8 ◎ 'You're so Pretty – You Don't Look Moroccan'

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You're so pretty – you don't look Moroccan.★ I grew up hearing this sentence from the time my parents brought me from Morocco to Israel in 1949, to the immigrant camp *Sha'ar Aliyah* and to the *Ma'abara* (transit camp) *Pardes Chana*. I heard it from the white-uniformed white nurse, who came to our tent in the immigrant camp to tell my mother how she should raise me, my sister, and my baby brother, who was born in that tent. This nurse spoke of 'raising children' as if it was something Zionists invented. The tall silver-haired *Yekke* (German Jew) kindergarten teacher also used this sentence. This teacher then took my name – Henriette – from me and gave me in its place the awful name 'Ahuva'. She did this 'because Henriette is difficult to pronounce – both for me and the other children'.

I continued to hear the sentence from neighbours and their children, and throughout my adolescence when, upon meeting people for the first time, special attention was given to my looks. Today, as an adult, when wrinkles have begun to carve my face, the sentence has been replaced by 'Really? You don't look it.' My so-called non-Moroccan appearance helped me more than once to become an invisible person, who can see but is not seen. Hence, I often still hear opinions about Moroccans spoken among non-Moroccans who take me for one of them. This has enabled me throughout my life to learn a great deal about inclusion and exclusion, superiors and inferiors, in Israeli society from the 1950s until today.

As early as the age of 4, hearing the sentence provoked in me vague, incomprehensible feelings; there seemed to be some tension between the green colour of my eyes, my relatively light complexion, and my origin. Only later on did I understand that these feelings were the conscious side of the unconscious subtext: 'I am lucky that I don't look Moroccan'. But as a

young child, I understood very early that there was an apparent conflict between aesthetic value and being Moroccan. This experience was exemplified when my mother came to my teacher to complain about the hostility shown toward me by other children in the class. The response of the teacher was that my mother was behaving like a pushy Moroccan street peddler, and that there was 'no room for such vulgarity and primitivism in our school'. The teacher completely ignored the content of my mother's complaint. My father transferred me to a 'better' school in Holon, named after a great Zionist thinker – Moshe Hess. His ambition for his children was that they should be absorbed quickly and efficiently. This school was 'better' because it was populated largely by the children of veteran immigrants (the so called 'pioneers') who were mostly Ashkenazi (of European origin). Most of the children participated in extra-curricular enrichment programmes such as ballet, piano, and violin. They included the children of artists and politicians. I, too, attended an enrichment programme: I 'took' a drawing class out in the sand dunes of Holon by myself. I loved to draw, and apparently showed some talent, but my father let me know in no uncertain terms that 'you'd be better off reading a book than wasting time out in the dunes'.

At this time in my life, I felt what I later realised was a deep sense of alienation. The axle around which this turned was the dissonance between the knowledge of who I was and what people took me to be: I don't look Moroccan and this is why I am 'lucky', but I am 'very lucky' that I look just like an Ashkenazi. Trapped between who I was – a Moroccan girl – and who people thought I was – an Ashkenazi girl – my world-view crystallised according to a clear dichotomy of what was good and what was bad, which derived ultimately from notions of where people came from.

When I was 10, my parents moved again, this time to Jerusalem (owing to my father's promotion at work). This gave me the opportunity to open a new page in my life. I told my new Jerusalem friends that I had been born in France. In order to be convincing I consciously eliminated my distinctive Arab accent when pronouncing the letters *Khet* and *Ayin,* and trained myself to adopt the typical Ashkenazi accent of *Chet* and *Ain.* Obviously, I did not invite any of my friends home; I could not risk their discovering my lie. I was afraid that, if they came home with me, they would hear my mother speak to me in Arabic. I forbade her absolutely to speak Arabic when outside the house. It was from this time that I was busy constructing (and protecting) the child I wanted to be – the French child, whom I believed other people thought I was. Soon I began to believe my own deceptive

tales, as, little by little, I constructed a desirable identity for myself. I milked my parents for bits of information about French history, culture, and language. My parents had knowledge about things French, since they had studied at the Alliance Israelite French colonial school back in Morocco. It was from them that I first heard of Zola, Hugo and *Les Misérables*, about Rousseau and the Revolution, about Napoleon and his battles, and about General Lyotée. My mother told me the history of France long before I began to study it in general history classes in school.

All of this I incorporated into the identity that I was constructing for myself, to which I added further biographical details that were meant to ensure my acceptance amongst the children in my class. For example, I claimed that I went to fine art classes after school. Later, I added that I also studied dance. People believed what I said, since I possessed some natural ability in these areas. I even survived the tests I was put to; for example, once, during a youth training course, I was asked to perform a 'piece'. I made something up; later I found out that this was called 'improvisation' – and it went down very well.

As the reality gap faced by the child I was at home and the child I was at school grew wider, my tales developed and became more involved. This was difficult to do, so I also cushioned my world with soft, fluffy, happy imaginative thoughts. I outdid myself when I bragged to my teacher at the vocational high school that I had been chosen to participate in the Habima Youth (Habima is the Israeli national theatre company). Habima Youth was an organisation that existed only in my imagination; I added that it was meant to promote talented young actors. The teacher believed me, and even permitted me to leave class early every Tuesday. It is apparent that the common denominator to all my tales, whether or not I was conscious of it at the time, was Ashkenazi, Western culture. This was not a problem for my friends, and was only of benefit to my self-image.

Only of benefit? To whom? To my self? Which self was my self? The self of that imaginative girl? The real me I hated, and tried to wish out of existence; the Moroccan me, the non-French immigrant who did not participate in extra-curricular enrichment programmes like the other kids, who did no more than her very annoying schoolwork. At school I had to read and memorise entire books about me and the Jewish people through-out the world (meaning Eastern Europe); about my ancestors in the *Shtetl* (East European Jewish villages); the 'Family of Fighters' who broke through to besieged Jerusalem, and took part in the *Choma u Migdal* (building the walls and towers of new kibbutzim). In vain I searched, but never found the

real me, nor my father, in these books. In despair I stopped studying, and became more certain that I should hold on to the identity of that imaginary French girl. *Mikra'ot Yisrael* and *Historia shel Am Yisrael* (obligatory elementary school texts on Israeli literature and history) provided background for the invented European girl, and only reinforced my belief that the other girl – the real me – did not deserve to exist.

Once, when I finally found something on the real me, I discovered that I was a Mizrahi (Oriental), the term used in Israel to define non-Western Jews, those of African or Asian origin. In these texts I was described as dirty, poor, riddled with contagious or infectious diseases, spiritually impotent, lacking in moral capacity, ignorant, violent, and lazy.[1] In the best of cases, my parents were described as 'having fallen into an historical coma'.[2] In the worst of cases, my parents and I were accused of bringing about the cultural demise of the *Yishuv* due to our so-called inferiority complex over belonging to undesirable tribes and *Edot* (*Edot* being the term used to refer to something just short of 'ethnicities', lest it be known that Jews do not constitute a singular 'ethnic' group).[3] By then I had sufficiently convincing evidence to justify my extermination of that hated girl, since even the history books said that she was bad, and who wanted to be primitive and dirty anyway?

Once I found myself leafing through a children's book, *Rumiah, The Little Nanny*.[4] The author of this book, Levin Kipnis, received the Israel Prize for his life's work and contribution to children's literature. The book tells the story of a 12-year-old Yemenite girl, 'a dirty and starving new immigrant'.[5] She is brought to a veteran settler's house by her father, who wants to hire her out as a nanny for the settler's son. At the settler's house, she goes through a metamorphosis. First, they change her name to the more Hebraicised 'Moriah'. Then they bathe her, clean her, and comb her hair. They believe, Kipnis tells us, that in a very short time she will become a real human being ready to learn some manners. Rumiah had two very important attributes in the eyes of the veterans: one, her father did not ask for much money in exchange for her work; and, two, she was considered better than an Ashkenazi girl, for she ate little and worked a lot. When selling Rumiah to the child's mother, the 'matchmaker' or 'go-between' (a woman herself) explains that all Rumiah requires is a stick and a belt, 'without which one cannot get her moving'.[6]

I found this book in 1991 at the National Book Fair in Jerusalem, when I was searching the children's literature counter for books for my own son. While holding this book in my hands, it occurred to me that the feelings of

alienation, contempt and self-hatred that I had experienced, and which developed during my childhood, had been based on knowledge that I had absorbed from my social and educational environment. As a reader of this sort of literature, I believed every word. All that is Mizrahi is retarded, degenerate and primitive, and therefore I had to choose the Ashkenazi alternative – I had to 'Ashkenazify' myself (become 'white'). For me this meant establishing a modern, progressive, clean identity, and destroying, down to the roots, the identity that my parents gave me. This meant rejecting everything: their past, their language, their values, their loves, their hates, their pains and their joys.

My Ashkenazification was quite successful. I knew about Stockhausen's avant-garde music as well as about *a cappella* singing. I was familiar with Mozart and his biography long before the movie *Amadeus* came out, and I could identify many of his pieces by their Köchel number. I was also familiar with the Wimbledon tennis championships and could answer most of the questions on Shmuel Rosen's radio quiz show, and I could solve the *Ha'aretz* crossword puzzle with ease. My father was proud. I knew about *Yalkut Hakzavim* (local Israeli folkloric tales) and I became an expert teller of *Chizbat* (one kind of folkloric Israeli tales), as if I had heard them from my own grandmother. Those who showed some knowledge of these tales were assumed to belong to the families of pioneers and fighters who had been in Israel for many years. I worked extremely hard to make this knowledge mine, and in acquiring it I invested all of my energies. But I did it as a thief in the night. I looked out of the corner of my eye to see what other kids ate, how they played, and what they wore. I listened to their conversations about cello lessons, messy rooms, and the punishments they received from their mothers. I visited their homes and paid special attention to how their rooms were furnished. I saw their 'little radios' and how they listened to *Hamasach Oleh* (high-culture theatrical broadcasts). I aspired to be like them, to speak like them, to be considered one of them. Nothing that was mine (the real me) seemed appropriate to share in exchange, which is why I concentrated on imitating the look and the form, on refining the costume. While they ('my friends') were succeeding in acquiring the 'real thing' – in-depth study of the formal curriculum – I was failing. The teacher told my mother 'she could succeed and achieve if she only wanted to', and my mother was sure to repeat this to me often. I truly wanted to succeed, but there was a limit to my capacity to absorb both the canon and the entire context in which it was rooted. I was held back a grade and then sent to a vocational school to become a good cook. I was expelled from there as well.

I was a failure in their eyes and mine. Later, in the army – another Israeli melting pot – I also failed the course. I was left imprisoned in an inner world built of shattered bits and pieces of my identities; like a room full of mirrors – a fictive reflection of an Israeli, a despised Moroccan, and an imaginary French girl.

Spiritually breathless, I continued to chase after this body of knowledge. I discovered that Kipnis and Shmuely were 'mere' teachers. The foundations upon which they based their work were laid for them by the intellectual leaders of their generation. My failure in school was but proof of the elaborate theses regarding my backwardness, theses that flourished in the ivory towers of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The frameworks for research into Israeli society were established by the intellectual elite, who constructed a picture of the desirable Israeli, a picture that matched the parameters set by the ideology of the Labour Zionist movement. It was only later that I realized that my conceptions of what was desirable and detestable were based on these 'scientific' cornerstones.

These philosophers inspected and scrutinised me like a scientific object – a laboratory rat – and postulated the following:

> the results these youth have reached during systematic examination, point to intellectual development retardation. Various non-verbal examinations conducted prove retardation of one to two years, and very often even more, in comparison with youth of similar age in Europe. Are we to interpret this as biological inferiority and to see their difficulties as an expression of lack of intellectual abilities and limitations in psycho-physiological activity?

This is what was written about me by Karl Fuerstein and M. Richel in their book *The Children of the Melah: The Cultural Retardation among Moroccan Children and Its Meaning in Education*.[7] What followed was an attempt by these philosophers to offer practical advice for the educators faced with the task of the re-education of my brother, my sister, and myself. They promised to conquer all the social and cultural factors that influenced my 'dysfunctional development'.[8]

I also found out that the authors had decided not only that I was retarded, but that I lacked curiosity. What is more, no one around me was capable of arousing my curiosity: I showed no interest in observation, and I was unable to differentiate between the real and the imaginary, the natural and the supernatural.[9] They did not bother to ask me whether I lived in an imaginary world of my own choosing; they simply decided that I was incapable of doing otherwise. They entered the innards of my consciousness.

Without consulting me, Fuerstein and Richel decided on the following instructions for my teachers: they should avoid showing disrespect for my traditions and beliefs, *even though they are superstitions*. Teachers would face resistance because I was incapable of grasping abstract explanations.[10] Moreover, beneath 'the religious problem' lay my problematic relationship with the father figure.[11] My educators were forewarned that my presence in a group of children could be dangerous due to my lax sexual morality, as informed by my North African way of life, and should be conditional on the professional opinion of a psychologist.

Contrary to Fuerstein, Karl Frankenstein was busy addressing the question of what should be done in order to change the ethnic character of my parents.[12] As the ethnic character of my father and mother was rooted in their unconscious, Frankenstein asserted that it could not be changed by conscious instruction.[13] 'Only forces directed at the unconscious are likely to change [their] ethnic character'.[14] Therefore, my parents and I were to struggle actively with our ethnic character.[15]

My parents believed him, and so did I. I actively struggled, even at the tender age of 6, both on the individual and the collective level, just as he recommended.[16] I invented the French girl from scraps of information taken from my mother, because that girl's chances of acceptance by the Frankensteins of my new country were greater. My world was tailored according to his measurements, but all in vain. For, despite his recommendations, Frankenstein declared himself sceptical of my ability to change, and, like Fuerstein and Richel, he thought that my intelligence and ability to think abstractly were deficient. Thus I was not blessed with the ability to think causally, to understand the ways of the world, to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential, to relate to situations that 'require comprehending reasons, rules, and the essence of things, and to adapt to new conditions which require quick observation of the common and the different'.[17] In his article 'On the Concept of Primitivism', Frankenstein analyses the different kinds of primitivism known to him – that of the child, that of the retarded, that of the mentally ill, and that of the backward primitive and his or her deficient self-consciousness.[18] All these 'constitute only an introduction to our main subject – the analysis of the primitive mentality of the Mizrahi Jews who come to us from culturally backward regions'.[19] '[W]e said that the primitive person lacks a self and that his world is beyond the personal'; to which he added that, in this world, what indicates degenerate primitivism is 'an inflated self [narcissism], … narrow egotism, and a lack of understanding of extra–individual values'.[20] From my

educators, who hungrily consumed his writings, I learned that my self lacked all functional content (whatever that means). He also claimed that I was incapable of abstractly conceptualising the 'other' as having a 'self' of his or her own![21]

What all this meant for me as an individual was of no concern to either Frankenstein or his colleagues. What mattered to them was 'the big picture' – they were concerned with 'the fate of the People of Israel'. Frankenstein's opinions infuriated Akiva Ernest Simon, another member of the club, who was the one to etch the term 'primitivism' into this body of work.[22] From here on, the debate became increasingly detached from reality and entirely scholastic. My parents and I became abstract entities in this discourse; we were looked upon as guinea pigs on which the argument was to be tested. '[T]he anthropocentric position [as opposed to religious, social, or national positions] calls for extreme caution and moderate pacing, if any possible changes are to take place in the social lives of those same immigrants [meaning my social life and that of my parents]'.[23] '[W]e have found that there are two fronts: the absorbers and the absorbed, the directors and the directed, the culturally developed and the culturally more primitive'.[24] This claim caused Nathan Rotenstreich (yet another member of the club) to state angrily that there is a basic methodological problem regarding the question, 'to what extent is it possible and/or permissible to draw a line distinguishing between the different sides … [of the pair of terms used in the previous sentence]'.[25] Rotenstreich's words did not fall on deaf ears. They influenced leading figures such as David Ben-Gurion, who claimed that the unity of Israeli society was dependent upon common conceptions of collective objectives and the means for achieving them. Rotenstreich asked the rhetorical question: 'Is there hope that such unity can be reached upon the background of the present reality of the veteran settlers? … [A return to fundamentals is necessary] in order to merge into the lifestyle founded on the ideas of Israeli society'.[26]

Who was I to doubt these truths? In a sense, I did not exist, whereas these fictitious truths did exist – they had been propounded by the members of the intellectual elite of society. How could I not believe that these philosophers knew what they were talking about? I conformed. Over the years I have come to see that this discourse functioned as a massive system of exclusion, filtering out those of us who failed the Ashkenazification test, a system essentially fertilised by philosophical, literary, ethical and educational authorities. This discourse stimulated the minds of subsequent thinkers, all of whom, in turn, nurtured the myth of primitivity versus modernity.

Astonished, I watched them fuel the fire of this discourse, and tried with all my might to digest the perverted ideas they had cooked up for me.

Once that generation's leading thinkers had established their polemical positions and documented them in public lectures, at conferences, in books, and in journals, a solid infrastructure existed upon which Ben-Gurion could base his characterisation of me as morally deficient. The educational system in which my brother, my sister and I were processed was based entirely upon these judgments, not unlike the superstructure of Israeli sociology, a sociology whose primary purpose was, during its first years, to serve the governmental authorities in absorbing the mass immigration of 'oriental' Jews.[27] The ideological and emotional proximity of the founders of Israeli sociology to the Zionist project blurred the distinction between the academic and the political.[28] Even in instances of ideological disagreement, the aggressive Zionist belief in the establishment and subsequent fortification of the state forged a common emotional and conceptual consensus among politicians and sociologists.

In all of his research, Eisenstadt preserved the distinction between pioneers and *Olim* (immigrants). My parents, who had arrived after the establishment of the state, could not be considered pioneers by his definition. Moreover, in his view, they possessed no national identity, since they were neither secular nor modern enough. They were the antithesis of pioneers, and even a danger to the Zionist enterprise, for they were traditionally religious.[29] According to him, my parents were incapable of consciously transforming their economic and employment patterns or their social and cultural lives.[30] My father, who had been a senior bank officer in Morocco, did change his 'employment pattern' – he went to work in a cement factory and the citrus harvest for several years – yet he was still not suitable enough for absorption according to Eisenstadt's thesis. My father had to go through 'something' metaphysical – which Eisenstadt termed 'de-socialization' – to be followed by 're-socialization'.[31] In any event, this entire process, according to Eisenstadt, related to how the members of the *Olim* groups 'acquired new social values and attitudes … required for gradual change'.[32] This laid the responsibility for my father's failure on his own shoulders.

According to Eisenstadt's classification, my father was uneducated, despite his professional experience in banking, and my mother, a *cum laude* graduate of the Alliance Israelite, was but 'another one of the illiterate Mizrahi immigrants'. The fact that both of them had experienced Western culture in the colonial city of Casablanca, and the French education they

had received at the Alliance was of no value in his eyes. Eisenstadt attributed my parents' failure to be absorbed to their being 'unripe', that is, unready to enjoy the privileges of Israeli citizenship and utilise it for their 'upward employment mobilization'.[33] As a result, my mother worked as a maid in the Ashkenazi house of Yitzhak Ben Zvi (the second President of Israel), and was fired after only two days for being Moroccan rather than Yemenite! In another Ashkenazi house she discovered that they did not keep *kashrut* (the Jewish dietary laws). In shock, she came home and exclaimed, 'they're not Jews!' This was the point at which she discovered that a deep chasm separated her from *Eretz Israel*. This was not the society into which she wanted to be absorbed. Unlike my father, my mother chose to 'fail' at her social absorption. Caught in this chasm, I finally made my choice in favour of the rich, successful and strong (winning) side – Ashkenazification. The price I paid for this effort was full alienation from myself and my identity, not to mention the contempt I felt for my parents' helplessness in this process.

The story of our absorption was no more than an abstract analysis in Eisenstadt's terms of pioneers versus immigrants – two groups, two worlds, the former positive, the latter a danger to the former. In his evaluation of absorption policy, Eisenstadt deemed it mostly appropriate, and saw the mistakes made along the way as a reasonable price for Israeli society to pay to learn a lesson.[34] He put it this way in general terms, as if the whole of Israeli society paid the price for this lesson. But in fact it was I, Eisenstadt's object of research, who was the one who paid, and is still paying, this price. Not he, or Ben-Gurion, or their families, or the honourable liberator of Jerusalem, Yitzhak Rabin, or the members of Knesset Naomi Hazan, Yael Dayan, Amnon Rubinstein and Dan Meridor.

The Wadi Salib riots of 1959 were the outcome of a steadily growing correlation between low socio-economic status and Middle Eastern origin. The oppression had reached such a critical point that it could not but backfire in the faces of the hegemonic Ashkenazi elite. Who, among others, was appointed to the governmental committee to investigate the cause of the riots? Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, who concluded that the entire affair was no more than an outburst by a gang of thugs, who, he assumed, represented neither my parents nor me.[35]

The scientific conceptualisation and description of all our defects in the spirit of structural–functional theory not only constituted the basis of official policy, it formed the contours of Israeli sociology as well. The Education and Social Work departments in Israeli universities based all their research and definitions of backwardness, social gaps and disadvantaged communities

on these scientific conceptualisations. Programmes were written intro-
ducing me and my parents to my Ashkenazi friends upon this basis. The
pioneer's child, whom I envied, was defined as 'an ancient Hebrew who has
already shed his Diaspora qualities and has renewed himself in his land'.[36]
After this, the story goes, my parents and I arrived, bringing with us our
negative values – a dislike of physical labour, conservatism and an inclination
to violence, all of which constituted a threat to Zionism. Then again, our
Arabised way of living was seen as a threat to the Zionist project and so had
to be disposed of by all means possible. My own experiences made it clear to
me that it did not matter what I did or did not do – my Ashkenazi friends
had to reject me. So I Ashkenazified. This Ashkenazification still runs
through my bones to this day – an Ashkenazi skeleton in my closet.

Today, in the new millennium, I hear people saying that the Mizrahi–
Ashkenazi tension does not exist anymore; instead there are Power Rangers,
Coca Cola and other such cultural diseases that have Americanised us all.
Then again, a student of mine of Arab Jewish origin expressed his being fed
up with the issue: 'Hey, look at me – I reached university, and have never
experienced discrimination. Whoever wants to can make it. I don't want to
deal with your problems, your parents' problems, and not even my own
parents' problems – all of that is irrelevant to me'. It is I, and maybe one or
two others like me, who spoil reality for this student and cloud the Israeli
consensus that, in the new century, is prepared, at most, to admit that once
upon time there was an ethnic problem in Israel ('and anyway, mixed
marriages are on the rise'). A number of years ago Dorit Rabinian, a second-
generation Iranian Israeli, defined herself as a 'Nouveau *Frank*' (*Frank* being
the pejorative term used to describe Moroccan Jews). She wrote:

> Any good Ashkenazi boy knows that – 'love shmove' – it's still better to marry
> 'one of ours' [an Ashkenazi] … [as opposed to the Ashkenazified Mizrahi boy
> who 'jokes' with 'the real thing' and asserts], 'I don't have a gold chain [a
> Moroccan sign], I don't curse in Arabic, and my Benetton shirt is buttoned all the
> way up!' Any minute, he thinks, his face will pale in identification with the other
> side.[37]

What are the Ashkenazified Mizrahim supposed to do? Return to the
past? Romanticise the culture in nostalgia? What culture? That of Kurdistan,
Morocco? That of today, of yesterday? I speak Yiddish–Hebrew, think
according to European cultural patterns, I inhale Zionist ideology and
exhale the *Reut* song (the semi-formal national hymn) at a dizzying pace,
and hurt in 'integration' terms (educational reform meant to achieve the

'melting pot' ethos). Therefore, all of this is still relevant. It is relevant because the vast majority of children's literature written today is the project of people of European origin, the same people who, literature researcher Adir Cohen found, are also responsible for the stereotypes that represent the Arab child as inferior and monstrous. It is relevant because students of education are still exposed to the texts that I have quoted here.[38] It is there that the students find the sources that define who is disadvantaged and who is backward, and why. It is in their libraries, compiled according to Ashkenazi priorities and belief structures, that I found the books and articles I referred to earlier on.

Today, I wonder whether Frankenstein himself was not too primitive to be able to recognize me as the 'other' – that is, in terms other than negative, and as having a 'self of my own'. Were I to send Fuerstein to the Tudra Dunes (a village in the Atlas Mountains where the geology, weather, and dangerous conditions of the wild world make physical life very difficult) with no knowledge of the language and with no skills for contending with such a way of life, would he have survived the intellectual and physical tests of such a situation? What did those researchers know about me as an 'other' anyway? Why did they find it necessary to project on to me all of this psychologism? I, the research object, ask today as a subject who became a researcher.

In her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*,[39] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that I re-examine the Freudian fiction, based on the Oedipal story, according to which my identity was constructed, the fiction upon which my educators leaned. Postcolonial women, in her opinion, do not necessarily have a European story versus a traditional one. She provides me with the explanation that I am caught between two worlds. I feel that my story is one primarily of oppression: traditional European oppression, colonial oppression, Western oppression, and Zionist oppression. Inside all of this lies a shattered, confused identity that is fighting a Sisyphean struggle for control over my consciousness, my values, my feelings, my passions, and my will. I am trapped in a world of mirrors.

This is a process whose nature and power I am still largely unable to comprehend. It is not a return to my roots, nor a rehabilitation or reconstruction of identity. These are suspicious and dangerous words to my ears. One thing though is clear to me: whether I am conscious of it or not, I am a product of an educational, intellectual and economic steamroller that squashed everything and left no room for any self-development outside of that of a distorting Ashkenazi, Zionist, Israeli, European hegemony.

NOTES

★   This paper started life as a lecture I gave in Hebrew a long time ago. Rachel Jones translated it into English, and the translation was edited by Haim Marantz, who adopted several suggestions made by Natan Aridan. I would like to thank Haim Marantz for convincing me to publish it

1. See Ruth Firer (1986) 'The Image of the Mizrahi *Edot*,' *Iyyunim beKhinuch*, no. 45, pp. 23–33, especially p. 28 [Hebrew].

2. Eliezer Shmuely (1970) *Toldot Amenu BaZman HaChadash* [The History of Our People in the Modern Era], vol. 7, Tel Aviv, p. 268 [Hebrew].

3. Ibid., p. 414.

4. Levin Kipnis (1981) *Rumiah, The Little Nanny*, Tel Aviv, p. 12 [Hebrew].

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Karl Fuerstein and M. Richel (1953) *The Children of the Melah – The Cultural Retardation among Moroccan Children and Its Meaning in Education*, published by the Henrietta Szold Institute and the Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, p. 17 [Hebrew].

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., pp. 17, 101, 185.

10. Ibid., p. 194.

11. Ibid., p. 195.

12. Karl Frankenstein (1951) 'On Ethnic Differences,' *Megamot*, B3, pp. 261–76 [Hebrew].

13. Ibid., p. 270.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 272.

16. Ibid., p. 292.

17. Ibid.

18. Karl Frankenstein (1951) 'On the Concept of Primitivity,' *Megamot*, B4, pp. 342, 344, 347 [Hebrew].

19. Ibid., p. 352.

20. Ibid., p. 353.

21. Ibid., p. 352.

22. Akiva Ernest Simon (1951) 'On the Meaning of the Concept Primitivity,' *Megamot*, B3, p. 227 [Hebrew].

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 335.

26. Ibid., p. 338.

27. Henriette Dahan-Kalev (1992) 'Self Organizing Systems: Wadi Salib and The Black Panthers – Implications for Israeli Society', Ph.D. thesis, Department of Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, pp. 37–42 [Hebrew]; see also Uri Ram (1995) *The Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology*, New York, especially chapter 3, pp. 23–46.

28. Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (1951) 'Immigration Absorption', MA thesis, Department of Sociology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem [Hebrew].

29. Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (1967) *Israel, A Society in the Making*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].

30. Ibid.

31. For further discussion, see Dahan-Kalev, 'Self Organizing Systems', especially. pp. 37–40, 73–96.

32. Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (1953) 'Leadership Problems among the "*Olim*",' *Megamot*, no.

32, pp. 182–91 [Hebrew].

33. Ibid., p. 44.
34. Ibid., p. 152.
35. Ibid., p. 263. For an extended account of the Wadi Salib Riots and an analysis of the responses to it, see Dahan-Kalev, 'Self Organizing Systems'.
36. Firer, 'The Image of the Mizrahi *Edot*', pp. 25, 28–9.
37. Dorit Rabinian (1993) 'Nuvo Frenkit', *Ha'Ir*, 29 September, p. 43.
38. That these ideas are still current can be seen in the fact that they are still repeated today by Israeli educational experts. See, for example, Shoshana Keiny (1999) 'Response to "Human Rights in History and Civic Text Books: The Case of Israel",' in *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 513–21, especially pp. 518–19. See also Ruth Firer (1998) 'Human Rights in History and Civic Text Books: The Case of Israel', in *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 195–208.
39. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, New Haven, Yale University Press.