

# “Yom Yom Odeh”: Towards the Biography of a Hebrew Baidaphon Record

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It is November 15, 2016 and I am sitting in a car, driving on a mountain road that winds down along the Lebanese coastline, overlooking the Mediterranean seaboard. With me, I carry a treasure, a piece of lost musical history, or so I believe. Saved on my mobile phone is the copy of a 78rpm record of a *pizmon*, a Hebrew para-liturgical hymn called “Yom Yom Odeh” (Every day I am grateful), which was released in the early 1920s by the Lebanese record label Baidaphon, the largest non-European record company active in the Middle East during the phonograph era;<sup>1</sup> from here onwards, I will refer to this record as “the famous record”. Although the famous record is in fact by no means famous, I use this expression to highlight its centrality to this article as well as to anticipate my focus on the record’s contemporary social interpretation.

Today, the famous record is carefully stored in the shelves of the Lebanese Foundation for Arab Music Archiving and Research (AMAR). Located in the little mountain village Qornet al-Hamra just outside of Beirut, AMAR holds one of the largest existing collections of historical records from the *Nahda* time, the period of cultural and intellectual “renaissance” that characterized the Arab-Ottoman world during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In musical terms, the *Nahda* is associated with the emergence of a new school, which, having its roots in Egypt, saw the revival of classical musical forms and genres such as the *qaṣida*, the *muwashshah* and, most importantly, the *dawr*, alongside the development

<sup>1</sup> Baidaphon was founded in 1906 by five cousins of the Lebanese Christian Baida family in Beirut. With distinctively local aesthetics—eminent, for example, in its trademark sign of the jumping gazelle, a prominent symbol in Arabic literature which stood in contrast to the dog displayed on records of the foreign “His Master’s Voice” label—the company appealed to the Middle East’s record buying public as a “national” enterprise. It soon became as influential in the Middle East as British Gramophone and German Odeon and operated in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Iran while exporting its records as far as North and South America (Racy 1976, 39-43). See also <http://www.amar-foundation.org/041-recording-companies-part-1/> (accessed April 2, 2020).

of new, colloquial and "light" repertoires associated with Cairo's musical theater (Lagrange 1996, 69-108; Racy 2003, 103; Shannon 2006, 59-61).<sup>2</sup>

I had made my way up to AMAR to search for historical records of Jewish musicians from Aleppo, the city which, for a long time, was regarded as one of the musical centers of the region. In Aleppo, as elsewhere in the Arab world during the Nahda era, Jewish musicians played an active role in the performance and perpetuation of the above-mentioned repertoires.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, synagogue cantors, *ḥazzanim*, often tended to structure new compositions of (para)liturgical hymns (known as *piyyutim* and *pizmonim*) according to these musical forms and/or combined Hebrew sacred and poetic texts with melodies from pre-existing popular songs, a practice with roots in the sixteenth century that continues amongst Syrian Jews today (Kligman 2009; Shelemay 1998). "Yom Yom Odeh" is an example of that tradition.



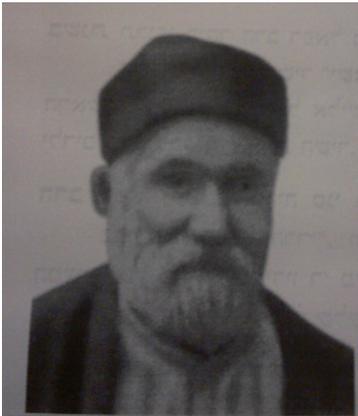
**Figure 1.** Photograph of the famous record's label, showing Baidaphon's trademark sign, the gazelle, and the name of the singer and the song written in Arabic, Hebrew and English. Courtesy of the author.

Back at AMAR, what had prompted the famous record to be picked out from the several thousand 78rpm discs held in the archive shelves and be placed onto the spindle of an old

<sup>2</sup> For biographical information on some of the musical pioneers from that time as well as detailed discussions of the aforementioned musical forms and styles, see the various podcasts available on the website of AMAR, <http://www.amar-foundation.org> (accessed April 2, 2020). Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in the Nahda period, with publications often drawing parallels to the Arab world's ongoing socio-political and cultural upheavals (see, for example, the various contributions in Hanssen & Weiss 2016). For a study on the politics of the current revivalism of music from the Nahda period and the role AMAR and its director, the Egyptian singer, composer and music revivalist Mustafa Sa'id play in it, see the PhD thesis of Maria Rijo Lopes Da Cunha (2017).

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent overview of the musical practices of Jews in the Arab world, see Seroussi 2010.

gramophone, from which I then recorded it with my phone, was my inquiry about one of the most famous composers of *pizmonim*, Hakham Raphael Taboush (1830-1918/19). Hakham Taboush, whose full name was Raphael Antebi Ades Taboush, was a Kabbalist and Torah scholar from Aleppo.<sup>4</sup> Over the course of his life, he, who was blind and relied on a scribe to record his compositions, is said to have produced and revived over four hundred *pizmonim*. Many of them continue to be sung by Syrian Jews around the world, where Taboush's legacy, his persona as well as his poetic and musical talents, have taken on an almost mythical status. Tales relate that he was able to come up with verses on demand and to set them to just about any sound or melody, such as that of a Turkish marching song (Sabato 2004, 94) or the sound of water dripping from the buckets of a waterwheel in one of Aleppo's public gardens (Sutton & Lanyado 2005, 123). Other stories concern Taboush's love and mastery of Arab music. It is said that, upon entering Aleppo's local coffeehouses which he would visit in search of musical inspiration, he was ironically greeted by the musicians present as the "thief of songs", whence he challenged them to compare their melodies and maqams with his own compositions (Shelemay 1998, 30-32). Even his blindness is rumored to be linked to his passion for music. According to his great niece in New York, Taboush lost his eyesight when, after running away from an angry crowd that had caught him secretly listening to their music, he splashed cold water on his overheated face (ibid.).



**Figure 2.** Hakham Raphael Antebi Ades Taboush. Courtesy of pizmonim.org.

Sitting in the car, I take another look at my phone and the photograph I took of the famous record label, wondering why both the Arabic and the Hebrew, as well as the English inscriptions of the singer's name read *Rafoul Tabbach*, instead of Raphael Taboush. Was this really the famous Hakham Raphael Taboush about whom I had inquired? And how could it possibly be him if, according to the AMAR foundation, recording sessions for the famous

<sup>4</sup> In the language of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, the word *Hakham* (pl. *Hakhamim*) is synonym with Rabbi. As indicated by his middle name "Antebi", Taboush's ancestors came from the city of Gaziantep, which today is located in Turkey, but then formed part of the Ottoman province (vilayet) of Aleppo.

record took place in the summer of 1921 and Taboush reportedly died in Cairo in 1918/19?<sup>5</sup> Was one of the dates wrong? Was someone perhaps imitating him? Or was Rafoul Tabbach a different ḥazzan altogether? And if so, was he, too, from Aleppo?

I put my headphones on. Maybe the music, his accent or singing style would provide a clue. I listen again to the copy on my phone. At that point I discover that towards the end of the first half of "Yom Yom Odeh", around ten seconds of the song appear muted, my recording somewhat muffled and much less audible than before. How did this happen? And who was Rafoul Tabbach?

## The Biography of a Recording

This article is the initial result of my attempts to answer these questions. Trying to learn more about the famous record's origins—both the song and its singer—I played the copy on my phone to a variety of people familiar with musical traditions from the Nahda period and/or the liturgical practices of Middle Eastern Jews. While everyone from the Jewish side was familiar with Hakham Raphael Taboush and/or the *Iraqi* version of "Yom Yom Odeh",<sup>6</sup> nobody knew Rafoul Tabbach or the rendition of "Yom Yom Odeh" saved on my phone. Moreover, listening to the song's style, nobody, Jewish or non-Jewish, was able to determine with certainty if it was "Aleppian", "Damascene", or even Syrian.

But that did not stop people from having distinct and often emotional responses to it. Whether nostalgic evocations of a once shared Arab-Jewish musical history, concerns about a Jewish musician's national authenticity, dreams about a city never seen, or my own fictional associations with the ten muted seconds on my phone—the different reactions to my recording of "Yom Yom Odeh" yielded a shift in my focus: the center of my inquiry was no longer the search for the song's historical roots (in Aleppo) but its contemporary cultural and socio-political interpretation. Put differently, once I had taken it out of the archive, "Yom Yom Odeh", now preserved as soundbites on my phone, began to develop a new biography, one made up of the different meanings, memories and desires that people attached to it. And my assumption that it featured a Jewish singer from Aleppo, together with my decision to call its original source "the famous record," constituted the beginning of this biography.

<sup>5</sup> AMAR, written correspondence, March 30, 2017. Information about the exact date of the famous record's release is not available. It is neither listed in any of the remaining Baidaphon catalogues held by AMAR, nor mentioned in catalogues held by the British library or the Berlin Phonogramm Archiv (as was the case with the Odeon company, many Baidaphon catalogues were lost during the Second World War or vanished during the Lebanese Civil War). However, the assumption that recording sessions for the famous record took place between July and September 1921 roughly corresponds to another classification of Baidaphon records, according to which it belongs to a group of records released between 1923 and 1928; <http://www.recordingpioneers.com/docs/BAIDA-TheGerman78rpmRecordLabelBook.pdf> (accessed April 2, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> The earliest available recording of this version is a 1920s Polyphon record of the Iraqi Ḥazzan Hagguli Shummel Darzi. It has been re-issued in the album "Shbaḥoth: Iraqi-Jewish Song from the 1920s" (2003) which was co-produced by Sara Manasseh, author of *Shbaḥoth: Songs of Praise in the Babylonian Jewish Tradition from Baghdad to Bombay and London* (2012). The National Sound Archive in Israel houses several other recordings of this version.

## Networks, Objects, Agents

In conceptualizing how this new biography is mediated by the interplay of human and non-human actors, this article brings together two main lines of inquiry. One can be found in recent scholarship on Actor-Network Theory (ANT), the other comes from the field of archeology. Developed in the early 1980s by the social theorist Bruno Latour and his colleagues at the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation in Paris, ANT is an analytical method that suggests that (social) reality is made up of networks shaped by the interaction of different actors or agents (Latour 1987, 2005). Any attempt to account for the nature of such networks, proponents of ANT argue, requires us to extend the idea of agents beyond humans and account for the role that non-human objects and "things" play in shaping the social fabric of the worlds in which we live. Scholars have applied this approach to the study of music (Born & Barry 2018; Hennion 2003, 2016; Piekut 2014), arguing that ANT can expand our understanding in that it invites us to think of music as a constellation or network of different material and non-material, human and non-human mediators, namely, sound, voice, instruments, devices, notation, venues, ideas, discourses, etc. As Georgina Born and Andrew Barry write, "identifying music's constitutive mediations yields a more complex and distributed object (an assemblage) on the basis of which to trace the conditions, trajectories and forces that converge on a musical object or event [...]" (Born & Barry 2018: 467).

For the purpose of this article, which is concerned with documenting the biography of a song, it is especially ANT's focus on *non-human* actors that is of significance. Indeed, the biography of "Yom Yom Odeh" that the following pages unfold is mediated by two main *things*: the famous record, a material object produced around one hundred years ago, meticulously looked after by the experts at AMAR, yet today essentially immobile and inaccessible to many, especially Israeli Jews; second, the famous record's copy on my mobile phone, generated by my interest in bringing back into circulation what I believe to be a rather remarkable evidence of a shared Arab-Jewish musical heritage, with the goal of reactivating and exploring its memory in the present.<sup>7</sup> Thus, both "objects" shape the biography of "Yom Yom Odeh" by preserving its music and animating people to ascribe meaning to it.

This second point links back to questions of *human* agency and its effect on objects and things, a relation that has been explored in the field of archeology. Holtorf (1998), Gosden & Marshall (1999), Peers (1999), and Joy (2009), among others, put forward the notion that material objects and artefacts have a biography which in turn is made up not only of the

<sup>7</sup> To imagine the network-like character of this biography, one has to bear in mind that these are only two out of many more non-human and human actors (other examples would be the historical manuscripts that contain the poetic text of "Yom Yom Odeh" or the people and musical instruments that have performed it in the past), with each of them having their own biography. In the case of the famous record, this would include, for instance, the ships that transported the shellac used for its production; the human and machine labor that went into turning it into a commodity; the Baidaphon customer who originally purchased it; the founders of AMAR who acquired it decades later; the archive's shelves that today place it next to the records of some of the most famous musicians of the Nahda period, etc.

history of their production, but equally by the processes through which society *marks* them.<sup>8</sup> The general idea is that a meaningful relationship exists between people and things (rather than a passive, production- and consumption-based one), and that this relationship fluctuates over time. Indeed, Igor Kopytoff writes that when writing the biography of an object one should ask, "What are the recognised 'ages' or periods in the thing's 'life,' and what are the cultural markers for them?" (Kopytoff 1986, 66-67). In chronicling aspects of "Yom Yom Odeh's" biography, I suggest adding a spatial and sonic perspective to Kopytoff's question: What are the recognized geographical spaces and trajectories that people associate with the famous record? And how, given that we are dealing with an audio artefact, are these mediated by the ways they *listen* to its recording on my phone?

Attending to these questions, the following pages present the reader with five different "scenes", each of which contains a particular response or reaction that "Yom Yom Odeh" has elicited since I played it to people, myself included. Taken together, these scenes not only illustrate ethnomusicologist Steven Feld's assertion that each hearing has its own history and biography (1984, 11), they also attest to a tension. And while this tension is generated by the at times opposing narratives of my interlocutors, it ultimately arises from the musical material of "Yom Yom Odeh" itself; that is, from its *reluctance* to being synthesized with the ideological precepts of the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict. Although aimed at purportedly incompatible political projects, what these precepts have in common is that they imply not only the dissociation of those living in the modern state of Israel from the historical landscape from which the famous record emerged, but also the dissolution of its musical material into the two distinct (national) categories of "Arab" and "Jewish". It is to a brief discussion of this musical material and with it, to the first "scene", that we turn now.

## Rafoul Tabbach, "Yom Yom Odeh"

Rafoul Tabbach was not the only Jewish Nahda musician who recorded with Baidaphon (others included, for example, the Egyptian vocalist and composer Zaki Mourad<sup>9</sup>, his brother Nessim Mourad and the Levantine singer Badriyya Sa'ada). However, most of them sang in Arabic and recordings of them performing Jewish religious hymns in Hebrew are rare. In that regard, the famous record, together with a few records by Zaki Mourad, one of which is referenced below, is indeed exceptional.

"Yom Yom Odeh" is traditionally performed on the Jewish holiday of *Shavuot* (Pentecost), which historically marked the beginning of the wheat harvest and commemorates the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai and which, besides *Pesach* (Passover) and *Sukkot* (Tabernacles), constitutes one of the "Three Pilgrim Festivals" in Judaism. While a printed

<sup>8</sup> This approach is regarded to have been pioneered by a collection of essays in Appadurai 1986. Examples of its adoption in the field of ethnomusicology are the articles by Eliot Bates, who advocates for the study of the social life of musical instruments (2012) and Virginia Doubleday, who provides an ethnographic reading of the gendered history of the Middle Eastern frame drum (Doubleday 1999).

<sup>9</sup> For biographical information, see Shiloah 2010.

version of the song's poetic text can be found in a manuscript from the Cairo Genizah dating from approximately the eighteenth century,<sup>10</sup> a list of sources provided in Davidson's *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry* points to Iraq (especially Baghdad) and Jerusalem as the main centers of the text's printed distribution (1929: 340).

In musical terms, "*Yom Yom Odeh*" bears a strong resemblance to a *dawr* and can be divided into several sections: an instrumental prelude, a well-known *dulab* in maqam hijaz on G performed here on a qanun and a violin, followed by an opening section, traditionally known as the *madhhab*, in which Tabbach, now only accompanied by the qanun, establishes the maqam of the song—huzzam—and introduces the first verse: *Yom yom odeh la-el asher bakhar banu* [Day after day I thank god who has chosen us]. This section leads to a middle part and the verse *min ha-amim lisgulah lo lekaḥanu* [from among the nations he has taken us as chosen]. Here, Tabbach gradually moves to a higher range of the maqam, characterized by the more melismatic stretching of certain lyrical phrases, particularly the vocalization of the syllable "lo". What follows is the climax and center piece of the song which, repeated five times in a row, signifies the occasion of its performance and has the character of a refrain: *Al Har Sinai, et Torato* [Upon Mt. Sinai, (God gave us) the Torah].

Upon closer listening, one notices the presence of a second singer taking turns with Tabbach—at one point he even praises Tabbach's virtuosic singing with what sounds like *Ya 'ayni* [O my eye!] in Arabic. While adding a second voice may possibly have been an attempt at evoking the characteristic interaction between the ḥazzan and members of the congregation in the synagogue, such call and response style is also typical to the structure of a *dawr* (see Shannon 2006, 135). Eventually, Tabbach modulates back to maqam hijaz, with the final verse *aseret dibrot kodsho hishmianu* [he announced to us his holy ten commandments] constituting the end of the first half of the song. "*Yom Yom Odeh's*" continuation on the B side is almost identical in its structure, with Tabbach commemorating the divine revelation and the descent of myriads of heavenly armies [*tzeva marom ribbotayim*]. This time, however, the refrain is followed by an additional section where he—joined again by the second singer—vocally improvises on the syllable "ah", a passage which, known as "ahat", again forms an integral element of any *dawr* performance (Racy 2003, 97-98).

## Scene I. Traces of Movement, A Hebrew Dawr

The overall structure of "*Yom Yom Odeh*", its complex modal and melodic style, Tabbach's Arabic sounding Hebrew pronunciation (such as the glottal 'ayn or aspirated *ḥet*), and finally, the Arabic-Hebrew inscriptions on its label, they not only mark the famous record as

<sup>10</sup> Ms. British Museum Or. 12369. Here, the *pizmon* is said to be performed not on Shavuot but on the Sabbath of the "Omer season", between Passover and Shavuot. I thank Edwin Seroussi for pointing out this reference. According to [pizmonim.org](http://pizmonim.org), one of the largest online archives for the liturgical heritage of Syrian Jews, its text also appears in nineteenth century manuscript collections from Aleppo, such as the one published by the Hakham and composer Yehuda Attiah in 1858: <http://www.pizmonim.org/book.php#374b> (accessed April 2, 2020).

a product of the Nahda period, but also render it evidence of a historical landscape of cross-territorial and Arab-Jewish musical exchange. This exchange was mainly facilitated by travelling musicians and the advent of recording technology at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both factors helped to perpetuate and shape a "classical", transregional (albeit heavily Egyptian-influenced) musical aesthetic, which can be considered one of the reasons why many of the people whose narratives are documented here associated "Yom Yom Odeh" not with a concrete locality, but with a history of movement.

One of them was Z, a renowned Syrian musician who, forced to flee from his country during the war in Syria, currently resides in Egypt.<sup>11</sup> Upon listening to the song over WhatsApp, and despite lacking a command of Hebrew, they not only identified Rafoul Tabbach's voice as "old style [*uslub qadim*]", but discerned in it an "Aleppian style taken to Egypt [*uslub ḥalabi manqul ila maṣr*]". This prompted them to relate the story of Shaker Efendi al-Halabi and Ahmed Abu Khalil al-Qabbani al-Dimashqi, two nineteenth-century musicians, composers (and, in the case of al-Qabbani, a playwright) from Aleppo and Damascus respectively who travelled to Egypt and brought with them local musical styles and repertoires (e.g. the *muwashshahat*) that would have a strong influence on Cairo's music and theater scenes.<sup>12</sup> In a similar vein, Moshe Habousha, whose ancestors came from Iraq and who is today one of Israel's most distinguished ḥazzanim, insisted that he "felt [*baḥiss*]" that it was the famous Sami al-Shawa, a Cairo-born violin player of Aleppian descent, who could be heard in "Yom Yom Odeh's" prelude.<sup>13</sup> He then went on to relate how al-Shawa had once come to Jerusalem to play with Ezra Aharon, a Jewish 'ud player and composer of liturgical hymns who had emigrated from Iraq to the Jewish community of Palestine in 1935.<sup>14</sup> Hakham Raphael Taboush himself, so Habousha maintained, had travelled between Aleppo and Jerusalem before he eventually moved to Cairo where he died. He went, for example, in the year 1893 to present one of his compositions for the inauguration of Yaakov Shaul Elyashar as Chief Sephardi Rabbi of Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

A look at the biographies of some of the musicians from that period shows that this kind of mobility was far from being the exception. The Egyptian composer Sayyid Darwish, another pioneer of the musical Nahda, spent over two years of his life in Aleppo (al-Hefny 1974); the Aleppian composer, nay player and music theorist Ali al-Darwish carried out much of his musical work in Cairo (Iino 2009; Katz 2015, 122-12); already during World War I, Omar al-Batsh, another of Aleppo's famous Nahda composers, had temporarily resided in Jerusalem, where he taught the Palestinian 'ud-player Wasif Jawhariyah (Tamari & Nassar

<sup>11</sup> For matters of protection or due to their own requests, the names of several individuals in this article have been anonymized. They are referred to as Z, X and Y, i.e. a symbolism that highlights rather than obscures their anonymization.

<sup>12</sup> WhatsApp correspondence, July 30, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> That it was Sami al-Shawa on the violin is not entirely unlikely, given that he was a permanent member in the ensemble of Baidaphon (as well as Gramophone, Odeon and Mechian ) (Salihi & Sa'id 2015, 32).

<sup>14</sup> Ezra Ahron, back then known as Azouri Haroun, the Arabic version of his name, also participated in the 1932 Cairo Congress on Arab Music. There, he was leading the Iraqi delegation which was composed of six Jewish musicians and one Muslim vocalist, Muhammad al-Qubandji (Barnea 1997, 74; Katz 2015, 147).

<sup>15</sup> Personal conversation, March 19, 2017.

2014, xxiii); the aforementioned violinist Sami al-Shawa lived between Cairo, Jerusalem, Beirut, Baghdad and New York to record for the leading international and local record companies of the day (Salihi & Sa'īd 2015, 32); and Egypt's female wedding musicians, known as the *'awalim* (sing. *'alimah*), would frequently travel between Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo, thereby facilitating the exchange of Egyptian *ṭaqāṭiq* (sing. *ṭaqṭuqah*) and Aleppian *quḍud* (sing. *qadd*; up until today, some of the latter are sung in Egyptian dialect), which both belong to the genre of "light" vocal music usually sung in colloquial Arabic.<sup>16</sup>

Another important factor facilitating musical exchange was the migratory paths of religious students and pilgrims: Egyptian Sheikha Sakina Hasan is said to have presented her Quranic recitations in Aleppo's Umayyad mosque (Kawakibi 2010, 25); members of Sufi-lodges travelled to participate in a saint's festival, the *mawlid* (as an Egyptian musician once explained to me, a Syrian Sufi would have few problems understanding the musical language at a *mawlid* in the Egyptian Nile Delta town of Tanta); ḥazzanim went from Urfa to Aleppo to receive their religious and musical education (see below); and Aleppian Kabbalists and mystics pilgrimaged to Jerusalem or Safed, the supposed origin of one of their main liturgical traditions, the *baqqashot*<sup>17</sup> (Barnea 1997, 70). Despite the considerable influence that human movement rather than mass media technology had in shaping a shared Middle Eastern geography of musical aesthetics, an historical account that traces this influence remains to be written.<sup>18</sup>

What is important to note here is that the Arab-Jewish musical exchange facilitated by this landscape of travelling musicians came to an end in the mid twentieth century. After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent division of the region into British and French mandates, an international border required people to obtain passports and other official documents to travel from one place to another (Zenner 2000, 81). Growing nationalist mobilization, anti-Jewish riots in the 1940s, and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 gave rise to the *en masse* migration of Jews from North Africa and the Near East, thereby dislocating almost the entire Jewish community of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq. With the region's current political order being defined by the rule of authoritarian state regimes, travel between these countries has become more restricted than ever. Z, displaced from their hometown in Syria, now lives in Egypt, unable to return home. For Moshe Habousha, countries such as Syria, Lebanon, or Iraq, the home of his ancestors, are inaccessible (though he has travelled to Egypt). As I explore below, the national borders and ideologies attached to these ongoing histories of immobility were also discernible in

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.amar-foundation.org/043-awalem-1/> (accessed April 2, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed account of the Aleppian tradition of *baqqashot* singing in Jerusalem see Yayama 2003; for more general accounts of this tradition see Katz 1968, Seroussi 1993, and Shiloah 1992, 151-54. For a study of it in the context of the Aleppian Jewish community in Brooklyn, New York see Kligman 2009. A useful first overview is provided here: <https://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/content/baqqashah-pl-baqqashot> (accessed April 2, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> Such an account would also have to investigate the infrastructures that shaped and enabled people's mobility, for example, the ways in which the movement of travelling musicians was facilitated by religious and/or state institutions, depended on their private capital or relied on an audience able to afford entry fees.

the ways in which my interlocutors rhetorically framed the famous record, both formally and informally.

## Scene II. Beirut: A Hebrew Song in Arab Memory

The archive where the famous record is preserved labels "Yom Yom Odeh" as "Arab music". As stated in its title and reiterated on its website, AMAR is dedicated to the preservation and revival of *al-musiqa al-'arabiyyah* ("Arab/Arabic Music"). Continuing the legacy of the Nahda as a project of a distinctively Arab modernity (Shannon 2006, 58-66; see also Hanssen & Weiss 2016 and Patel 2013), the foundation has chosen to mobilize a term that only really gained prevalence as a musical category in the context of the region's struggle for national independence and which, contrary to terms such as *ṭarab* or *al-musiqa al-sharqiyyah* ("Eastern Music"), obscures the long participation of ethnic minorities in local and regional music traditions or at least implies their integration into an Arab (musical) collective.<sup>19</sup> As Salwa El-Shawan Castelo Branco has noted, besides referring to Egypt's urban secular music, *al-musiqa al-'arabiyyah* more generically signifies "all musical idioms that are composed and performed by Arabs, provided that these idioms do not transcend the boundaries of Arabic musical styles as perceived by native musicians and audiences" (1980, 86). How, one is tempted to ask, does a Hebrew record fit in here? If historical records had allowed the Jewish communities that emigrated from countries such as Syria, Egypt or Iraq to literally "carry" music to their new homes—to the U.S., to South America, to Israel or elsewhere (Shelemay 1998, 108)—was the famous record simply left behind, lost somewhere on the way? Who does its music belong to today?

The answer provided by the AMAR foundation seems clear: It renders "Yom Yom Odeh" as a remnant of a time in which, to borrow the words of literary scholar Lital Levy, "the incorporation of Jews into the Arab collective—not only as a matter of citizenship but as a matter of popular or collective consciousness—was still a viable possibility" (Levy 2008, 463).<sup>20</sup> I was able to gain a more profound, more informal and, above all, *musical* insight

<sup>19</sup> Looking at the records that Baidaphon released, one gets a sense of the ethnic diversity at stake here; besides music performed in the Arabic language, the company recorded Greek Orthodox hymns, Turkish instrumental compositions as well as songs sung in Armenian, Assyrian, Kurdish, Azerbaijani and Hebrew—all of which employ the maqam as their common musical denominator (Aghamohseni 2017; Racy 1976, 39).

<sup>20</sup> The idea that such an Arab-Jewish integration is still possible today has been most prominently advocated by Ella Shohat. In her elaborations on the "Arab Jew" (1992, 2017), Shohat argues that this concept/identity, used here primarily as a form of self-reference, has the potential to counter Zionist nationalism and its inherent discrimination not only of Arabs but also of Jews (and their descendants) who once resided in Arabic speaking lands. While the concept of the "Arab Jew" is clearly valuable in that it aims to intervene into separatist ideologies, I follow scholars who have criticized its commodification as a largely symbolic and historically ambiguous figure—one whose identity tends to be largely constructed against Zionism as well as a supposedly harmonious past—and called for more nuanced efforts to endow this concept with historical depth (Levy 2008; Gottreich 2008; Starr 2011: 121). Whether a "history of intimacy" as documented, for example, by Ammiel Alcalay (1993) or histories of competition, confrontation and social discord (Harel 2010; Tsur 1995, 2016), what emerges from such endeavors is a picture that gives nuance to, complexifies and at times complicates the possibility of a past and present Arab-Jewish integration.

into what this incorporation entails from a reaction by X, one of my interlocutors in Beirut who is particularly knowledgeable about the music traditions of the Nahda period.

After listening to "Yom Yom Odeh", X not only compared the vocal style of Rafoul Tabbach with that of the aforementioned Egyptian Jewish singer and composer Zaki Mourad, they even began to sing, in Hebrew, what turned about to be an exact rendition of the opening of *Adonai hu ha-Elohim* [My Lord is God], a Jewish hymn that Mourad recorded in the 1920s, i.e. at around the same time the famous record was produced.<sup>21</sup> Once finished, X was keen to stress that Mourad was *opposed* to Zionism and that he never emigrated to Palestine but rather died in Egypt, adding that Mourad only recorded this hymn for the purpose of preserving the Egyptian Jewish community's heritage, and allegedly even had to read its Hebrew text from a piece of paper.

This response captures well the tension between the continued presence of a once-shared musical heritage and the imperatives of the Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflict. On the one hand you have X's brief but genuinely intimate rendition of a Hebrew hymn, a proof of their insider knowledge of the musical heritage to which "Yom Yom Odeh" belongs and a gesture that seemed to musically evoke the image of the song emerging from the thousands of Arab music records held at the AMAR archive. On the other hand, you have their rhetorical framing of this rendition which, in ways that not only suggest its implicit association with Israel, but also shed light on the narratives that are mobilized to *integrate* Jews into contemporary Arab imagination, concerned their need to *authenticate* Zaki Mourad by recounting his death on Egyptian soil and suggesting the singer's lack of familiarity with his Jewish religious and linguistic heritage.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps one could conceive of X's reaction as a "cloistered memory", which is how Jonathan Shannon (taking his cue from Benjamin Stora's study on the Algerian War in French public memory) describes how surviving memories of Jewish musicians in Syria relate to the politics of official amnesia that the regime has directed against the country's Jewish past (Shannon 2015; Stora 1997). Referring to these memories as "phantom musical presences", Shannon presents as examples a photograph of a group of Aleppian Nahda musicians that includes the Jewish qanun player Yacoub Ghazala and his son Salim, both of whose names have been erased from the photograph's index, as well as a "Jewish" finger technique on the qanun which continues to be practiced by at least one of his interlocutors. Describing the place these memories hold in contemporary Syria, he writes:

Formerly a small but integral part of Syrian society (as they were of Arab society more generally), the Jews now constitute a spectral presence as memories of their actual presence are refracted through the mirrors of official amnesia. Like memories of the

<sup>21</sup> For a recording of the hymn see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cgfp9Whxp3U> (accessed April 2, 2020). This YouTube clip also includes a recording of the prayer *Sehemim betzetam* (starting at 2:59) which, similar to "Yom Yom Odeh", recalls the style of a *dawr*.

<sup>22</sup> Another point to possibly mention here would be the fact that in his recordings of Jewish liturgy, Zaki Mourad is accompanied by his daughter Leyla Mourad, one of the grand "divas" of Cairo's music and cinema scene who eventually converted to Islam.

Algerian War in France, memories of Syria's Jewish population occupy a protected (and sensitive) walled off area in the national consciousness; they reside in a cloister (Shannon 2015, 126).

If we understand X's rendition of a Hebrew hymn as a "cloistered memory", then the way they rhetorically framed it brings to the fore one of the main "mechanisms" that has and continues to relegate such memories into "cloisters," namely the caesura that the establishment of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba mark in collective Arab memory. This caesura was discernible again in the fact that many of my non-Jewish research partners viewed "*Yom Yom Odeh*" as authentic cultural practice, while often rendering Jewish religious hymns sung to the melodies of more recent songs by Farid al-Atrash or Umm Kulthum, most of which were produced after 1948, as "cultural appropriation". Moreover, it was, at least to me, also audible on my phone.

### Scene III. Personal Excursion, A Meaningful Fiction

As mentioned before, the most conspicuous "mark" on my mobile phone recording of "*Yom Yom Odeh*" consists of the ten seconds in which the recording appears muffled and significantly less audible than in the minutes before. This can be attributed to different factors: the muffled section could have been part of the original recording; it could have been the result of a flaw in either the record or the device on which it was played; or I may have accidentally moved my phone in a way that covered its microphone. Whatever the reason, in the months that followed my visit to the AMAR archive, this "mark" made me feel increasingly uncomfortable, given that my repeated requests for a digitalized copy of the song (which I was hoping to compare to my recorded version) went unanswered. Rumors had it that this was because I was also carrying out fieldwork in Israel, rumors which, and this is a crucial point as I do not wish to be misunderstood as making false allegations, were never confirmed. In fact, the staff at AMAR had been very helpful and welcoming and the reason for my request having remained unanswered was probably a re-structuring that the archive was undergoing at the time. What concerns me is not the question of whether these rumors are true or not (nor, indeed, the question of what caused the ten muted seconds); rather, I would like to invite the reader to focus on the *action* these rumors performed, as knowing about them drastically shifted the way I listened to the muted section on my phone.<sup>23</sup>

If initially I concluded that the ten lost seconds resulted from my inattentiveness, my inexperience with the practice of recording, or some technical fault on either my phone, the gramophone or the famous record itself, now, knowing my engagement in a zone of conflict, I became more and more convinced that the muted section sounded as if my phone

<sup>23</sup> My approach here is inspired by the article "Vulnerable Writing as a Feminist Methodological Practice" by sociologist Tiffany Page (2017) who calls on scholars to engage critically with their positionality and integrate moments of uncertainty, ambivalence and hesitance into their writing and analytical frameworks.

had been *covered* by something; I started to believe that the ten muffled seconds could have been caused by someone actively trying to *prevent* me from retaining a full copy of the song; I even reinterpreted a sound of coughing in the background, now thinking that it could have been an attempt to upset my recording. All this reinforced my feeling that my inquiries into Jewish musicians in the Arab world had provoked suspicion among people, both in Lebanon and in Israel.<sup>24</sup> And so whether the muting was the result of some form of deliberate action or a figment of my own imagination, *thinking* about it turned it into what the political theorist Lisa Wedeen has called a "meaningful fiction" (Wedeen 2015 [1999], 69).<sup>25</sup> Its socio-political ramifications can be explored in two directions, both of which highlight the ways in which "*Yom Yom Odeh's*" new biography relates to landscapes of fear, tension and national ideology and conflict.

On the one hand, my anxious belief in the possibility of my recording having been "sabotaged" epitomizes what is arguably one of the most significant disciplinary causes and effects of an environment of (national) conflict: paranoia. On the other hand, it brings to the fore the political conditions and sensibilities that *could have* motivated an intentional muting of the song, namely the Arab world's ongoing post-colonial struggle, the conceptualization of the famous record as a *national* heritage, and the desire to *preserve* solidarity with those affected by the ongoing histories of material and immaterial dispossession that shape the region. All of these factors would explain resentment felt towards the de-territorialization of "*Yom Yom Odeh*" (or at least of its full version), qualify a muting gesture to be taken seriously as a form of political protest, and, ultimately, explain why, whether deliberate or not, the geographical association that I had with the muted section on my phone was Palestine.

The way I considered it, divesting myself of parts of a song that promised to be a remnant of a repertoire that, to many of my research partners in Israel, constitutes a "quasi-sacred, esoteric body of knowledge", to reiterate Jonathan Glasser's reference to the status of Andalusí music in North Africa (2016: 76), could serve as a reminder of Palestinian history. More precisely, the hand that I now envisioned covering my phone carried out an act of dispossession not comparable to, but still associated with, the seizure and erasure of land executed by soldiers, bulldozers and concrete walls. Or, to put it the other way around, the "mark" I imagined it to make on my recording was, at least to me, reminiscent of the ways a

<sup>24</sup> This suspicion worked both ways, ranging from the moment where speaking Syrian Arabic with a Damascene-born Jew in Tel Aviv triggered associations with the Syrian Secret Service (*mukhabarat*), to the time where my clapping along to a rendition of a qadd sung by a Mizrahi singer in Jerusalem was interpreted by a Palestinian 'ūd-player as evidence of my endorsement of Israeli nationalism.

<sup>25</sup> Wedeen uses this term with reference to an anecdote that was related to her whilst doing fieldwork in Syria in the 1990s. The anecdote concerned "Officer M" whose regiment was prompted by a high-ranking officer to recount the dreams that they had had the night before. After several soldiers had shared their dreams, all of which featured glorious visions of Hafiz al-Asad, "Officer M" allegedly replied: "I saw that my mother is a prostitute in your bedroom," a metaphor for his country being "a whore," as he would later explain (Wedeen 2015, 67). According to Wedeen, the question of whether this story was really related by M himself or originated in the imagination of those who told it is of secondary importance. Rather, she encourages her readers to view it as a "fable", one that, in this case, illustrates what she describes as "the [Syrian] regime's demand that citizens provide external evidence of their allegiance to a cult whose rituals of adulation are manifestly unbelievable" (*ibid.*, 68).

Palestinian music archivist once illustrated how the *dabke*, one of the region's most popular folk dances, belonged to the Palestinian national struggle:

We stomp our feet in the *dabke* to show the world that this is *our land* [*Baladna*] [stomping loudly on the floor], that people and villages can be killed and erased [stomping again] ..., but *our heritage* [*turāthnā*] is something that they can't reach because it is here [motioning to his heart]. They have stolen our land [stomp], forced us out of our homes [stomp], but our culture is something they cannot steal. When we stamp our feet, we are saying that no matter how far we have been scattered, *Palestine will always remain under our stamping feet* [*filasṭīn rāḥ biḏāl taḥt aqdāmnā*]. (McDonald 2013, 20)

This was how my ideas about the muted section on my phone, although almost certainly fictional, took on meaning.

#### Scene IV. Jerusalem: "Back Home to the Maqam"

While providing insights into past and present histories of migrating musicians, the place Middle Eastern Jewish musicians hold in the collective and personal memory of those living in the places they left behind, as well as the ways (my own) listening experiences can be disciplined by national conflict, my inquiries had not brought me any closer to knowing who Rafoul Tabbach was. The only way I could find out more about his origins, I thought, would be by visiting Syrian synagogues. Having lived in Damascus throughout the beginning of the Syrian uprisings in March 2011 disqualified me from entering the U.S. via the visa waver program and therefore from going to Brooklyn/New York, the main center of Syrian Jewry. I had to rely on interlocutors in Jerusalem; there, the cultural *value* that my meaningful fiction concerning the muted section had implicitly attributed to the famous record was positively reaffirmed by the desires, wishful thinking and dreams with which people invested it.

One ḥazzan whose ancestors had emigrated from Aleppo to Egypt before settling in Israel, came running up the stairs to my fifth-floor apartment in the hope of hearing the voice of his beloved Hakham Raphael Taboush. But after taking a quick look at the famous record's label, he concluded, not without disappointment, that this could not be him. If it was Taboush, he surely would have liked his main family name, Antebi, to be printed on the label. Then, in an instance of local pride and Aleppians' belief in the musical superiority of their city, he told of the old rivalry between Aleppo and Damascus, asserting that whoever the singer was, he had to be someone from Aleppo because this rendition was refined, complex and "clever".<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Personal conversation, May 25, 2017.

The Jerusalemite Ḥazzan and music scholar Ezra Barnea, former director of Renanot, the Institute of Jewish Music, who has documented the influence of Aleppian ḥazzanim on the liturgical styles of the Sephardic communities in Jerusalem (1997), couched his belief in Rafoul Tabbach's Aleppian origins in more miraculous terms. Listening to the copy on my mobile phone, surrounded by books and CDs in his small shop in Jerusalem's Clal Center (a 1970s office tower which is home to one of the city's oldest indoor shopping malls), he insisted: this song *had* to be from Aleppo; why? (he answered with a smile on his face)—simply because he wanted to believe in the (im)possibility of Hakham Raphael Taboush's voice having been captured on record.<sup>27</sup>

The same was true for Ḥazzan Roni Ish-Ran, one of the founders of the "*Kehillot Sharot* [Singing Communities]", a nation-wide project that brings together different sectors of Israeli society interested in Jewish liturgical traditions. "This is [maqam] ḥuzzam," is how he, sitting in his small apartment in West Jerusalem's Rehavia neighbourhood, expressed his surprise upon listening to "*Yom Yom Odeh*". Then, towards the end of the song and commenting on Tabbach's skilful modulation, he whispered, in a reverent, approving tone: "Back home...back home to the maqam".<sup>28</sup> Ish-Ran's ancestors came from the area between Urfa and Diyarbakır in what is today Anatolia, in south-east Turkey; his family name translates into the "singing man" and, so he proudly related, has a distinctive history. When his father, as a twelve-year-old boy and accompanied only by his younger siblings, arrived in Israel in 1949, authorities turned their name from the Turkish "*Içran*" into the Hebrew "*Ishran*". Given that this name had no meaning, he, himself a passionate singer, decided to change a letter and add a hyphen, turning it into "*Ish* [man]-*Ron* [singing]", and the name came to designate a family tradition. Ish-Ran's grandfather was a ḥazzan and had received part of his cantorial training in Aleppo, a city that continues to inhabit Ish-Ran's imagination as a place of (musical) yearning and familiarity. Indeed for him, intimate knowledge and daily practice of the musical heritage to which "*Yom Yom Odeh*" belongs renders him quasi *native* to a city he has never set foot in. As he remarked:

I dream of Aleppo, I feel like it was me who was born there eighty years ago and then left at once [...]. I miss Aleppo because I live this music, this is what I do, it is my life. So I feel like I belong there or at least I was born there and spent my childhood there. Just to feel like I belong, I want to go to a small street and hear the Aleppian dialect, and see the people, the Hakhamim.

As ethnomusicologist Sarah Cohen vividly argues, music can transmit and evoke memories of far removed times and locations. It can constitute a "way out" and enable people "to travel in an imaginary sense to different times and places" (Cohen 1995, 439). Indeed, immersed

<sup>27</sup> Personal conversation, April 6, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Personal conversation, May 19, 2017.

in the soundbites on my mobile phone, Ish-Ran traversed, auditorily, what is today an impassable national border, "missing" a city that he has never and probably will never see with his own eyes. Yet listening to "Yom Yom Odeh", for him, not only evoked an idyllic image of an Aleppo of the past, it also led back to the nearby Nahlaot quarter, the neighbourhood where Ish-Ran grew up. Once, he stated, people there lived lives similar to the people of Aleppo or Urfa; they greeted each other on the street in Arabic, dressed in traditional Arab clothing or wore a tarbush, the red-colored, cylindrically shaped headdress worn by men during Ottoman times. But that, he asserted, was long lost now; times have changed, and only he was somewhat "stuck in the past".

What is captured in this response, then, is not only an act of nostalgic imagination and the claim to the acoustic intelligibility of a place never seen; Ish-Ran's associations with the famous record also indicate a sense of displacement from the past hometowns of his musical ancestors, coupled with an alienation from his present surroundings. It is this "double loss" that leads Edwin Seroussi to speak of a "culture of exiled individuals" when describing how contemporary Mizrahi musicians in Israel longed, through music, for the cities of their ancestors (Baghdad, Tunis or Thessaloniki), cities whose cultural heritage was neglected by mainstream Zionist discourse and thus constituted, in a double sense, "homes beyond [their] reach" (2014, 47-48). This "being beyond reach", the inability to *locate in the present* the historical arenas associated with the musical heritage to which "Yom Yom Odeh" belongs, was, albeit in a different way, also apparent in the following fifth scene (and thus far, the last one). Coincidentally, this story was related to me in a now closed Middle Eastern instrument shop in Nahlaot, the neighbourhood of Ish-Ran's childhood.

### Scene V. Off the Map: "This News is Only for Singers"

I had come across this shop after one of my visits to the nearby Ades synagogue<sup>29</sup> and whilst strolling through Nahlaot's narrow alleyways. Stepping through a door with a small wooden 'ud placed beside it, I entered a living room and, after climbing a set of winding stairs, arrived at a second floor filled with qanuns, kamanjahs, buzuqs, riqqs, and carefully arranged 'uds. While their inside labels revealed the places of their origin (Muhammad Ali Street, Cairo... Istanbul... Jerusalem), I noticed that in some of them, letters had been blacked out with a marker.

<sup>29</sup> Built in 1901 by Aleppian immigrants, the Ades synagogue is the flagship of Aleppian Jewry in Israel and has been described to me by many as a "museum of Arab music". Indeed, it is one of the few remnants of a time in which Nahlaot, as recounted in the diaries of the Jerusalemite 'ud-player Wasif Jawhariyah, was home to many great Aleppian-Jewish musicians and ḥazzanim (Tamari & Nassar 2014, 87). Today, the synagogue is attended not only by Syrian Jews, but also (and even more so) by worshipers and ḥazzanim from the city's Persian, Kurdish, Moroccan and other Middle Eastern Jewish communities. They practice their liturgical traditions in what is generally referred to as "Jerusalem-Sephardi" style, an overview of which can be found here: <http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/content/jerusalem-sephardic-tradition> (accessed April 2, 2020). The reactions that my recording of "Yom Yom Odeh" triggered there will, for lack of space, be recounted elsewhere in the future.



**Figure 3.** Image of the inside label of one of the Syrian ‘uds. The two marks above have been added by the author to protect the name of its manufacturer. Courtesy of the author.

“This one is from Syria.” During one of my visits, the owner of the shop had watched my clumsy attempts to hold one of the ‘uds against the sunlight to detect what it was that had been crossed out. The old ‘ud hanging on the wall next to the shop’s entrance, he told me, was also from Syria and manufactured by the popular Aleppian ‘ud-maker Ibrahim Sukkar. How had he brought these instruments into Israel? That, he assured me, remained his secret (although he probably imported them from elsewhere). As it turned out, the Syrian ‘uds were not the only instance of a musical trajectory taking place “off the map” and revealed in this little shop. I learned this during my conversation with Y, one of the shop’s frequent visitors and an expert on the liturgical heritage of Jews from the Middle East, who, I had hoped, could help me find out more about the origins of Rafoul Tabbach. Upon taking a look at the famous record’s label, Y not only expressed doubts that this could possibly be Hakham Raphael Antebi Taboush; they were also keen to tell me how they themselves had once received a copy of “Yom Yom Odeh”, but its Iraqi version. This memory, in turn, prompted them to reminisce about their participation in gatherings with musicians from other countries in the Middle East, including Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq. What had brought them together, so I was told, was their shared passion for music from the Nahda time. Moreover, the fact that I recognized the names of some of these musicians seemed to serve as a kind of “code” that led Y to switch from Hebrew into a heavily accented but fluent

Arabic, a language which, within certain parts of Israeli society, is still seen as the language of the Other (Suleiman 2011).

Instead of providing new insights into the identity of Ḥazzan Rafoul Tabbach, my conversation with Y revealed something that I had not considered when explicating my "meaningful fiction" about the muted section on my phone, and that is the fact that the eroding landscape of cross-territorial musical exchange from which "Yom Yom Odeh" emerged *continues* to be sustained by an ongoing history of travelling musicians. While this realization should draw our attention to the infrastructures that condition and grant access to such cross-national musical affiliations today (including my right to obtain a second German passport and travel freely between Israel and Lebanon), it is equally important to note that the musical gatherings that Y recounted happened "off the map", and they did so in a double sense. Not only did they take place outside the Middle East; given that for many in the region contact with Israeli institutions or individuals presents a risk to their professional reputations and can even lead to their imprisonment, the names, professional details and other personal information that Y's story revealed had to be omitted from my account, that is, they had to be taken *off* paper. A potential way to conceptualize the relation of Y's memories to the numerous regimes that demand this anonymization was captured in the language of musical intimacy in which they described a mournful message that they had received over WhatsApp. The message concerned the supposed (but untrue) death of the Syrian star-singer Sabah Fakhri and had been shared with them by someone in Damascus, and this at a time in which, I was assured, nobody else had yet been informed of the singer's passing. As they explained: "*Hada al-akhbar bas lil muṭribeen*," this news is just for singers.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

Whether nostalgia for lost landscapes of musical mobility, concerns about an Egyptian Jewish musician's national authenticity, my association of the muted section on my phone with Palestine, the sense of loss and alienation experienced by the grandson of an Ottoman Jewish ḥazzan in Israel, or accounts of musical affiliations that happen "off the map", each of the article's scenes features a different narrative of and/or attachment to the geographical spaces and trajectories to which the famous record belongs.

Triggered by the recording on my mobile phone, each of my interlocutors' responses constitutes an entry point into "Yom Yom Odeh's" new biography, each acts as its mediator, and has the capacity to transform it. X's recitation of a Hebrew hymn and Y's account of their "secret" encounter with Lebanese, Iraqi and Egyptian musicians expose musical networks that complicate the national borders by which they are framed and also challenge the separation between Jews and Arabs bequeathed by the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict. Other insights presented here, however, contribute to a sense of stasis, to the notion of

<sup>30</sup> Y is not a native speaker of Arabic. The grammatically correct expression would be "*hadhihi akhbar*" in High Standard Arabic and "*hay al-akhbar*" in spoken Levantine Arabic.

"Yom Yom Odeh" being "locked" in place. Be it the image of the famous record being safely stowed away in the shelves of the AMAR archive, the song's association with the "enemy" State of Israel, my paranoid reaction to its muted sound on my phone or the need to anonymize members of its present-day constituencies—all these aspects render the memory of "Yom Yom Odeh" a matter of (national) dispute.

Recalling the original question this article set out to explore ("who was Rafoul Tabbach?"), readers will have noticed that they gained no insights into the identity of the singer featured on the famous record. In fact, it was only towards the end of my stay in Jerusalem in 2017 that I eventually found out that it was not Hakham Raphael Antebi Taboush who featured on the famous record, and that Rafoul Tabbach—a different Ḥazzan altogether—originally came from Damascus, not Aleppo.<sup>31</sup> But rather than retrospectively pronouncing my fieldwork a failure, I invited the reader to consider the new geographical, cultural and political associations that the search for Tabbach's origins elicited. Taken together, these associations not only shed light on the agency that a musical object can develop once out of the archive, they may also suggest that to *physically* move music in-between ideologically policed and segregated spaces, and to "think more through recording and playback," to quote Steven Feld (2015, 17), can be a form of intervention in an environment all too often governed by national conflicts.

*\*This article was written with the support of the Martin Buber Society of Fellows at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It draws from fieldwork undertaken in Beirut and Jerusalem in the years 2016/17 which was supported by a doctoral studentship of the German National Academic Foundation and the Mildred Loss Studentship of the Jewish Music Institute (JMI) in London. Earlier drafts of this article have benefitted greatly from comments by my former PhD supervisor Ilana Webster-Kogen as well as Edwin Seroussi, Martin Stokes, Laudan Nooshin, Oded Erez, Abigail Wood, Kerstin Hünefeld and the anonymous reviewers of Yuval. I thank all of them for their valuable feedback. Many thanks are also owed to the staff at the AMAR foundation, as well as Moshe Habousha, Roni Ish-Ran, Ezra Barnea, and those of my interlocutors whose names have been anonymized for matters of protection.*

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<sup>31</sup> This was related to me from two different sources, a descendant of Aleppian Jews in Jerusalem and a Syrian-Jewish musician in Buenos Aires. Besides that, I was recently informed that Tabbach's grandson lives in Brooklyn. This and the likely fact that the famous record was pressed in a factory in Berlin, parts of which were subsequently used to produce military equipment during the Second World War, shall be the subject of a future publication.

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