration of Muslims in the European space and the future of Western-Christian hegemony. The massive waves of Muslim migration to Europe have created areas of conflict and resolution between communities from different religious and cultural backgrounds. It is not only European pluralism that is being put to the test but also the ability of Muslims to adopt pluralism without abandoning their traditions. In addition to the personal and communal traumas that many Muslims experience in the first and second generations of migration, and in addition to the widely reported struggles for the shape and character of the public space, some are trying to cope with the issue on an intellectual level. Bassam Tibi, the subject of Varon’s study, proposes creating a European Islam that will open the way for Muslims to be both Muslim and European. According to Varon, although Tibi is proposing ways to bridge the intercultural tensions, he does not succeed in overcoming the “inherent contradiction.”

Accompanying Varon’s article is an essay by the qadi of the Jerusalem Shari’a Court, **Iyad Zahalka**, that deals with the judicial role of the Shari’a Court in Israel. In contrast to Bassam Tibi’s proposal of creating a European Islam, Zahalka argues that the internal Islamic logic is more powerful than the influence of the state’s laws. And in contrast to those who argue that judgment takes place within and is influenced by the laws of the state, Zahalka argues that the new generation of Shari’a Court

judges is influenced by and connected to the internal Islamic debate more than it is to Israel's judicial-logical system. We hope that this essay will serve as the beginning of a discussion about the mutual relations between the community courts and the state courts and about additional areas of contact between the institutions of the minorities and those of the hegemony.

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