

Introduction

At the end of every Hebrew sentence that you utter,
There sits an Arab, smoking his hookah,
Even if it begun in Siberia,
Or in Hollywood, with *Hava Nagilah*.
—Me'ir Ariel

THE SCENE IS PLAYED OVER and over again in the novels of the First Aliya:¹ Jewish travelers on the road recently arrived in Palestine. Evening is drawing near and the shadows are lengthening. From a distance they spy the figure of an armed horseman approaching, who seems to them to be an Arab, possibly a robber. They are afraid, and in their fear there is a hint of the Diaspora from which they have just arrived, the “old Jewish” fear of the Cossack, the Gentile. But how surprised and relieved they are, and how overjoyed (and yet somewhat ashamed), when the approaching stranger, dressed in *Abaya* (robe) and *Kafia* (headdress) in the manner of the Bedouin, addresses them in Hebrew. He turns out to have been a *Shomer* (literally “guard”), a new Jew mistaken for an old enemy.² The scene opens with the old Jew, marked by the Diaspora, and ends with the appearance of the new Jew, the *Shomer*, the farmer-fighter. And in between these two, in the liminal space marked by the road trip in the Orient, where identities dissolve into one another and are postponed, the figure of the Arab mediates between the opposites. It is the face reflected in the mirror, permitting an internal transformation — the bridge upon which past and future could meet.

Almost three-quarters of a century later, a Jewish traveler is again threatened by an ambiguous figure, possibly an Arab. Me'ir, the protagonist of Jacob Shabtai's *Past Perfect*, goes to Amsterdam for a holiday, but at his hotel he encounters “a burly man . . . black-haired and with a black mustache, his skin of a white-greenish-olive hue, in a fancy suit . . . and with the same glance he told himself that this man was an Arab . . . in his hard-set dark face there was the clear expression of a bitter, arrogant enmity, and violence.” The muted encounter between them is repeated over and over in Amsterdam's

2 Introduction

streets but does not lead to any resolution. It serves only to evoke Meir's submerged fears, which in the context of the novel function as a premonition of his own impending death. Me'ir never attempts to speak with the man, who for his part remains silent. He is like an ambiguous dark shadow upon whom the Israeli projects all his fears and despair. He serves as a mute and threatening background for Me'ir's desire to speak not with him but with residents of Amsterdam, who are Europeans: "after all, he is not as distant from them as those Asians and Africans . . . after all, he is an engineer and is learning history, Dutch history, or at least European history, and he read books, *Till Eulenspiegel*, and he admired the paintings of Rembrandt, Brueghel, and others." With no dialogue between them, the two remain unchanged, each in his place, one a muted Arab, the other an Israeli longing to be considered a European.³

Three-quarters of a century have passed, and this halting dialogue, which underneath the Arab's mask has exposed the possibility of being a new Jew, has been replaced by hostile silence and the breathless internal monologue of Shabtai's prose, in which the Arab can appear only as a phantom, an internal persecuting bad conscience (since Shabtai never confirms whether the man was an Arab or not). An inversion of sorts: the solid presence of the Arab, within which the new Jew could hide and take shape, has now itself become ethereal and internalized. My intention in this book is to describe and explain this transformation, not as a literary phenomenon but as a wholesale change in Israeli culture.

I chose to open with the stories of Shabtai and the First Aliya, not because I think they represent the development of Israeli literature, but because they each in their own way encapsulate a particular cultural structure, namely, the experience of encounter with what lies at the boundaries of Israeli culture. This encounter began under the sign of a myth of autochthony, a project of inventing a new Hebrew culture, almost out of whole cloth, and for this very reason it required the mask of the Arab. The invention of the Hebrew went hand in hand together with the invention of the Arab, and therefore the characteristic experience of this new culture was of this imaginary yet coherent space that contained the two within it and that contemporaries recognized as "the Orient." In this book, I try to trace the process of disintegration of this Orient and show how the contemporary experience of encounter was created out of its ruins. This experience is mostly a desperate attempt to affirm a separate Western identity. Desperate and futile, because the Arab keeps resurfacing as the phantom presence, or as Me'ir Ariel puts it, "sits at the end of the sentence," waiting for his turn, no doubt.

To describe and explain this transformation, I have decided to write a history of the cultural lens through which Israelis view their neighbors, or more precisely of the complex of knowledges and practices that mediate

their encounter with the reality around them. Israelis have a generic name for this complex. They call it *mizrahanut* (literally, “orientalism”) and typically use the term to refer to something larger than the academic study of the Middle East, Islam, or the Arab language and Arab literature. Typically, Israelis apply the term *mizrahan* (orientalist) not only to academics but also to all those government officials, army officers, journalists, and other experts who monitor the neighboring Arab countries, supervise the local Palestinian population, or participate in official and media debates about Arab, Islamic, and Middle Eastern affairs – in short, all those individuals who pronounce authoritative discourse about these matters and all those institutions in which such discourse is produced, packaged, and circulated.

Moreover, one of the main theses of this book is that it is impossible to disconnect the history of *mizrahanut* from the history of that social category that Israelis call *mizrahim*, namely, Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab and Middle Eastern countries. As I show in the later chapters of this book, the sharp distinction between knowledge about Arabs and knowledge about the *mizrahim* – a distinction that is a defining characteristic of contemporary Israeli culture – was not self-evident before the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, and these forms of knowledge and expertise were inseparably intertwined at that time. Therefore, I include within the rubric of *mizrahanut* all those who do research about the Jewish immigrants from Arab and Middle Eastern countries or who are in charge of absorbing and integrating them into Israeli society. This rather broad and diffuse sphere of expertise is the subject of this book.

Even such a broad definition, however, does not fully capture the social and cultural significance of the discourse of *mizrahanut*, which in an important sense is not the sole monopoly of the experts but is accessible as a sort of “inner orientalist” to almost all members of this culture. In this sense, *mizrahanut* is not merely a form of expertise but a core component of Israeli culture, of the way public discourse is conducted in Israel, of the way Israelis perceive the world around them, and of the manner in which they relate to themselves and define their own identity. In the same way that the linguistic codes of Israeli culture mandate speaking directly without beating around the bush (speaking *dugree*), they also include a certain orientalist function – an authoritative mode of speech that encompasses attitudes, opinions, tropes, and other discursive devices that can be used in ordinary conversation or in a political polemic and that position the speaker as someone who is observing from the outside (from the West), from a position of impartiality and superiority, what goes on in the Middle East or how Arabs behave.

The main argument of this book is that the role played by *mizrahanut* in Israeli society – both as a form of expertise and as a cultural-linguistic

function that shapes the experience of encounter – has been profoundly transformed in the course of the last century, especially by processes caused by the establishment of the state. Just as from the First Aliya to Shabtai the figure of the Arab lost its capacity to mediate between old and new Jews, so too did Israeli *mizrahanut* turn separatist, and its knowledge now serves to confirm the cultural chasm between Israelis and their neighbors. The generation of prestate academic orientalists, for example, consisted of Central European Jews who were trained as philologists in German universities and construed their own role as building a bridge between Jews and Arabs to facilitate a “Jewish–Arab symbiosis.” Even though they were experts in Islamic civilization, they also dedicated many of their studies to the Jews residing in Arab countries, especially Yemenite Jews, whom they regarded as “the most genuine Jews living among the most genuine Arabs.”⁴

More importantly, as I show in chapter 2, in the years preceding the formation of the state of Israel, from 1926 to 1948, *mizrahanut* in the broader sense of a cultural-linguistic function applied itself to the “Orient” as a coherent and unified cognitive territory and as a meaningful metaphor signifying the renewal of the Jewish nation. Since Zionism exhorted Jews not only to return to Palestine in body but also to transform themselves, to shed the residues of the Diaspora and become pioneers, the “Orient” became the place where such transformation was possible as well as a rich source of tangible markers to signify the break between old and new Jewish identities.

The formation of the Israeli state in 1948, however, accelerated a process of divesting the metaphor of the “Orient” of the meaning it had in the past and of fragmenting its earlier coherence. The cognitive territory of the “Orient” was carved into different and separate jurisdictions, each claimed by a different group of experts: intelligence, government, *hasbara* (propaganda), and the absorption of immigrants. The Orient was disenchanting, while *mizrahanut* became separatist, no longer straddling the seams of the Jewish–Arab symbiosis but occupying a watchtower overlooking the hardening boundary between Israelis and Arabs. A younger generation of Israeli-born orientalists have applied themselves to this disenchanting and fragmented universe, no longer seeking there the secret of Jewish renewal but rather searching for “overt intelligence on the intentions, plans and deeds” of Arab leaders and regimes, which “often cannot be logically understood by an external observer.”⁵

The Disenchantment of the Orient

Max Weber coined the term “disenchantment of the world” to denote the loss of meaning in modernity, or more specifically the loss of the ability to give the world a unified, organic, and coherent meaning. Weber argued that

this loss was caused by the process of rationalization, which led not only to the severing of the bridges between this world and the next but to a more general process of differentiation and autonomization of the various spheres—religion, science, art, economy, politics, sexuality, and intellectual life—such that the coherent and meaningful world of our predecessors has fragmented into separate and competing jurisdictions.⁶

In coining the term “disenchantment of the Orient,” I mean to refer to an analogous process of fragmentation in which the formerly coherent territory of the Orient was carved up into separate and competing jurisdictions (e.g., discourse on the Arab village is now distinct from Middle Eastern studies, which are themselves differentiated from the study of ancient Islamic civilization, which for its part has nothing to do with the sociology of *mizrahi* Jews in Israel). But unlike Weber, who argued that disenchantment was caused by a process of increasing rationalization, I argue the inverse: that disenchantment preceded rationalization and served as its condition of possibility.⁷

The first step in the transformation of the role that the orientalist function plays in Israeli culture was not recognition that the category of the “Orient” was imaginary and irrational but rather the arbitrary act of separation, of drawing external and internal boundaries, that took place as part of the state-building process during the 1948 war and its immediate aftermath: the expulsion of Palestinians from their villages and from the mixed cities; the decision to prohibit the return of the refugees and the war conducted against “infiltration”; the imposition of military government on the Palestinian population remaining within the confines of the new state; and the great migration of Jews from Middle Eastern countries and their forced settlement in the periphery. These acts not only separated Jews and Arabs but also provoked an intense conflict between different groups of experts, each presenting itself as capable of managing for the state the new external and internal boundaries and the new populations and problems. In the course of this struggle, the formerly coherent category of the “Orient” was carved up into different jurisdictions administered by different forms of expertise, and gradually the Orient was disenchanted and lost its capacity to endow the new Jewish existence with general and coherent meaning. Rationality, namely, the recognition by orientalists that the “Orient” was an artificial and essentialist category, as well as the new forms of rational knowledge—the discourse on the Arab village, Middle Eastern studies, the sociology of *mizrahi* Jews in Israel—only appeared much later, as a rather forced interpretation of the categories created by the state-building process.

To even formulate this project, to consider how and why *mizrahanut* has changed and with what consequences, is to break at once with two opposed yet symmetrical interpretations of orientalism. On the one hand, there is Edward Said’s seminal analysis of orientalism as the way in which Europe

sought to deal with the world around it, by essentializing the difference between “Orient” and “Occident.” From this point of view, the orientalist function has no history and no development. Although there may have been some changes on the surface, on the “manifest” level, in what orientalists say, these changes never disturb orientalism at the “latent” level, where it has always and by definition functioned to position the West as separate from and superior to what lies outside it.⁸ On the other hand, there is the testimony of orientalists themselves about what they do. They often depict themselves as educating an ignorant public about other cultures and peoples and thus, contrary to Said’s view, as bridging the gap between them. The plausibility of this account is enhanced in the case of European Jewish orientalists, who were themselves branded as “oriental” by fellow Europeans and in reaction, so the argument goes, have espoused a much more sympathetic view of Arab and Islamic civilization than Said allows.⁹ Yet, although their account may not ignore the historicity of orientalism, it obscures how orientalism functions on the discursive and institutional level. The history of orientalism is reduced to the story of a few individuals laboring at the margins to provide an accurate picture and combat prejudices with respect to Arab and Islamic civilization.

In one sense, my position can be seen as standing midway between those of Said and his critics: while Kremer and Lewis were right with respect to prestate Jewish orientalists, Said was right with respect to contemporary Israeli orientalists. But in another sense, what I am suggesting is altogether paradoxical from the point of view shared by Said and his critics: my argument implies that precisely because Jewish scholars in the prestate period were orientalist in Said’s sense – that is, because they thought about the “Orient” in binary and essentialist terms – they construed their own role as bridging the gap between Jews and Arabs (i.e., they were nonseparatist). Contemporary Israeli orientalists, on the other hand, tend to disavow the old essentialist dogmas about the Orient,¹⁰ but precisely for this reason they also tend to reinforce a separatist definition of Israeli identity. In short, as Israeli *miznchanut* became less and less essentialist, it also became more separatist.

This is quite unthinkable from the point of view shared by Said and his critics, but it becomes thinkable if we understand the separatist effect of discourse not in terms of the prejudices and stereotypes it propagates but in terms of how it manages the boundary lines of identity. It becomes thinkable also when we sensitize ourselves to the paradoxes and hybridity of Zionism: this Jewish project of escaping internal colonialism via colonial settlement overseas also meant that in order to become “normal” (i.e., Western), the Jews had to go to the East and integrate themselves there; in order to constitute the binary division of East and West, they had to transgress it.¹¹

Zionism and Its Boundary Signs

This argument derives from a conceptualization of orientalism that differs from the one developed by Said. From Said's point of view, orientalism is a Western discourse that invents an imaginary object – the “Orient” – and depicts it as radically different from the “Occident” (i.e., their difference is a difference of essences). In this sense, orientalism is not only a discourse about the orientals but also a way of defining the identity of the “West.” As Said writes, “Orientalism is never far from . . . the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying ‘us’ Europeans as against all ‘those’ non-Europeans.”¹² Identity – whether European or Israeli – is created by drawing a strict boundary between East and West, thereby defining “us” and “them.” This argument is by now a truism. Everybody knows that identity is defined against “the Other.” Right?

Wrong. The problem with this approach, however simple and self-evident it may seem, is that it ignores the reality of the boundary itself. It basically requires us to think of the boundary as a nonentity, a “fine line” without any width to it, as in Euclidean geometry. If we conceive of the boundary as possessing a certain volume or width, if we analyze it as a real social entity, then what is inside the boundary is neither here nor there, neither them nor us; it is hybrid. Another way of saying this is that the very agents, social mechanisms, and symbolic materials that participate in the act of boundary making – the boundary signs themselves – of necessity also transgress the boundary just as they mark it.¹³

This point is well illustrated by the episode of the masked horseman with which I began. On the one hand, this figure is a boundary sign. One of its roles in the story is to mark the boundary between Arabs and Jews, since we are reassured at the triumphant end of the scene that the horseman was “really” a Jew (and the readers are also expected to learn in this way how to be a new Jew). On the other hand, however, if we freeze the frame and investigate more closely this figure in itself, just before it disappears, we realize that by the same token it also transgresses the boundary, since in itself it is neither Arab nor Jew but quite literally Janus-faced – a hybrid, an Arab-Jew.

Another illustration of this point is the wealth of terms that currently exist in the Hebrew language to signify the volume of the boundary, that social-spatial entity that at one and the same time separates and connects the two sides of the boundary: *Shetach Ha-Hefker* (no-man's-land), *Merhav Ha-Téfer* (seam zone), *Téchum Ha-Sfar* (frontier area), *Ezor H-Gvul* (border zone), and many others. The first term, *Shetach Ha-Hefker*, is particularly apt and revealing. This was the name given, for example, to the no-man's-land separating Arab and Jewish Jerusalem before 1967. The Hebrew word *Hefker* is loaded with significance: it may mean a thing that is lost, without an owner, free for the taking, or it may refer to a deserted and empty zone,

outside sovereign rule (or where sovereignty is disputed). Therefore, it also connotes an area outside morality, where no laws hold, where nothing is forbidden or protected – in short, a site of scandal (*Hefkenut*). In this sense, no-man’s-land is a sort of antiborder, the opposite of the border (or of the law), which nonetheless always adjoins it and acts as its constant shadow. Moreover, linguistically *hefker* is also connected with another sort of transgression – losing one’s religion, becoming a non-Jew (*Hitpakmt*), thus connoting a zone where identity dissolves, where the Jew merges into the Gentile.

The boundary, therefore, is not a fact established once and for all, but at any given moment it is an ongoing and rather precarious achievement. One can never stop marking it. At this point, I would like to return to the role of orientalist discourse and expertise. If the discourse of *mizrahanut* is separatist, this is not because once and for all it draws a boundary between East and West or between Arabs and Jews, since the very act of drawing the boundary also transgresses it and produces hybrids. Whether discourse and expertise are separatist depends on how they patrol, so to speak, the no-man’s-land within the volume of the border; on the particular modes of control and supervision they exercise over the hybrids that exist therein; and on the forms of self-control and self-monitoring they exercise over the experts themselves. Separatism is a specific border regime that deals with the purification of hybrids (i.e., with the arbitrary relegation of them to this or that side of the boundary line).

The purification of the hybrids does not mean that they are eliminated. On the contrary, it is precisely what permits them to be manufactured on a large scale. This is Bruno Latour’s argument concerning modernity. All premodern societies, explains Latour, manufactured hybrids, “monsters” that transgressed the carefully outlined boundaries of the cultural systems of classification and therefore were deemed to be a threat to the social order. For this reason, much of the ongoing cultural effort of these societies was directed at limiting the number of hybrids and controlling them, which is why the hybrids typically appear as carriers of impurity. An excellent example is furnished by the status of the pig in Judaism.

Modernity, on the other hand, multiplies the number of the hybrids exponentially, because at its disposal are forms of expertise that purify the impure hybrids and in this way reconstitute the cultural system of classification. The basic distinction of the modern classification system, according to Latour, is between nature and society, or between manipulable objects and right-bearing subjects. This distinction is a myth, but different groups of experts – doctors, psychologists, natural scientists, lawyers, and so on – have a vested interest in its persistence, and consequently their discourse obsessively endeavors to distinguish between “body” and “mind,” between conscious and unconscious, between natural phenomena and human-made instruments.¹⁴

It is possible to apply this analysis, by way of analogy, to orientalist expertise, especially to the new forms of expertise that claimed jurisdiction over various departments of the Orient after 1948. This is where their significance lay. They produced rational accounts that legitimated the arbitrary fiat of purification, which explained why the hybrids “really” belong only to one side of the boundary, either Arab or Jewish, and which discounted their other features as nonessential, temporary, artificial, correctable, and so on. At the same time, however, the experts themselves, precisely because they endeavored to supervise the border zone, ran the constant risk of becoming themselves entangled in this no-man’s-land, becoming identified with it, themselves perceived as hybrids who are not quite trustworthy. An important part, therefore, of the separatist border regime is the self-control and the self-monitoring that the experts exercise over themselves, the way their own discourse requires them to purify themselves because of their proximity to the hybrids.

At this point, the readers may justifiably wonder whether this rather complex and abstract theory has anything to do with history of Zionism and its relationship to the Palestinians. Isn’t the story much simpler? Aren’t the causes of the emergence of separatism much more straightforward? And wasn’t the role of the experts in this regard altogether secondary and after the fact? It is fashionable today to compare Zionism with European colonialism and to point to their common origins. Zionism understood itself, so argue the critics, as a Western movement bringing the light of progress and civilization to the backward Orient. For this reason, it separated itself from its Arab surroundings, which it deemed inferior. In short, Zionism was a form of orientalism.¹⁵

Additionally, labor Zionism had economic reasons for separating from the Palestinians. In order for Jewish laborers to survive in the labor market, it was necessary to split the labor market (this was the notorious struggle over “Hebrew labor”), because the Palestinians laborers were much cheaper than the Jewish ones. The labor Zionist solution was to settle the land by means of purely Jewish agricultural cooperatives that relied solely on the labor of their members. In short, the economic exigencies that followed from the attempt to create a colonial settler society in the adverse conditions of Palestine led to the creation of a series of institutions – the General Federation of Labor, the kibbutzim, the Jewish National Fund – that gave Jewish society in Palestine its distinctive character and separated it economically and territorially from the local Palestinian population.¹⁶

This combination of separatist institutions and separatist identity, however, meant that the Zionist movement was on a collision course with the Palestinians, and it led directly and inevitably to their expulsion during the 1948 war. In comparison with this dynamic, rooted in the inescapable constraints of

material existence and the ineluctable forces of identity, isn't the story about the hybrids, the experts, and the disenchantment of the Orient completely incidental and of marginal significance?

The aim of this book is to show that when the history of Zionism is considered from the point of view of the manufacture and purification of hybrids, it is possible to tell a different story about separatism. Separatism was not inevitable, a direct result of the essential nature of Zionism as a colonial-orientalist project, but a historical event overdetermined by multiple and sometimes contingent causes, of which some at least had to do with struggles among the experts and the relations between them and the state.

To substantiate this argument, chapter 2 deals with early Zionism and its experience of encounter with the Orient. This experience, I try to show, constituted something much more massive, complex, and meaningful than merely a sense of separateness and European superiority. To understand this point, we must recall that early Zionism was not only an organization mobilized to achieve political and economic ends but also a church seeking to disseminate a certain revealed truth and to instruct individuals on how to fashion their bodies and souls to attain salvation. To perform the magic of transforming old Jews into new Jews and to endow the new identity with a sense of authenticity and autochthony, early Zionism manufactured three different types of hybrids that at one and the same time marked and transgressed the boundary between Jews and Arabs in the prestate period:

1. The *mista'ravim*, that is, Jews who learned to imitate Palestinian customs and dialect to perfection.¹⁷ Not only could they "pass" as Palestinians, but, as I will show, their imitation of the Palestinians functioned as a public sacrifice of their old selves for the sake of fashioning a new Zionist self. In this sense, the *mista'ravim* were similar to the early Christian martyrs and saints. They were virtuosi. The sacrifice of their old selves and the ascetic fashioning of a new self served as the basis for their claim to lead the flock of lesser souls by means of setting an example of virtuous conduct.
2. The Sephardim, that is, Jews who claimed to be descended from the exiles of Spain and who have lived for centuries under Ottoman rule – in Greece, Turkey, Syria, and importantly also in Palestine, especially Jerusalem. They were typically well integrated into urban Palestinian society. Intricate and dense networks connected their leadership with the Palestinian urban elite, thus providing confirmation for the idea that the goal of Zionism was to promote a harmonious synthesis between Orient and Occident.

3. The fellahin, that is, the Palestinian peasants, who were represented in Zionist iconography as “hidden Jews” (i.e., as the descendants of the ancient Hebrews or at least as their living image). This representation served to weave the Zionist narrative into the fabric of the settlers’ everyday life in Palestine and transformed Palestine into *Eretz Israel* (the land of Israel).

These three hybrids joined together to create the experience of an open horizon of identity, a space of metamorphosis and the transmutation of identities. This was a coherent and meaningful experience of the Orient as a metaphor for the Zionist project of sacrificing the old identity and fashioning a new one.

I do not mean to claim that these were the sole forces shaping Zionist identity in the prestate period. The separatist institutions and acquired predispositions identified by other authors were no doubt dominant in prestate Jewish society, especially from 1936 onward. Consequently, all these hybrid figures were viewed with some suspicion, and numerous attempts to “purify” them were made. At the same time, however, as I argue in chapter 2, these hybrid figures and the practices associated with them were also central to key Zionist practices and rituals validating the new Jewish identity. In fact, they even played an important role in the functioning of the very separatist institutions that would seem opposed to them. As Latour argues, the production and mobilization of hybrids are intrinsically tied to their purification. They are not opposed to the purification of hybrids but feed it, and vice versa.

As I show in chapter 3, the key factor that explains the laxity of the prestate border regime and differentiates it from the current situation is the balance of power in the field of orientalist expertise: the two dominant groups of orientalist experts in the prestate period – the German-trained philologists and the amateur “Arabists” – not only did not seek to purify the hybrids but in fact modeled their own expertise on them: the philologists specialized in the “Jewish-Arab symbiosis,” which they considered the Sephardim to embody most perfectly, while the Arabists claimed expertise in Arab affairs because, like the *mista’ravinim*, they imitated the Bedouin and the fellahin and could “think like them.” Thus, neither group of experts managed to disentangle themselves from the no-man’s-land surrounding the boundary or to prevent their identification with the hybrids. On the contrary, their very authority depended on existing within the border zone, “between East and West,” alongside the hybrids.

The 1948 war and the formation of the state of Israel certainly brought this state of affairs to its end and completely transformed the role that *mizrahanut* played in Israeli culture. In chapter 4, however, I show that it is impossible the attribute these changes to the war per se; rather, one must examine

also the struggles between the experts that took place during and after the war. Even the most brutal and thoroughgoing attempt at separation, namely, the expulsion of Palestinians and the mass immigration of Jews from Arab countries to Israel in the aftermath of the war, did not completely separate Jews and Arabs, nor did it eliminate the ambiguity of the boundary between them. On the contrary, it led to the formation of three new hybrid figures:

1. "Infiltrators," whose movements blurred the boundary between what was inside the state and what was outside it.
2. "Israeli Arabs," whose status within the Jewish state remained ambiguous, between citizens and enemies.
3. *Mizrahi* Jews, the new immigrants, who were perceived as somewhere between Jews and Arabs.

This time, however, there was intense competition between different groups of experts, each seeking to present itself as better able to supervise and purify the hybrids. The difference between this period and the prestate period was not the fact of the war per se but more generally the project of giving Zionism the shape of a sovereign (Jewish) *state*. It was this project that produced the hybrids as a sort of a "byproduct" of the effort to draw external and internal boundaries, and it was this same project that changed the status of these hybrids and required their purification as well as the self-purification of the experts.

Like the boundary, the state is not a fact established once and for all but rather an ongoing and precarious practical achievement. Or as Timothy Mitchell put it, the state is an "effect" of a political practice that continuously blurs the boundaries between the state and society, or between the state and other states, and continuously redraws them. This effect has two components: first, the effect of sovereignty, the image of the state as a bounded unit with clearly defined jurisdiction, and second, the effect of agency, the image of the state as a cohesive and impersonal actor, strictly separated from the web of social relations and yet capable of effectively commanding it.¹⁸ This image is in one respect a sham, because to be effective the state cannot avoid becoming entangled in the web of social relations. It cannot have recourse to the relationship of command alone. It must persuade, influence, bargain, mobilize, organize, and form linkages, networks, and coalitions; that is, it must act as if there were no boundaries between state and society, and in fact state elites benefit from "fuzzifying" these boundaries. But in another respect, the effect of the state is an important political reality, because without the boundary between the state and society, and certainly without a clear territorial boundary between the state and other states, the power of the state to issue commands would become illegitimate.

In the modern world, expertise has grown in parallel with the rise of the state, because it provides one crucial means of orchestrating the effect of the state: on the one hand, expertise establishes durable relations, which are not command relations, between state agencies, social actors, technology, and natural phenomena, thus producing and utilizing hybrids; on the other hand, it provides an ongoing account of its activities in which everything is separated carefully to its own proper realm – the natural, the scientific, the social, and the political – and the hybrids are purified.

The three hybrids mentioned above, therefore, were created as a result of the project to give Zionism the shape of a sovereign Jewish state, and as we shall see later, state elites benefited and continue to benefit from fuzzifying the external and internal boundaries. At the same time, however, it was also necessary to redraw these boundaries again and purify the hybrids in order to establish the legitimate authority of state agencies. This double movement of hybridization and purification was the basis for various alliances between state elites and groups of experts, who functioned in this manner as a sort of subsidiary arm of the state. As I show in chapter 4, this prompted an intense struggle between various groups of experts, each claiming to monitor the external and internal boundaries and to supervise the hybrids on behalf of state elites so as to assist in producing the effect of the state. In the course of this struggle, the previously coherent cognitive territory of the Orient, which earlier accommodated both experts and hybrids, both Jews and Arabs, was carved up into separate and competing jurisdictions, each controlled by a different group of experts. In particular, the expertise required to deal with Arabs outside the state (“intelligence”) was differentiated from the expertise needed to deal with Arabs inside the state (“government”), and both were differentiated from the expertise needed to deal with the *mizrahi* Jews (“absorption of immigrants”). This process of differentiation is what I call the “disenchantment of the Orient.”

I would like to accentuate the fateful importance, in particular, of the fact that the expertise required to absorb the *mizrahi* Jews was differentiated from other forms of expertise in Arab affairs “proper.” It signaled a complete transformation in the role played by *mizrahanut* and the orientalist function in Israeli society: before the formation of the state, the orientalists in the Hebrew University took Judeo-Arab civilization as their main subject and dedicated many studies to the dialect, folklore, and religious traditions of the first communities of Middle Eastern Jews who immigrated to Palestine, especially the Yemenites and the Kurds. It was part and parcel of their expertise. After the formation of the state, however, succeeding generations of Israeli orientalists began to restrict themselves to the study of the Arab world in and of itself and abandoned the study of Jewish history to the field of Judaic studies. The communities of *mizrahi* Jews who immigrated to Israel

were thus left outside the purview of *mizrahanut* and became an object of study for the social sciences. The social sciences, in their turn, tended to avoid the study of the Palestinians and only returned to it rather late, during the 1970s.¹⁹

From the point of view developed here, however, the social scientific discourse on *mizrahi* Jews and the orientalist discourses on Arabs outside and inside the state must be grasped together as a single “border regime,” a device for the constant construction and purification of the *mizrahi* hybrid. One arm of this device undertakes to study Arabs, and Arabs alone, from a position of exteriority. This simple, staggering discursive fact reaffirms the boundary between Jews and Arabs and constructs *mizrahi* Jews as a hybrid in need of purification. The other arm accepts this construction as given and undertakes to “develop” and educate the *mizrahi* Jews – that is, to purify them. Nonetheless, it also continues to report a certain obstinate, irreducible difference that cannot be eliminated. The category of *mizrahi* Jews is thus the “hinge” between those two realms of discourse, making possible their separation and yet linking them inextricably. As I show in chapter 4, it is impossible to understand the emergence and significance of the category of *mizrahi* Jews without taking into account the project to separate Arabs and Jews. The attempt to draw such boundaries, especially through residential segregation, has produced as its inevitable byproduct a sort of “third space,” a no-man’s-land between the Jewish and Arab spaces, where the category of *mizrahi* Jews crystallized and acquired the meaning it currently has. From this perspective, the disenchantment of the Orient, the transformation of orientalist expertise, and the formation of the new category of *mizrahi* Jews appear as three sides of the same process, a process through which Israeli society produces and confirms itself as “Western.”

The last part of the book deals with the forms of knowledge and expertise that developed over the years inside the jurisdictions of intelligence and government. These forms of expertise took upon themselves the task of purifying the hybrids and thus shaped how Israelis perceive the world around them. For example, as discussed in chapter 5, the discourse on the “Arab village” that developed within the framework of the military government imposed on the Palestinians from 1948 to 1966 purifies the Israeli Arab hybrid by separating what is “internal” to the village and hence “traditional” and “Arab” from what is “external” and hence due to the dynamic effect of the “modern” and “Western” Israeli society. In this way, modernization discourse – with its binary oppositions of modern versus traditional, West versus East – was inscribed upon the physical landscape of the state of Israel and has become part of the taken-for-granted spatial knowledge of all Israelis.

In a parallel development, as I show in chapter 6, a discourse of commentary about current events in the Middle East arose in the interface between

military intelligence and academic Middle Eastern studies and has functioned to purify the refugee or infiltrator hybrid. It ignores and suppresses the complexity and ambiguity of the no-man's-land along the external boundaries and instead produces a dominant definition of Middle Eastern reality restricted to leaders and regimes whose intentions are well defined and whose responsibility is clearly formulated. The hybrids – the refugees and the infiltrators – are excluded from it.

The contiguity and proximity to the hybrids, as I have argued, pollutes the experts and therefore requires them to disentangle themselves from the no-man's-land inside the boundary and to purify themselves so they can appear as credible allies of state elites. For this reason, they have a vested interest in distancing themselves from the hybrids. The emergence of the discourse on the Arab village, for example, as I show in chapter 5, should be understood as part of a solution to the crisis of Arabist expertise, a solution that included the abolition of the military government and the withdrawal of its supervisory functions to behind the scenes. The reason for this crisis was that Arabist expertise became more and more identified with the no-man's-land inside the internal boundary and became polluted by the scandal and sensation that were linked to it and the rumors that grew around it. The expertise of intelligence officers and academic Middle Eastern studies specialists, on the other hand, was constructed from the very first as an extensive and hierarchical network that orchestrated the activities of various intelligence-gathering agencies (including those entangled in the border zone) while simultaneously permitting the researchers to remain distant from the hybrids. The result was a form of expertise that could afford to ignore the ambiguities of the border zone and thus was not polluted by proximity to the hybrids.

The final argument shared by chapters 5 and 6 is that the purification devices deployed by orientalist discourse no longer perform their role as well as they did in the past. Put differently, the dreaded “return” of the refugees has already taken place, at least at the level of the discursive mechanisms that were meant to supervise the hybrids. By now, after the Oslo Accords established the Palestinian Authority in the territories, and even more so with the eruption of the Al-Aksa Intifada, the discourse of intelligence experts is nothing but a desperate and futile attempt to impose its obsolete categories on a reality that no longer accords with them, a reality in which it is no longer possible to ignore the existence of the hybrids – both the residents of the territories, who are now all potentially refugees and infiltrators, and the Palestinian Authority itself, which is something between a state and a nonstate. The discourse on the Arab village was confronted with similar challenges even earlier. During the 1980s, it became clear that many so-called “villages” have grown to become more like towns and cities, while their residents were far more politically assertive and organized than was

expected of peasants. Consequently, the discourse on the Arab village began to lose its relevance, and it has gradually been replaced by a debate conducted in categories taken directly from 1948. The specter of the internal enemy has returned to haunt public discourse, and with it have come renewed debates about the advantages and disadvantages of population exchange, transfer, autonomy, and assimilation.

Before embarking on this elaborate and difficult history, however, I offer, in chapter 1, a methodological excursus to clarify the subject of this book. I assume that many readers are already exasperated with my rather liberal and imprecise use of the terms “*mizrahanut*,” “orientalism,” “orientalists,” “experts,” “Arabists,” “Middle Eastern specialists,” and so on. What exactly do they mean? Who is an orientalist and who is not? Am I not fudging the issue by permitting myself to include all sorts of extra-academic actors and institutions within the scope of this study? The following chapter, therefore, is intended to serve as a methodological introduction to the rest of the book. There I take up the question of who is an orientalist and what is the scope of orientalism. I rule out definitions of orientalism based on its object (the “Orient”) or on some clearly demarcated discipline and instead suggest we think of it as a set of practices that mediate historically changing forms of encounter within the boundary zone and as an open-ended field of struggle over the orientalist prototype – that is, over the definition of legitimate actors in the field, the rules of entry into it, and the hierarchy of worth within it.