Glorious, Accursed Europe

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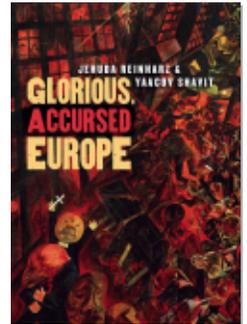Published by Brandeis University Press

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EUROPEANNESS AND
ANTI-EUROPEANNESS IN PALESTINE

Decidedly, almost all the development, science, art,
civil consciousness, and humanity we have—all of it,
all I say, comes from that land of holy wonders! You see,
our whole life, from earliest childhood, has been
geared to the European mentality.

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY,
Winter Notes on Summer Impressions[1]

————

I bring forth Ashkenazi ideas and clothe them
in the purity of the Holy Tongue.

MORDECHAI AHARON GINSBURG,
Aviezer[2]

Culture is, among other things, the set of normative values a society holds. Thus it is important to point out, at the outset of this chapter, that what follows constitutes no sort of value judgment on the contents ascribed to any particular cultural system. As a result, we will do without opaque concepts such as identity, essence, collective character, or collective mentality, whose meaning usually derives from self-awareness and subjective feelings. Although it is essential not to downplay the importance and influence of perceptions, representations, and stereotypes, we will attempt to examine the role of European cultural models and traits in the creation and consolidation of the cultural system of the new Jewish society in Palestine. In other words, we will investigate the status and role of the European heritage within the ensemble of concepts, values, symbols, customs, and practices which formed the cultural system and dominant habitus of Palestine's Jewish society.

We will not attempt to describe the content of the new Jewish (Hebrew) layer of this cultural system—a subject on which there has been

much research. In any case, it is important to reemphasize the need to distinguish between rhetorical declarations or ideological expressions of what is desirable and cultural realia, or what we can actually observe. Our interest lies in what can be defined as the European layer of Hebrew culture in Palestine. In other words, we are interested in the role played by the European repertoire in Hebrew culture—a repertoire acquired through processes of transference, adaptation, and innovation. It is important again to note that it is not our intention in this or the following chapter to describe the history of Hebrew culture and the various stages of its development. For such descriptions, we refer the reader to the works cited in our endnotes. Our intention is to provide an overview and a few insights germane to the context of this book.

In using the term "European values," we are not referring to the cultural models perceived as Ashkenazi—that is, to those models that were part of the authentic culture of Ashkenazi Jews and, more precisely, part of Jewish village culture. Within Israel's cultural polemic, the difference between Ashkenazi culture and the European traits of that culture is frequently blurred.[3] It is also important to differentiate between, on the one hand, representations and images of European culture and the symbolic role they played in the public discourse in Jewish society in Palestine since the 1880s, and their actual cultural influence, on the other hand.

Most of those who have written about the Jews' need to leave Europe—including those convinced that the purpose of that departure was, among other reasons, to escape the destructive influence of Europe's immanent ailments, as well as those who believe that the Jewish spirit (*Geist*) could be saved only in Palestine—do not believe that it was necessary or even possible to abandon many of the cultural and material assets that were the fruit of the Jews' Western heritage.

EUROPEANNESS IN HEBREW GARB

On June 8, 1895, Herzl wrote in his diary that the goal of Zionism was to "uproot the [Jewish] centers and transfer them to Palestine. To transplant whole communities in which the Jews feel comfortable."[4] Here Herzl referred, as we have seen, to the organized, planned transfer to Palestine of the high-culture assets of modern Europe's urban, bourgeois world; these included not only values, but lifestyles and institutions. In contrast, one of the authors of the Ramle Platform, the platform of the Poale Tzion party,[5] quoted a line from Horace's *Epistles*: "Those who cross

the sea change the sky, not their spirits."[6] The purpose was to clarify that it was not European culture that would be transferred to Palestine, but rather its revolutionary consciousness. This would enable the Jews to establish in a new location a Jewish world built upon the European model of a revolutionary society; revolutionary consciousness could be expressed successfully in Palestine, and the conditions there would not weaken it.

In practice, the process of emigration and the enterprise of constructing a new Jewish society in Palestine were accompanied by both the planned, intentional transfer of a European cultural repertoire and the intensive creation of new cultural components, which were in part a translation of European and traditional Jewish values to the new Hebrew conceptual system. This process of transference was an act of acculturation with no need for or fear of assimilation, because it took place in an autonomous Jewish political community rather than within a largely non-Jewish society. This reality was perceived as releasing Jewish culture from the pressures and temptations of its European cultural environment, and consequently enabling a conscious, deliberate selection of desired traits and models from the latter.[7] Many cultural traits were imported by immigrants as part of their cultural assets and were assimilated into the new cultural system of the *Yishuv*, where they were accepted as self-evident. Their foreign identity inspired neither rejection nor objection, and in most cases, their acceptance was not taken to mean unacceptable imitation. Furthermore, because many of the European immigrants to Palestine had undergone at least some of the processes of modernization and acculturation before leaving Europe, their encounter with its cultural assets did not begin in Palestine; nor was modernization forced upon them by colonial rule or a centralized local authority. For this reason, the combination and amalgamation of originally European traits with authentic Jewish (Hebrew) cultural traits, both old and new, into a single cultural system—a process which, under other circumstances, would be accompanied by difficult conflicts and crises of identity in the host society—did not cause similar problems in the new Jewish society in Palestine. On the contrary, amalgamation and combination were seen as necessary and desirable—and as phenomena that could take place only in Palestine. In Western Europe, Chaim Weizmann wrote, there were Jews who succeeded in enjoying both worlds and combining them harmoniously. Yet others, including him, felt in Europe like guests "overwhelmed with wine at a banquet for strangers." As a result, Palestine was the only place in which it was possible to combine harmoniously "all the good features of the Ghetto" (which he

described as a "sewer") and "implant [them] in Palestinian soil" alongside European culture.[8] Only in Palestine, wrote Nachman Syrkin, could "Europeanness in Hebrew garb" emerge, and this was because "Zionism will bring world culture to the Jewish people and create a new Judaism, which will be the historic grafting of the world's loftiest features onto the national characteristics and ancient assets of the Jewish people."[9]

All groups in the Zionist movement agreed that there could be no national revival or return to the homeland without modernization and changes in the social and cultural spheres, in keeping with European models. In an 1895 address to the Rothschild family council (which he recorded in his diary but did not deliver in person), Herzl wrote: "for everyone will take across a piece of the promised land: one in his brain, one with his brawn, and the third through his personal belongings."[10] The imported cultural institutions would satisfy "the longed-for illusion of the old homeland."[11] Thus immigrants would carry with them the cultural assets they had acquired in the modern Western world and would establish all the cultural institutions that were an inseparable part of high European culture. Those institutions did not, and could not, emerge as part of modern Jewish culture in a Europe where Jews were a subculture and an ethnic, national, and religious minority, and where they did not need, and were not able, to establish a full cultural system. In Palestine, on the other hand, an autonomous Jewish society was being built with the declared goal of creating an all-encompassing territorial and national Hebrew Jewish cultural system.[12]

Because of this, it was urgently necessary to select those assets of the overall European cultural repertoire that were considered requisite and appropriate for the new society, and at the same time to impose cultural censorship and reject those traits deemed negative or harmful. Since the construction of this cultural system was accompanied by a series of decisions and rulings, an ideological *Kulturkampf* took place in the *Yishuv* between people who held different outlooks and preferences. The processes through which Jewish Hebrew culture in Palestine was consolidated were accompanied by a permanent and sometimes stormy dispute over the question of what weight and status should be given to the European foundations of Hebrew culture, and what the substance of those foundations should be. Nevertheless, the new Jewish culture was the result not only of planning and initiative,[13] but of uncontrolled importation of traditions, values, and practices. Palestine was a free market for importing cultural merchandise from the West. Immigrants brought with them a variety of

Europe's cultural assets—using their heads, their hands, and the belongings they acquired. As a result, the ability of the cultural elite to tailor the *Yishuv*'s cultural profile to a predetermined model was limited, and the cultural market in Palestine was open to imports from many sources and of many types. Attempts to enforce supervision and censorship over the cultural field were only partially successful. Brenner was thus correct when he cast doubt on the "immigrants'" ability to create "a cultural life and cultural assets" or "European-style intelligence" in a deliberate and organized way.[14] Yet Brenner was overly pessimistic. A hegemonic cultural center with shared values did operate in Palestine; it determined the official norms and ethos of cultural behavior, and it shaped the cultural identity and habitus of Jewish society.

EUROPE IN PALESTINE

"Here in Jaffa, everyone is educated, everyone is intelligent, everyone knows how to behave according to the latest fashion or the custom of Europe's civilized Jews . . . and any passerby in Jaffa's markets will behold real Europeans." So *Havatzelet*, a Jerusalem newspaper, described the modern *Yishuv* in Jaffa in 1891.[15] Mordechai Ben-Hillel Hacohen, one of Tel Aviv's first residents, wrote in his memoirs about the reactions of British soldiers when they arrived in Jaffa's new suburb in December 1917: "'Europe, Europe!' they rejoiced, as though, after floundering in the desert for two years, they had not hoped to find such an orderly city, with its beautiful houses and straight, wide streets, in untamed Asia. The officers and officials were particularly glad to find handsome and well-equipped buildings here in the neighborhood, with infrastructure for plumbing and bathing."[16]

In 1917, Tel Aviv consisted of only a few small neighborhoods, but in comparison with Jaffa, the Oriental city, it had a clearly European personality. It was modeled on the ideal of the modern European suburb. That was how its residents described it, and that was also the impression it left on many of its visitors, who compared it to great European cities such as Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Odessa, Nice, and Cannes: "All of Europe is concentrated here, in this small city." Even those who criticized Tel Aviv compared it not to an Oriental city but to an East European *shtetl*, or warned that the danger it faced was that "its glittering façade will be pseudo-European, but in effect it will become one of the port cities of the Levant."[17]

Besides Tel Aviv, Hebrew settlements in general were described as European—that is, modern—because of their structure and their public institutions. In 1882, the bylaws of Yessod Hamaale's settlers' committee stated that self-rule in the new settlement planned for Upper Galilee would be "in accordance with the local custom of all peoples of Europe in their places of assembly."[18] The settlers, Avraham Shmuel Herschberg wrote, wanted to turn Palestine into a "civilized" country complete with manufactures and industry, and its residents into "cultured people."[19] The Jewish settlement was thus seen as the opposite of the primitive Arab village:[20]

> In the eyes of a man passing through the country . . . the settlements will seem a sort of magical sight, as he walks through a great wasteland, climbing hills and descending into valleys, without paved roads, and suddenly the scene changes, and before him lie paved, attractive roads and lovely settlements, splendid in their beautiful buildings, their broad, straight streets, and the vineyards and orchards which surround them, as well as in their steam-powered mills, their hospitals, pharmacies, and bathhouses, aqueducts which deliver water into houses in several settlements, and beautiful synagogues.[21]

Within *Yishuv* society, there was scant objection to the idea of designing the Palestinian landscape and urban and rural settlements according to European models. Nor were there objections to importing material culture and agricultural and industrial technology from Europe.[22] On the contrary, as we have seen, all of these were considered prerequisites for creating a modern society. Importing the traits of modernism was not perceived as a demonstration of Western colonialism, because of their neutral and practical nature—even though in reality they brought about far-reaching changes in the social and cultural systems of Jewish and Arab society.

However, the European model encompassed not only components of modern technology—trains, the telegraph, electricity, industry, etc.— but also the whole of civilized or cultured society. Civilization meant theaters, lending libraries, museums, orchestras, kindergartens, schools, institutions of higher education, journalism, and the like. All of these institutions were meant to satisfy the thirst for culture that arose through the habits of cultural consumption Jews had acquired in their countries of origin. These institutions and others were meant to create a sort of self-sufficient cultural island that did not rely on the backward cultural

environment surrounding it, and to provide a civilized standard of living according to the criteria of European high culture.[23] The need to accomplish this led, even in the initial stages of the Jewish society's construction, to the establishment of each of these cultural institutions, in order to form through them the cultural repertoire characteristic of an official national culture.[24]

Technology, means of production, institutions, and the like may be classified as neutral traits of a civilization. Yet the questions at hand were: What about those characteristics classified as cultural traits—that is, those meant to express the particular cultural content, or value culture, of the new society? And what about those contents that determined how the new society defined itself, as well as its normative and symbolic systems? These were essential questions because the official Zionist ideology maintained that national intellectual and cultural creation must express the authentic Hebrew spirit. No wonder, then, that the nature of that spirit in the context of culture and art was the subject of ceaseless debate. Our claim in this matter is that many so-called authentic traits were actually European traits that added Hebrew content. In many cases, this was a matter of reviving a cultural element, considered identical or equivalent to a desirable European element, from Jewish tradition; in other cases, it was an instance of dressing a European element in "authentic" Jewish or Hebrew cloth.

Three spheres of cultural activity originating in Western culture formed an inseparable part of Palestine's new Jewish cultural system: a repertoire of forms of cultural consumption, such as music, cafes, outings at the beach, and cinema; the translation into Hebrew of classic literary works for adults, young adults, and children—including works for the theater and opera—which were often selected based on how well they suited the needs and outlook of the new culture; and the internalization and assimilation of European values into the new Hebrew culture, and their transformation into an inseparable part of it.

IMMIGRANTS AND CULTURES OF ORIGIN

The fact that immigrants brought with them cultural assets that were characteristic of the countries they had left—values, lifestyles, patterns of cultural consumption, and the like—led to the division of Palestine's Jewish culture into subcultures based on countries of origin. Thus, for example, it was claimed that some of the immigrants from Poland dur-

ing the Fourth Aliyah possessed the habits of a small-time, provincial bourgeoisie,[25] and that others brought with them a type of Romantic and integrative nationalism. According to the prevailing view, German immigrants imported the German bourgeoisie's tradition of *Bildung*: punctuality, discipline, and etiquette, as well as cafes, love of classical music, and more.[26] These "Yekkes" persisted in speaking German; their style of clothing, with its European jackets, was distinctive as well. They crammed their apartments with "stylish and shapely furniture, silver- and crystal-ware, and fine, antique porcelain; they slept on spring mattresses and sat on comfortable couches; and in their crowded rooms they erected full, overflowing bookcases." Merchants who immigrated from Germany "knew how to display their wares in store-front windows with taste and panache."[27] In other words, German immigrants brought with them the habitus of the quasi-European model man and created a sociocultural enclave in Palestinian society. Yet bourgeois immigrants and consumers of high culture hailed from Poland as well, and not every immigrant from Germany was a disciple of its lofty bourgeois and intellectual culture. Moreover, values and institutions that originated in German culture were also imported by immigrants who did not come from Germany, because these were, in reality, general European values.[28]

It is not our intention to downplay the influence of the cultural differences that arose from the various European cultures of origin and from the different habitus from which these immigrants arrived. Nonetheless, it appears that the cultural borders between the various groups that made up Jewish society in Palestine were determined more by ideological and class identification than by culture of origin. In any event, within a short period of time—certainly by the second generation—the differences based on country of origin became blurred and did not greatly influence the nature or substance of cultural consumption. Jews from Russia, Poland, and Germany saw the same plays, attended the same concerts, and read the same literature, even if their preferences may have varied. It is true that stereotypes anchored in culture of origin were preserved and even exaggerated within Palestine's immigrant culture (as was the case in the United States),[29] causing tensions, resentment, and antagonism between the different groups. Yet as far as European Jewish immigrants were concerned, the melting pot of Palestine's reality blurred these differences—especially in the case of the second generation, which was brought up within the Hebrew educational system. The common European cultural background permitted these differences to be minimized, and as

a result, all European immigrants became Ashkenazim, or descendants of Europe's culture—and not solely in the eyes of foreign observers.

ANTI-EUROPEANNESS IN PALESTINE

The images of Europe and Western culture in Jewish society in Palestine underwent several processes of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction after the 1880s. These images were constructed, as we have seen, from generalizations or topoi that acquired a symbolic status. The broadest generalization was built on the foundations of two binary models: the first pitting Europeanness against Jewishness, and the second East against West. Each model adopts the essentialist, ontological understanding by which every well-defined group has its own autarchic worldview, value system, and cultural code. These are internalized by the group and in turn brand it uniquely and determine the range of its behavioral templates. From this point of view, any process of acculturation and cultural adaptation is perceived as coercion, which denies the host culture its heritage and uniqueness and forces it to accept external values foreign to its spirit and heritage.

When this essentialist perception fractures into slogans on the battlefield of cultural debate, each side involved in the polemic enumerates what it considers the positive foundations of Western culture—rationalism, liberalism, democracy, etc.—as well as what it considers the negative foundations of Oriental culture. Similarly, each lists the negative traits of Western culture—fascism and Nazism, colonialism and imperialism, vulgar mass culture, and so on—and also praises the virtues and unique qualities of Oriental culture.[30] This sort of essentialist understanding forms the basis of much of the criticism of the hegemonic system of modern Jewish Hebrew culture in Israel, which, according to some, is merely an imitation of Western culture. In both Jewish Palestine and Israel, this criticism gave rise to several versions of the postcolonial anti-Europeanness that existed both in Europe and outside it.[31]

The anti-European and anti-Western sentiments found in Israeli society consisted—and still consist—of several branches, each of which offers different templates and interpretations of authentic revival based largely on presenting such a revival as an alternative to European Jewish culture.

1. Criticism of what is described as the adoption of the negative manifestations of European society: a capitalistic, bourgeois, and even

hedonistic lifestyle, inappropriate for the realities of Palestine and its pioneering ethos. The city was the antithesis of the pioneering lifestyle; it represented the "illusion of European culture" and even "decadence" —boulevard theaters, cafes, cinemas, and the like. All of these cultural institutions were classified as undesirable, and their adoption or "imitation" was seen as a clear expression of "self-deprecation in the face of Western culture, which has once again brought us into an entanglement of foreign life and values."[32] Adopting European cultural institutions and lifestyles was described as accepting an inferior culture, one that was superficial, nihilistic—even abominable and perverted.

2. Criticism by the Jewish Orthodoxy in Palestine. This was a continuation of the struggle that the Jewish Orthodoxy waged in Europe against the processes of acculturation and secularization, and against the presentation of modern, secular, nationalistic Jewish culture as a full and legitimate alternative to observant Judaism. Western culture— the "culture of Japheth"—was perceived as both an heir to Hellenistic culture and a degenerate secular culture. "We have absolutely no need to learn from Europe's ways," declared Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, "nor even from the civilized [European nations]." He believed it acceptable to adopt Western technology and achievements in medicine, engineering, and the like, but anything that contradicted the Jewish Bible and the unique spirit of Israel must be rejected.[33] Europeanness was usually described as Hellenization, and Western culture was depicted as possessing its negative traits.

3. Criticism from those possessing a nationalist, essentialist, and purist outlook. According to this approach, original culture is an all-encompassing, autarchic *Volkskultur*, and therefore its revival in Palestine must be nourished only from the wells of authentic cultural tradition. This critique sees Hebrew Israeli culture as shallow, superficial, and cosmopolitan—the obvious and inevitable product of drawing from Gentile springs. Leo Strauss makes a more extreme claim, that Jewish Hebrew culture exists only subject to Europe and Europeans, and thus holds the false beliefs that what is good and noble can be found only in Europe, and that Western culture sets the standard in every field:

> From this point of view, there was actually no difference
> between the nationalists and the assimilated among us. The
> assimilated aspired to live by the Western lifestyle among the
> peoples of the West and as an integral part of them; while the

nationalists wanted to cast the etiquette, ways of life, opinions, and moral values of the West according to our own national molds.[34]

These words imply that only complete independence from the influence of the Greco-Hellenic-Western mentality, and a return to original Judaism, can save modern Jews from the crisis into which Western civilization has lured them and fully revive the Jewish essence. From this perspective, all Western values—even those perceived as positive, such as the values of Western humanism—are unacceptable. The resurrection of Judaism depends on its ability to dissociate itself decisively from the values of the declining West; Jewish revival is not and cannot be possible in the sphere of Western influence.[35] Accordingly, Jewish nationalism was born as a rejection of the "Europeanization of the people"[36] and is entirely different in its essence from European nationalism. This outlook adopts the distinction between civilization and culture, and from it concludes that it is necessary to separate the assets of Europe's material and technological civilization from its spiritual culture—a distinction drawn from German sociology and philosophy of history. Thus, for example, Fritz Kahn declared in his 1920 book, *The Jews as Race and as Culture*, that in the public sphere, Jews utilized and were surrounded by civilization (trolleys, cars, radios, and so forth), but in private spheres (at home, among their families, or in Jewish company), they lived within a Jewish culture.[37] There is no need to point out that in reality it was difficult to make this distinction, particularly in a reality in which Jews were the dominant actors and aspired to create an all-encompassing Jewish culture. Thus, for example, when the radical Revisionist writer Yehoshua Heschel Yeivin criticized what he described as Ahad Haam's spiritual affinity for "English thoughts and modes of thought," he supported his arguments with none other than Nietzsche's dismissal of Ahad Haam's "English teachers," H. T. Buckle and Herbert Spencer, whom he considered no more than "mediocre thinkers."[38] Brenner pointed out the dichotomy in this outlook in his criticism of H. L. Zuta's *The "Melamed" and the "Teacher*," in which Zuta, a writer and educator, claimed that Jews must not take lessons from the world on the subject of moral education, since "the wealthy must not return to the starting point"; in other words, Judaism had a rich history of moral education and therefore was not in need of outside instruction. "We have among us," wrote Zuta, "Frenchmen, Germans,

and Italians, all of Moses' faith. If we abandon that faith we will become Russian, Turkish, and Arab entirely."[39] All well and good, Brenner wrote mockingly, but how did Zuta's purist call coexist with his own suggestion to study values and standards of behavior from "the Slavic League," which was based on the Pravoslavic religion; from Germany, "which considers religion the goal of patriotism"; and from liberal England, which represented "loyalty and absence of hypocrisy"?[40]

4. Criticism by fringe ideological groups that proposed an alternative, imaginary East—one that would be not Arab Muslim or Jewish, but Hebrew. This critique saw Judaism and Islam as aterritorial cultural religions alien to the authentic, nationalistic character of the ancient Middle East. Jewish cultural foreignness, they claimed, also stemmed from the European character of Palestine's Jewish culture. The following, for example, comes from the platform of a group calling itself "Young Palestine":

> The core of the previous generation belongs to and has remained in Europe. From birth they learned to admire Europe as the capital of the world and as the birthplace of culture. In the Semitic region they were, and have remained, alien in spirit. But the Palestinian generation was raised in Asia, and Asia is its home. We have learned the ancient history of the Semitic lands, which turns our eyes Eastward. We have learned to scorn Europe, which has atrophied in our eyes . . . We find this [Arab] reality obvious, and we have no need for complex ideologies from European sources in order to be familiar with it.[41]

In other words, the author called for the creation of an authentic Hebrew Palestinian culture based on ancient foundations, or on the modern existential experience, without relying on either European culture or the culture of the Arab East.

5. Criticism by part of the secular, modern, "Oriental" intelligentsia concerning the influence of various postcolonial and anti-European theories. This criticism conveys discomfort and even cultural rebellion, and carries the torch of the aspiration to revive an authentic, non-European Jewish culture—an "Oriental Jewish culture."[42] From the Oriental intelligentsia's point of view—that of the second and third generation of immigrants from the Muslim world—the European immigrants brought with them shared European assets, and as a result there was no difference between their various European cultures of

origin. In many cases, the subject was not European culture itself, most of whose assets no one intended to reject, but rather Ashkenazi culture—the Jewish culture that was, according to this point of view, imported to Palestine by immigrants from Europe.

At first glance, we have here a thorough rejection of the Western cultural heritage. Yet the perceived foundations of Western culture—belief in the autonomy of the human intellect to interpret the world; belief in individuality; belief in the rule of law; and belief in one's capacity for self-improvement and individual entrepreneurship—are not the real subjects of these critiques. In other instances, it was claimed that the Ashkenazi Jews brought with them negative European values, or adopted them once they were in Palestine;[43] these values were primarily the nationalistic and socialist ideologies and their collective, integrative ethos; the centralized, nationalistic model of government; and the model of a secular nationalistic Judaism. The Oriental intelligentsia described these values as a contradiction to the cultural values and traditions of the East, which are characterized by orientation toward the community, tolerance, and religious and traditional nationalism.[44]

According to the critical, secular Oriental intelligentsia, what Hebrew ideology describes as the combination and merger of the new Jewish spirit and Europeanness—a combination through which modern Jewish Hebrew culture was created—is in fact only a shallow imitation of Western culture; the cultural hegemony of the European immigrants is perceived as based on values extrinsic to Eastern culture. This is a hegemony that turned its back on both the unique character of the natural environment in Palestine (the Orient) and on the unique character of the local (Arab Muslim) culture. Through various methods, this hegemony forced itself upon that part of immigrant society that did not hail from Europe and that had no part in or claim to its assets, and compelled it to exchange its own cultural identity for another. In general, this criticism targets the European heritage, but not America or the Americanization of Israeli culture and society.

Countering the image of the Arab Muslim East as a static world characterized by theocracy, inferiority, and backwardness in all areas—and in contrast to the image of the culture and society of immigrants from the Muslim world—an image which did in fact portray them in a harmful and degrading light—there arose both a positive image of the East and a negative image of the stereotypes of Europe and Ashkenazi culture. This Israeli

version of anti-Westernness sometimes involved the rejection of modern values, but in general preference was given to the unique Oriental model of modernism—a modernism not formed, as it was in Europe, within the framework of nationalistic, particularistic societies, nor as part of the process of creating a new sort of Jewish collective.[45] Thus there is no objection here to modernism in itself, but rather a rejection of what is described as arrogance on the part of the European immigrants and of their claim that they alone brought the values of modernism to Palestine.

One prominent result of the cultural unease of the Israeli Oriental intelligentsia was the attempt to formulate an all-encompassing alternative of an authentic Oriental Jewish collective identity,[46] carrying its own values and symbolic assets. This attempt to create opposition to the Ashkenazi Jewish identity (that is, to the European Hebrew culture) led, in many cases, to a need to define Orientalism in integrative essential terms (which were borrowed from the European conceptual framework) and, on the basis of that definition, to note those traits of the Oriental cultural repertoire which were worthy of preservation or revival. The description of Jews from the Muslim world as Arabized Jews, parallel with Europeanized Jews, indicates the choice of an ethnic, cultural definition rather than a religious definition; after all, it was impossible to talk about Muslim Jews.[47] In this way, the description adopts the antinomy between the East and Europe, seeing each as separate, homogeneous cultural and ontological entities. As a result, it is important to note that this portrayal of the East—in which the Ottoman East is seldom mentioned—is not based on the Orientalist image of the East, which was the fruit of European imagination; at the same time, neither is it the East of Arab Muslim culture. Rather, the East in this portrayal is the cultural tradition of the Oriental immigrants. A religious tradition, it developed to a significant extent under the influence of Muslim culture, where the cultural layer of modern secularism was far thinner than it was among European Jews. Thus it is no wonder that when those who adopt this perspective are asked to enumerate the nonreligious templates and traits of the Oriental repertoire—apart from the seemingly ontological characteristics that they ascribe to Orientals—they list, as a rule, its language (Arabic) and (Oriental Arab) literature and music.[48] They do not reject the values and institutions that belong to the European heritage, nor do they attempt to exchange them for the values and institutions of the Muslim heritage.[49] Thus it seems that their protest and revolt is aimed not toward European or Western culture (with the latter including American culture), but

toward the values and institutions perceived as symbolically representative of the Ashkenazis' political and socioeconomic hegemony. This is not a question, then, of an all-encompassing alternative model of an Oriental counterculture. Even the sharpest critics of Ashkenazi culture do not propose to reject the central traits of Western culture and uproot them from modern Jewish Israeli culture. It is even possible to say that they claim their modernism is not a result of Western Jews' historical experience, nor the result of the modernization forced upon them by the European immigrants in Palestine, but instead an independent and autonomous creation.

The anti-European literature to which we refer deals, therefore, with representations, and not with cultural realia. In the radical Oriental perception, it is not only Europe that is a single, imagined entity: the East is, too. What was born as the product of European imagination was adopted by those speaking on behalf of Oriental culture in a process of reverse acculturation, in which the negative traits of Oriental culture were replaced by positive ones. While secular Jews of European origin seldom define themselves in terms of ethnic identity, the Oriental cultural elite frequently employs these terms and reinvents its own ethnicity.[50]

The extent to which this description of the culture and society of Jews in the Muslim world is valid, or whether it is a matter of imagined tradition and ethnicity, is not important for our purposes. What is important is the fact that this description ignores many assets of the European repertoire: a liberal civil society, a strong family ethos, and a traditional way of life. The description also ignores the character of Hebrew society, which is based on both the original assets of traditional Judaism and its new interpretation. The description ignores, among other things, the place and contributions of the Hebrew Bible and modern Hebrew literature in the creation of the new society's identity and values.[51] Similarly, it ignores the fact that Palestine's Hebrew culture—in both its self-awareness and the process of its creation and construction—saw both Levantineness and the East European exilic manner as its primary foes. And it ignores the fact that most assets of Hebrew European culture are an inseparable and even obvious part of the cultural experience of immigrants from the Muslim world. Finally, it ignores the fact that every cultural system, including modern ones, is, to some extent, a hybrid, multilayered, and even syncretic system. Though every culture has its own content and values, there is no such thing as an autarchic and exclusive culture;[52] often, a self-concept of exclusivity is the product of reaction to and defense against the other.[53]

The ambition of Jewish society in Palestine to become a Europe of the Middle East prompted more than a little contempt: Palestine was, after all, nothing more than an Asiatic province. It was a village populated by pathetic Jews clinging with all their might to the hem of Europe's robe— the same Europe that rejected them—and endeavoring to draw nourishment from it in order to create a pale imitation of Europe in the East. Indeed, Jewish immigrants to Palestine from 1882 onward, who had left Europe out of a sense of disappointment and despair, did not wish to give up the cultural assets they had acquired from the continent. Certainly many of them had only a tenuous connection in their country of origin to the assets of official European high culture and were acquainted with it only through intermediaries—primarily literature and cinema. Still, the new Jewish culture formed in Palestine was not a closed one. It was not isolated from European culture, and the latter did not make its way to Palestine only in the minds of immigrants. It also arrived in reality, through the medium of various cultural agents who brought it to Palestine—and not as an imitation, or a pale shadow of the original. As a result, the Israeli cultural experience is pluralistic and even syncretic, and this is also true of the habitus of the majority of the Jewish population. However, the founding kernel of this experience is the hybridization of European and Western values with Jewish and Hebrew ones. This hybridization includes selections from the full range of the European heritage: those seen as representing what is enlightened, noble, and progressive in Europe, as well as those considered representative of its negative qualities.

In the critical literature surveyed above, the East-West antinomy is described as key to the culture war in Israeli society. Thus in Europe, the characterization of Jews as Orientals was an expression of internal cultural colonialism and antisemitism, while at the same time in Israel, the Orient became an instrument of discrimination and oppression in the hands of the very people who had suffered similar treatment, in part by means of that same European characterization. This antinomy is part of the European Jewish immigrants' cultural colonialism.[54] This picture exaggerates the importance of labeling the West European Jews as Orientals in anti-Jewish ideology and modern antisemitism, yet it accurately reflects the perception in Israeli society of Orientals as belonging to a failed group, from a social and political perspective.[55]

The critical literature also suggests a negative image of Israeli society,

describing it not as an heir to European culture, but as a society that abandoned the positive values of Western culture and acquired and internalized all of its negative values: "We are residue of all that Europe has tried and abandoned or is abandoning, or is still struggling to abandon with abhorrence and at a great price: nationalism, fascism, colonialism, Orientalism, étatism, state capitalism, the Thatcherist market economy . . . We are Europe's leftovers."[56]

The implication is that Israeli society is nothing more than a garbage can for Europe, a clear personification of the universality of evil of European output. Israel, its society, and its culture are presented not only as the waste products of an evil, demonic Europe, but also as the final historical manifestation of this Europe. Israel is also confronted with a new imaginary Europe that is noble and liberal, full of all that is good and devoid of borders, nations, or separate cultural identities—in other words, a Europe that is the fountainhead of universal enlightenment. Yet even in this picture, the alternative is not an imaginary Orient but an imaginary West: a culture that is not arrogant but shaped by the ideal of cosmopolitan humanity,[57] a multicultural and multiethnic civil society (or, in Israeli terms, a multiethnic and binational society) that has no unifying national cultural identity.

Thus the dual portrait of a Europe at once loved and detested, adored and accursed, which took form throughout the course of the nineteenth century, has been revived in an entirely different historical context.

THE UNITED STATES BECOMES THE WEST

During the 1960s, and especially since the 1970s, the State of Israel underwent an accelerated process of Americanization in almost every aspect of life. This process was partly due to the status of the United States as the primary Western power and chief supporter of Israel on the international scene, and to the increasingly close relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community. It was also due to the deep disappointment of the Israeli radical Left in Soviet policies toward Jews in general and toward Israel in particular, and to the profound influence of American values on the world at large. The decline of countries such as Britain and France in the postcolonial era caused them to become temporary allies of Israel, notably in 1956, but from that point on, Israel's political orientation became tied to that of the United States. Even the radical Zionist Left began, toward the end of the 1960s, to consider the United States as an

ally and a nation with which Israel shared political values. No longer did the United States represent the reactionary opposition to the world of tomorrow; it became the clear representative of the West, though the many differences between American and West European culture were widely recognized. From the 1960s onward, westernization became synonymous with cultural trends born of American influence, or with imitation of the United States.

After the 1880s, the United States became the primary destination of the mass Jewish emigration from Europe, yet these millions of emigrants had only a vague notion of the particular character of American culture. Before disembarking on American shores, most Jews devoured fragments of information that shaped their overall image of America, as well as a repertoire of stereotypes that chiefly emphasized its suitability for immigration. In general, they judged America in light of the opportunities and risks that awaited them there. In the Russian-language Jewish media, for example, a negative image of America was very common.[58] This negative image was especially pervasive in Orthodox literature, which represented America as an upside-down world whose way of life was entirely different from that of the Old World—that is, Europe. America was represented in this literature as "the Land of Darkness," a "treifene medina" (an unkosher nation), and an inherently materialistic state.[59] The negative image was also widespread in Hebrew journalism and literature, especially among those with radical social perspectives. At the same time, a positive image was established, in which America was perceived as a newborn nation free from the heavy burden of tradition—a "country without a past" and without the burden of a long historical memory, notable for its values and a lifestyle of tolerance, freedom, and progress. In other words, it was a place in which the positive traits of Western civilization achieved their greatest expression and were, in fact, born anew.[60]

Accordingly there were radical *maskilim* in Eastern Europe who pointed to America as a vastly preferable destination for immigrants than Palestine, which was located in the backward East. For example, a popular guide for immigrants that was published in Odessa in 1891 said: "A bit of advice for you: Do not take a moment's rest. Run, do, work, and keep your own good in mind. A final virtue is needed in America—called cheek . . . Do not say, 'I cannot. I do not know.'"[61]

The Hebrew writer David Frischman wrote in 1885 that human history moves toward the West; the torch of enlightenment would shine from now on in America.[62] The historian Simon Dubnow praised America and

its constitution, which promised maximal cultural autonomy to every minority:

> I am well aware of the characteristics of American culture which tend to blur the features of Jewish national life rather than help to preserve them. This is true only, however, if immigration and entry are allowed to remain chaotic and unorganized. If the intellectual classes will assume leadership, it will be possible to secure the freedom and opportunity needed for the realization of cultural autonomy. It is not possible, in accordance with the American constitution, to prevent communities from exercising self-government or organizing education in national schools, or setting up some general national organization of Jewry.[63]

The Jewish British writer Israel Zangwill went even further. In a famous 1908 play, he wrote that America not only harbored immigrants of various origins, but, through its melting pot (a term he invented), made them equal partners in a new, humane society:

> Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward![64]

Only a few adopted the position of the bizarre Jewish American writer Samuel Roth, who issued prophecies of horror. After World War I, in a poem titled "Europe: A Book of America," he declared that "the next future of the world will be in America." In the mid-1920s, however, he foresaw only darkness for America. To Zangwill he wrote:

> I have been too hopeful about America. America will yet prove to be the most ungrateful of all the nations. She will expel us, just as Spain expelled us, just as England expelled us, just as France expelled us . . . America does not yet know what she really is, so her prides are numerous but not concentrated. For things in which she now shows a remarkable interest she will have only a mild curiosity. Passions which have no roots in the ideals of democracy will spring up and find some democratic means of expression. It has been done. It will be done. When she has become conscious of her subconscious character, America will suddenly discover herself to be a sort of glorified

Ku Klux Klan, suspicious of all intruders, especially of Jews . . . I expect to be living when they will be roasting Jews alive on Fifth Avenue.[65]

Jewish society in Palestine existed far away from America, and America was distant from its cultural horizon. Any interest it had in America was focused on American Jews (whom Zionist literature seldom described as living in exile). What Palestine's Jewish society knew about the United States was generally based on history and literature in translation, journalism, and, after the 1930s, the cinema. From these sources, Jews in Palestine learned about American pioneer society, the frontier and the Wild West, African slavery, laissez-faire capitalism, and more; and it was based on these sources that the stereotype—or stereotypes—of America were formed in Palestinian culture. Few Jews there apparently gave much thought to the special nature of American nationalism or found it a model to emulate. During the 1950s, the American melting pot served as a model for the absorption of Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries; but since the 1970s, criticism of the melting pot and its replacement, multiculturalism, have dominated political and cultural thought in Israel.

The new Jewish society in Palestine, then, did not consider American culture one that could—or even should—be emulated and mined as a source of inspiration.[66] Against this background, the words of Chaim Nachman Bialik, regarded as Israel's national poet, diverge from the spirit of the times. In 1926, Bialik made his only journey to America; he remained there for six months. On his return in October of that year, he spoke at length about his impressions of the journey to a large audience in Tel Aviv. Before leaving Palestine, said Bialik, the sum of his knowledge about America consisted of crumbs of impressions. America's negative image was so deeply lodged in his consciousness that he traveled there "out of terror and fear, out of a deep dread—I would say almost a feral dread, or, to alliterate, a feral phobia." What allayed his terror to some extent was the comment addressed to him by one American Jew: "But, America! Oh, America! She is sweeter than honey!" Bialik imagined the unknown America as a land of noise, commotion, and materialism; the negative qualities associated with the concept of business; and spiritual emptiness. Yet the America he discovered was something entirely different: a "new land," in which a new life had been forged and a new type of human being created—one who shook off every bit of the Old World and its old traditions.

Rushing forward, incessantly striving toward the future, without looking back. The American people grows, rising ever higher and marching forward. They move towards the future free of any worry. This is the potential of a cultural, not a savage, nation, confident in its power and unencumbered by any concern about the past.

America, Bialik continued (echoing Tocqueville, with whom he was not familiar), was a place in which men looked not backward but toward the future. It was true that material values held sway in America, but the negative traits responsible belonged to this early period of construction and would be corrected in the future.[67]

It is impossible to know to what extent Bialik's words influenced the image of America in the *Yishuv*. In any case, the dominant Socialist Zionist camp continued to adhere to the image of the United States as a capitalistic, materialistic, and imperialistic nation—certainly not a nation from which to learn the processes of democracy, or a model for the construction of a new Jewish society. Nor did the extreme Zionist Right look to America as a guiding example;[68] it maintained that America's foreign policy in the Middle East was dominated by its interest in oil, especially after the 1940s. All of this changed at the end of the 1960s. After that, parallels were drawn between the American and the Israeli historical experience: both included founding fathers, pioneers, frontiers, an immigration movement, and immigrants from various countries.[69] American influence had made inroads before then, but after the 1960s, that influence became so dominant that products of American culture became an integral part of Israeli society and culture. It would take longer for the image of the United States to change.

The process through which America's image evolved within Jewish society in Israel from 1948 onward calls for a thorough discussion—the proper place for which is not this study.[70] In any case, it is clear that at least since the 1960s, Israeli society entered the American cultural sphere of influence in almost every area, and the Israeli cultural orientation became decidedly American. This does not mean, of course, that the influence of Russian culture—or French, English, and German culture—on various aspects of cultural life in Israel disappeared, but there is no doubt that American cultural influence became dominant. America replaced Europe, against which Jews held a profound grievance. However, it took more than a little time for America's political culture to become a source of inspiration. During the 1950s, among those Israeli politicians and public

figures who frequently praised the United States as the leader of the free world (in contrast to the threat posed by the Communist Eastern bloc), few went on to praise American values or the American way of life. The political and public discourse dealt primarily with the political relationship between Israel and the United States, and even more so with the American Jewish community; it dealt very little with the various aspects of American society.[71] All this changed, as we have noted, beginning in the 1970s—a change observable in the increase in the number of books published in Hebrew about various aspects of the general American experience (not only the Jewish American experience), and in the number of American literary works translated into Hebrew. In an era of modern and global culture, the importance of geographical distance faded, and America became a permanent, active presence in almost every aspect of cultural life in Israel.

An unavoidable result of this situation was that America became the symbol of Western culture. Now, when representatives of anti-Western sentiments in Israeli culture wished to point to a lenient, corrupt, untraditional, and materialistic culture—a culture that is thoroughly negative and a threat to authentic Jewish values—the source of danger they indicated was American, rather than European, culture. From their perspective, Israel's importation of the American dream was better described as a nightmare. The changes in Jewish attitudes toward Europe from the nineteenth century to World War II and the Holocaust also occurred in attitudes toward America during the latter half of the twentieth century. America was at once glorious and accursed—depending on the beholder's political and cultural orientation.

The political conflict between the United States and several countries of Western Europe—a conflict that became increasingly acute at the end of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first—carved a gulf of sorts between America and Europe, and it sharpened the essential differences between them. Spokesmen of both the European Right and the European Left renewed the longstanding motif of a profound difference between the so-called Old and New Worlds, and this motif was adopted in various Israeli circles. This inspired a debate in Israel on whether Western values were more truly represented by America or by Old Europe, now revived and beginning to put on new clothing. Was it possible to see Europe's tyrannical regimes—and the Holocaust—as a drastic but temporary deviation from its exalted values, or was Europe continuing to reveal not only its intrinsic antisemitism but also weakness, feebleness, and

acquiescence, particularly to the perceived Muslim threat? Was Europe, at the end of the twentieth century, once again becoming an atrophied and unhealthy culture? Was Europe betraying its American ally, who had liberated it from the tyrannical Nazi regime? Or was Europe—unlike the United States—learning from its own history that the use of military and economic measures to impose its values on the rest of the world was inappropriate and harmful, constituting the sort of imperialism that had no place in a postcolonial world? The clash between Europe and the United States began to be perceived as a clash between two civilizations in which Israel had to take a stand. Over the last decade, various circles in Israeli society have shown signs of returning to the negative image of America that predominated from the 1940s to the 1960s. America was no longer a model of efficiency and progress, of political freedom and civil rights, but the last remaining imperialist nation—a nation that polluted the universe; inundated the world with mindless cultural products; represented unrestrained, profit-chasing capitalistic imperialism; and displayed strong currents of narrow, zealous, evangelical fundamentalism. In short, a spirit of hatred toward America and what it represented began to take hold in Israel. It is no wonder that Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies's *Why Do People Hate America?* was translated into Hebrew in 2006, by a publishing company of radical social tendencies. What is called Occidentalism was now no longer aimed at countries with a recent colonial past, but at the United States. Andrei S. Markovits's *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America*[72] is an attempt to describe the phenomena of European anti-Americanism and anti-Americanization, which target all aspects of the American experience, not just American foreign policy. This opposition is expressed through both protests and criticism, and through hatred and loathing. In Markovits's opinion, this attitude is the domain not only of the intelligentsia in Western Europe—on both Left and Right, each group for its own reasons—but also of many segments of the public. Moreover, Markovits does not consider this simply a fashion or a passing phenomenon; he traces its roots to the very birth of the United States. It appears to us, however, that Markovits conflates various types of criticisms and perceptions and does not balance them with a parallel corpus of expressions that might reveal a positive approach to America (for example, in his discussion of anti-Americanism in France, Tocqueville is not mentioned). It seems that even a partial survey of mutual perceptions on both sides of the Atlantic would reveal many ambivalent exchanges and relationships—and, of course, many generalizations and stereotypes.[73]

Which way the winds blow in the near future will depend more than a little on the development of political and cultural trends in Israel, as well as on the results of the United States' foreign policy. For our purposes, most important is the fact that in the contemporary historical and cultural consciousness of Israeli society—particularly during the last generation—there exist two stereotypes of the West, each of which excites both positive and negative images. No less important is the fact that criticism of America draws liberally on concepts and opinions that originate in the United States' self-criticism, just as the Jewish criticism of Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries drew on both the conservative European *Kulturpessimismus* and Europe's revolutionary radicalism. Furthermore, in the case of America, just as in the case of Europe, negative attitudes toward American policy and decisive rejection of American cultural values are not sufficient to cancel either the influence of American culture or its massive presence in Israeli culture—not even its presence in the culture, or habitus, of those who hold it in a negative light and warn others to keep away from it.

ISRAEL AS WESTERN

Is Israel, then, a Western nation? This question was addressed not long ago by the sociologist Sammy Smooha in an article titled "Is Israel Western?" The subtext of the article is directed toward those who congratulate themselves that Israel, despite its geographic location, is a Western country and not, Heaven forbid, Oriental; it attempts to demonstrate that Israel does not meet the criteria of Westernness. Smooha proposes a distinction between modernity and Westernness: the processes of modernization have a universal character, while Westernness is expressed in ten principal attributes that are common to Western European countries and provide them with a uniform character. The properties Smooha lists relate to national characteristics (for example, Western countries have fixed borders and a low birth rate; religion and the military do not occupy a central position; and theirs is a civic nationalism). Consequently, even though Israel sees itself as part of the Western world and as possessing a Western character, that is not the case—which illustrates how difficult it is to export the Western model in its entirety to non-European nations.[74] Smooha, of course, uses as his comprehensive model Europe after World War II. And indeed, Israel's geopolitical situation is different from that of European nations, as is the makeup of its population. The Jewish

tradition's position and role in Israeli culture and society are unlike the position of the Christian tradition—Catholic or Protestant—in European society. Nonetheless, if we consider, for example, an important criterion such as quality of life, we find that the quality of life in Israel is similar to that of Western European countries. The United Nation's Human Development Index of 2006, which reports data from 2004, finds Israel ranked twenty-third in the world with respect to life expectancy, gross national product, level of education, and human health. Ahead of it on the index are the Western European countries, as well as Canada, Australia, Japan, and the United States. The other Middle Eastern countries trail Israel significantly (Kuwait, for instance, is thirty-third). Most importantly, Smooha maintains that although the Israeli lifestyle is becoming increasingly European, it remains distinct. However, the measure of Westernness he proposes—which includes television viewing, use of cellular phones, and the like as primary cultural traits—ignores a long and important list of cultural traits that form an inseparable part of the culture and lifestyle of Jewish society in Palestine. The reason for this is, apparently, that these cultural elements are so deeply internalized in Israeli society that they are self-evident, and their European origin has been forgotten.