

# More than Friends? On Muslim-Jewish Musical Intimacy in Algeria and Beyond

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For many people in Algeria, the wider Maghrib, and its diaspora, music is a potent medium for talking about Jewish-Muslim connection. But as anthropologists working on kinship have long known, relatedness is anything but simple. What does it mean to be close? And doesn't closeness imply a baseline separation? To take one classic distinction from this literature, to be related by 'blood' (consanguineous kinship) is not the same as being related by marriage (affinity). And even if in all societies a close degree of consanguinity bars sex and marriage, in some instances certain consanguineous kin make preferred marriage partners, and everywhere affinity in one generation leads to blood relationship in the next.

It is an open question what such matters might teach us about closeness between people who neither share 'blood' nor think of one another as legitimate marriage partners. But perhaps it is the very openness of this question that brings to mind snippets from two recent conversations I had with music aficionados in Algeria. One of these was with a friend in Tlemcen in July 2017. Recounting his close relationships with Jews during his youth in the independence era, he said to me, 'Ils étaient plus que des amis [...] Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire qu'ils étaient plus que des amis?'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'They were more than friends [...] What does it mean to say they were more than friends?'

The second conversation took place in Algiers in February 2018. Speaking with a friend about someone we know in common who had been close to the great Algerian Jewish singer Sultana Daoud, known as Reinette l'Oranaise, I described him in French as having been 'son proche'. My friend's quickly passing look of surprise made me realize that I had misspoken even before he explained my linguistic error: whereas I meant to say they were close, it had come out sounding as if they were relatives.

Neither of these conversations was about music per se, although both of them were with music aficionados, and the second concerned musicians. But both conversations bear great relevance to the question of the Muslim-Jewish relationship around music in Algeria and its diaspora that is my focus in the following pages. At the most basic level, they are both about closeness between people who are neither consanguineous kin nor potential affines. In the first conversation, the idiom of friendship does not quite go far enough, while in the second, the idiom of kinship goes too far. How then, are we to make sense of closeness? Is kinship an appropriate metaphor, or a dangerous one? And if it is appropriate, what kind of kinship should we be talking about?

But at another level there is an additional form of relevance in these conversations that more specifically engages the question of music: the way in which music might be a medium of relationship between Muslims and Jews in Algeria and the wider Maghrib – one that is all the more important in the absence of ties of 'blood' and marriage. What happens when music becomes an arena or object of the Muslim-Jewish relationship, or for talking about that relationship? And can anthropological thought about kinship help us to think through the relationships and forms of representation mediated through this proxy substance?

In the following pages, I offer a cautiously affirmative answer to the latter question. In particular, I find it useful to draw on a contrast traced by the Amazonianist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro between two notions of relatedness, and recently applied by Naor Ben-Yehoyada (2017) to rhetorics of national brotherhood and transnational 'cousinage' between Sicilians and Tunisians. In the first of Viveiros de Castro's notions of relatedness, an idiom of 'brotherhood' predominates, in which '[two] partners in any relation are defined as connected in so far as they can be conceived to *have something in common*, that is, as being in the *same* relation to a third term. To relate is to assimilate, to unify, and to identify' (2004: 18). For Viveiros de Castro, this idiom of brotherhood stands in contrast to certain 'Amazonian ontologies [which] postulate difference rather than identity as the principle of relationality [...] [If] all men are brothers-in-law rather than brothers [...] then a relation can only exist between what differs and in so far as it differs' (2004: 18). In other words, contrary to agnation (consanguineous kinship

traced through fathers), in affinity, 'difference is a condition of signification and not a hindrance' (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: 18).<sup>2</sup>

The following pages trace these two possibilities through a reading of a range of conversations about Muslim-Jewish musical relationship in Algeria and its diaspora. Whether in the form of recordings, musical instruments, or personal reminiscences, the sonic traces of Jewish musicians have circulated in Algeria continuously since Jews' mass departure following independence in 1962. But it was not until the 1980s that popular and scholarly written texts began to appear about them in Algeria (Allalou, 1982; Bouzar-Kasbadji, 1988) and France (Teboul, 1987). For many of those working on Algerian Jewish musical expressions since then (Shiloah, 2002; Swedenburg, 2005; Guedj, 2009a; 2009b; Saadallah, 2010; Bousbia, 2011; Miliani, 2011; Seroussi and Marks, 2011; Langlois, 2015; Glasser, 2012; 2016; 2017; Silver, 2017), I suspect that a good part of the attraction to this topic lies in its offer of a counter-narrative to the 'lachrymose historiography' (Baron, 1928: 526) of Jewish North Africa. The sound of Jews singing the Arabic standards straight through their post-independence exile in and just after 1962 challenges the notion that Algerian Jews' 'enjoyment' of French citizenship starting from the Crémieux Decree of 1870 resulted in an inexorable, wholesale casting-off of Maghribi culture in favour of the French. While the bulk of Algerian Jews may have become French citizens, speakers of French, and eventually inhabitants of France, where they would even be retroactively cast in the settler-turned-repatriate category of *pieds-noirs*, the longstanding Jewish engagement with Algeria's urban Arabic music traditions – and the memory of such engagement – seems to tell a different story from the one that emphasizes a France-centred process of assimilation, unification, and identification.

But what is this story? That is the lingering question in this small but growing literature, and it finds its counterpart in more popular discourse as well, including that of the organic intellectuals of urban music scenes in North Africa and France. In my ethnographic and historical work in and around Algeria, France, and Morocco, I have often been struck by the sheer variety of ways in which people have described the Muslim-Jewish musical relationship. It is not that there is no agreement that Jewish performers were part of the urban Algerian and wider Maghribi music scene before independence, or that music has continued to be important to Algerian

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<sup>2</sup> The masculine emphasis reflects the terminological and conceptual emphases of Viveiros de Castro's and Ben-Yehoyada's respective regions of discussion, as well as the relative rarity of enatic rather than agnatic principles in the general ethnographic record.

and other Maghribi-origin Jews in France and elsewhere. But the details of this story are up for dispute. Or rather, even when there is broad agreement about the details, there is little agreement on their import. In some instances, these disagreements can be rather subtle: was there a recognizably Jewish style, and in what domains? If so, what did these distinctions mean? Were and are they evaluated positively or negatively, and by whom? In other instances, the disagreements can be quite sharp: in Algeria, recent public discussion of Jewish participation in musical life has been an important avenue for advocating a pluralist rereading of the national project, but in part because of this it has also opened the door to tropes about loyalty to the nation, normalization with Israel, and alleged plots to 'Judaize' Algerian and Arab patrimony (Saadallah, 2010: 12-13). The most prominent illustration of such a dynamic was in President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's 1999 address in Constantine, during which he briefly acknowledged and celebrated Jews' role in upholding the musical patrimony of that city in the face of French colonial rule (Bouteflika, 1999). This was swiftly followed by an unprecedented presidential invitation to the Jewish singer Enrico Macias, born and raised in Constantine, for a series of concerts in Algeria, only to be rescinded in the face of strong denunciations, including from those who viewed the invitation of someone with unabashed Zionist sympathies as a fig leaf for normalization of relations with Israel. In other words, notwithstanding the seeming counter-exemplarity of music for the historiography of Muslim-Jewish relations in the Maghrib, we find ourselves caught between polemics on the one hand, and, on the other, what is for students of such matters an all-too-familiar morass of ambiguity and ambivalence. Is this a story about conflict or harmony, or about both, or about neither?

While what follows does not definitively sidestep either the polemics or the alternative modality of ambivalence, it gestures towards an escape route by musically extending Viveiros de Castro's terms to locate some order in this welter of competing evaluations of what Jewish musicality means, including connections between evaluations that usually are thought of as contrasting. In three sections, I sketch a typology of the stories and accompanying moral lessons that scholars, memoirists, politicians, aficionados, and others have crafted about Jewish involvement in Algerian musical practices, both in North Africa and France, punctuated by three brief intertwined ethnographic vignettes. The discussion begins with narratives that treat music as an emblem of Jewish belonging in Algeria, and of Muslim-Jewish commonality rooted in the deep past – an approach that corresponds closely to Viveiros de Castro's idiom of brotherhood. I then turn to an incipient critique of this emblematic approach that, while not definitively eschewing the concept of agnation, emphasizes the embeddedness of musical practices in colonial and

post-colonial institutions and politics, cultural and otherwise. This critique shifts the conversation from the idea that music was a countercurrent, or a glimpse of what was really there beneath the modern colonial veneer, to one that suggests that music was but another arena of sociality – one that might blur the distinction between Muslim and Jew, or alternatively might be a point of separation that helps reproduce many of the familiar patterns of Muslim-Jewish difference and even hierarchy. But while this critique is important to make, I end with a critique of this critique, suggesting that the institutional view of music, while valuable, is not entirely satisfying, particularly in its blindness to non-hierarchical forms of difference that the idiom of affinity is particularly helpful in recognizing, and that was prefigured in an earlier generation of anthropological work on Muslim-Jewish relationships in the Maghrib. Thus, this discussion, in addition to trying to make sense of the conversation about the Muslim-Jewish musical relationship, also seeks to recover a neglected thread in the North Africanist literature.

### **Music as an Emblem of a Substrate of Sameness**

Let me start with my first ethnographic vignette, from June 2009, in which I am catching a ride towards downtown Algiers with an Andalusí music aficionado who has recently introduced me to Sid Ahmed Serri, the late dean of the Andalusí musical style of the capital. Serri had told us of Charles Sonigo, a blind Jewish violinist who left Algeria in the mid-1960s. Destitute, his fellow musicians had mounted a concert to help pay his ship's fare. During the benefit performance, Sonigo played several unknown pieces from the repertoire, leaving these 'lost' songs behind in Algiers with his Muslim fellow musicians. As we are wending our way down into the city centre, I ask my friend to tell me more about Sonigo, and he tells me he has a short recording of him. 'Les juifs étaient des algériens', he assures me, 'ils étaient d'ici'.<sup>3</sup>

In the circles of musicians and listeners that I am familiar with in Algeria, there is nothing particularly surprising about this statement. Among music-lovers, particularly those who, like my friend at the wheel, are partial to the wide range of urban song repertoires marked as patrimonial, Jewish performers are a frequent topic of conversation, and in recent years this presence has seeped into wider journalistic debates regarding the place of Jews in the Algerian nation. Indeed, on the Algerian side, music – whether through recordings, photographs, anecdotes, journalistic accounts, instruments left behind by Jewish musicians, vocal timbres, or even presidential addresses – is one way in which Jews have remained present even in their physical absence.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Jews were Algerians; they were from here.'

The volume of popular discussions of Algerian Jews and music stands in striking contrast to the quietness of music in the old, rich, and still growing scholarly literature on Muslim-Jewish relations in the Maghrib, including the more specialized subset devoted to Algeria and its French diaspora, where music has made what we might call a cameo appearance (Boum, 2014; Katz, 2015; Stora, 2016 [2015]). When music makes its turn in the generalist scholarly literature on Muslim-Jewish relations in Algeria and the wider Maghrib, it tends to do so in forceful and consistent ways that echo the popular discourse and in many respects run against the leitmotiv of rupture that dominates the field. First and foremost, and particularly striking in the Algerian case that is my focus here, music, much like cuisine, often stands for a deep past that reaches back before the modern colonial experience but that persists right up to the end of the colonial period and into the post-colonial diaspora, albeit in fragmentary form. Yet, in contrast to cuisine, which introduces myriad elements of Muslim-Jewish differentiation (Bahloul, 1989), music is often treated as a medium of unalloyed sameness. Thus, unlike most other 'cultural' phenomena (language and dress being at the fore; see Allouche-Benayoun, 2015: 40), music is often treated as something that resisted the disentanglement of Jews from Muslims over the colonial period. The deep past that is allegedly indexed by music situates Jews as indigenous to North Africa, and also as intimately connected to Muslim North Africans. Indeed, the idea of a cameo appearance in its everyday theatrical sense might not accurately capture the potency of the musical figure in some treatments of the Algerian Jewish experience. Instead, it might be better to talk about music as standing as an *emblem* of indigeneity and intimacy, albeit located in a difficult to access substrate. In this way, music is treated as a privileged sign, an index that through some unspecified mechanism acts as a self-evident reflection of a deep past.

The semiotic and ontological qualities of music's emblematicity in this context are telling. As in much of the literature on Muslim-Jewish relations, there is a frequent slippage between the intercommunal intimacies of the late colonial past and the much deeper past that reaches back to the Ottoman era and even before. While there are some counter-tendencies that would trace Jewish participation in the public cultural sphere – including in music – to the French colonial era, the main tendency is to treat music as a vestige of a primordial indigeneity and intimacy, thereby collapsing modernist musical experimentation into much older repertoires that are conventionally traced back to al-Andalus. Such an approach conceives of music as an undifferentiated spirit or soul of a place; while it often treats Jews as epitomizing the musical, ultimately the musical figure points back to a fundamental, essential sameness of Maghribi Jews and Muslims that came to be disguised by the vicissitudes of the colonial era and its end.



Figure 1: Postcard depicting a family party with musicians in Setif, circa 1930.  
© Jean Laloum and Jean-Luc Allouche.

Note, too, the way the emphasis on sameness is tied in turn to discreteness. In this reading, Muslims and Jews are clearly distinguishable as discrete categories and perhaps even discrete groups. They are brought into relatedness through something they share – in this case, music. This music, too, is discrete – a singular unit emerging from the past. In Viveiros de Castro’s ‘idiom of brotherhood’ (2004: 18), the partners are Jewish and Muslim men and women, and the thing they have ‘in common’, the ‘third term’ to which they stand in relation and by which they stand in relation to each other, is music marked as patrimony. In other words, the ability to bridge the two groups depends upon the unity of the linking object. Take, for example, the following caption from a photograph (Figure 1) of an early twentieth-century ensemble:

Ce sont des musiciens juifs, identifiés à tort par l’observateur français à des Arabes, la carte postale portant la mention « scène indigène. Fête arabe ». Bien davantage que dans le vêtement ou la cuisine, s’est perpétuée dans le domaine musical une fusion culturelle judéo-arabe: il n’y avait aucune distinction entre musiciens juifs et arabes (sauf peut-être une pointe d’accent différent, perceptible à l’oreille attentive). Seule comptait la qualité de l’interprétation. (Teboul, 1987: 277)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ‘These are Jewish musicians, misidentified by the French observer as Arabs, with the postcard bearing the label “Native Scene – Arab Party”. In the

A lot rides on Annie Teboul's parenthetical exception here, and I can only hint at the debates surrounding the legitimacy or lack thereof of the labels (some of them quite popular in France) of Judeo-Algerian, Judeo-Maghribi, Judeo-Andalusi, and Judeo-Arabic music, and the ways these relate to the 'misidentification' identified by Teboul. The basic point is that, in such an approach, assimilation of Muslims and Jews with each other through a common relation to the privileged, indeed exceptional third term of music is presented as being able to overcome other assimilations and separations: Jewish assimilation to Frenchness through the granting of citizenship and Jews' subsequent cultural and political 'francisation', particularly through integration into the French educational system during the colonial period, and, by the end of the War of Independence, Jews' cleaving from normative understandings of Algerian citizenship and nationhood.

There is a less celebratory coda to this logic of sameness, in that debates in the Maghrib regarding Jewish distinctiveness or lack thereof can blend into a certain reticence or even embarrassment concerning Jewish presence – in other words, the logic of sameness, pushed far enough, can in fact assimilate Jews out of existence. By this I refer to those streams of thought that acknowledge Jewish participation in Algerian musical life but that either retreat from Jews' identification as Jews (Hachelef and Hachelef, 1993), ignore musical activities associated with specifically Jewish religious practice (see discussion in Aous, 2002: 129–30), avoid Jews' identification as Algerians (Bendamèche, 2003; Meziane, 2009), seek to downplay the extent of Jewish contributions to Algerian musical life (Na'ila, 2007), or try to correct an allegedly excessive emphasis among Jews on Algerian Jewish difference from their Muslim compatriots (Saadallah, 2010).<sup>5</sup> Some of this can be explained by the vexed nature of Algerian citizenship and national discourses of unanimity (McDougall, 2006; Goodman, 2013a; 2013b), the complicated place of Jews in post-1962 Algerian discussions of the makeup of the nation (as well as the similarly fraught conversation in France regarding the place of Jews, Muslims, and Algeria past and present in the national imaginary), and of course the complications raised by the Palestinian-Israeli question inside various national and transnational politics. These positions require a much fuller account of their ideological implications and entanglements vis-à-vis

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musical domain, much more than in dress or cuisine, a Judeo-Arabic fusion was maintained: there was no distinction between Jewish and Arab musicians (except perhaps a bit of a different accent, noticeable to an attentive ear). The only thing that counted was the quality of the performance'.

<sup>5</sup> This is by no means limited to Algeria, but can find counterparts throughout the Maghrib and indeed beyond.



Jewish indigeneity, Muslim-Jewish intimacy, and the various lacks thereof within the Algerian political field. But for the purposes of this chapter, they point out some of the more problematic potentialities of the emphasis on sameness.

### **The Institutional Alternative: Integration or Hierarchy?**

While emblematicity and its tensions predominate in the scholarly and popular literature that deals (however briefly) with Muslim-Jewish interactions around music, an emerging alternative approach offers a challenge. This institutional alternative dispenses with a largely stable, primordialist picture of mainly positive commonality and instead introduces a number of other factors that afford a great deal more specificity and critical edge. The decisive advantage of this approach lies in its assertion that music is not timeless but timeful, in the sense of being situated in specific (and changing) historical conditions, and therefore being embedded within larger social patterns. Even some of the oldest parts of the repertoires linked to Algerian Jews – here I am thinking mainly of certain para-liturgical repertoire in Hebrew and the melodically and modally related anonymous Arabic-language urban repertoire popularly traced to al-Andalus – underwent many changes over time, whether with regard to modes of circulation or performance practice (Bouzar-Kasbadji, 1988; Saadallah, 2010; Seroussi and Marks, 2011; Langlois, 2015; Glasser, 2016). This is not only a question of change in some autonomous field called ‘music’, but raises the question of the way in which musical change is tied to wider social changes, without simply saying music is a transparent reflection of its surroundings. Far from being a holdout from the pre-colonial era, these changes were themselves closely connected to colonial-era institutions, technologies, and politics that were simultaneously creating and reshaping many aspects of the Muslim-Jewish interface (Saadallah, 2010; Miliani, 2011; Glasser, 2016; Silver, 2017; Théoleyre, 2016). Furthermore, there were many musical elements of Algerian Jewish experience and Muslim-Jewish interaction in the colonial period that were tied to new, non-traditional genres, whether in Arabic, French, or other languages. Here we can think of Moroccan, Tunisian, Egyptian, French, Spanish, and pan-Mediterranean, as well as various Algerian popular novelties, among them the *franco-arabe* experiments of the 1940s and 1950s associated with such figures as Lili Boniche and Line Monty. In addition, Western European classical ensembles and genres were important parts of the Algerian and wider Maghribi soundscape in the colonial period and to a degree since.

Very quickly, then, such a track leads us to complicate the idea of music as a bulwark against the colonial, and even its very evidential value as

an unproblematic, privileged sign of some deeper truth. Instead, musical practice gets situated inside the colonial (alongside the pre-colonial, the anti-colonial, and the post-colonial), standing therefore as a sign of a near context, a sign that is itself reshaped by that context. And, of course, part of this is tied to the plurality that hides behind the singularity of such a term as 'musical practice'. So, we can find in the literature on Algerian Jewish experience (in reference to genres marked as French) evaluations of music as a vehicle of Frenchness (Lamarre, 2017). We can likewise find other genres being set up in the colonial Algerian scene as *opposed* to Frenchness – itself a form of entanglement with the colonial (Glasser, 2015). Hence, we can find the ways in which the 'pure', 'patrimonial' genres are themselves packaged and repackaged in ways that are deeply indebted to the past presents of the colonial era.

As someone whose published work fits rather well into the institutional approach, I can attest to the existence of two versions that are of relevance to the question of a Muslim-Jewish relationship but that stand in considerable tension with each other. One of these asserts that indeed there was musical intimacy involving Muslims and Jews, but that the notion of Muslim or Jewish groupness is misplaced. Instead, what we are dealing with is categories, not groups, and fluid ones at that. In other words, we ought to downplay Muslim-Jewish difference, as well as even the utility of framing things in terms of Muslim-Jewish relations; instead, we should be paying closer attention to questions of region, the urban-versus-rural, and, above all, socioeconomic class. Note that this approach allows for a far more detailed and variegated sense of the genre map, and for a deep embedding of Jews within the Algerian social fabric. In a sense, it offers an alternative notion of Viveiros de Castro's relation through identity: instead of music standing as the third term that lies in common between Muslims and Jews, Jews are here presented as already assimilated into the wider Algerian society, with music simply being one of many components of that social web. Here, it is the broad structures of society that constitute the third term through which Muslims and Jews stand in a relationship of identity.

The problem with such a move, however, is that in emphasizing Jewish embeddedness in the Maghribi social fabric, it has difficulty dealing with the question of the dilatory senses of groupness, Jewish prominence, and genre specializations – as if the very idea of Muslim-Jewish difference beyond mere nominalism is unthinkable. The second version of the institutional approach, while emphasizing a complex, diverse genre map, attempts to address this shortcoming by retaining a sense of Jewish and Muslim groupness and in turn linking this sense to generic diversity, thereby embracing questions of difference and prominence. Evidence for such musical differentiation between

Jews and Muslims is not difficult to find in the historical record or in contemporary memory. At least in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jews were disproportionately represented among urban professional musicians in Algeria, the Maghrib at large, and the wider Arab and Middle Eastern worlds (Seroussi, 2010). While these Jewish professional musicians (and not the cantors, amateurs, or instrumentalists specializing in Western European art music) are often the reference points when Jews, Muslims, and others speak of music as an emblem of Jewish integration in the Maghrib, they also turn out to be fulcrum points for questions of social exclusion in that, like many Muslim colleagues in the ranks of professional musicians, they were largely subaltern figures. Not unlike in Northern India and many other places (Brown, 2007), in the relations of musical production in urban Algeria in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the prestige associated with these musicians was largely understood by their patrons to redound to themselves through the act of patronage. And in many other cases, these urban musicians were associated with 'low' registers, with 'vulgar' vocal timbres, or with allegedly adulterated versions of the higher-prestige repertoires. At times, such linkages spilled into rivalries between majority-Muslim and majority-Jewish ensembles as well as into debates about musical reform, particularly as urban art music entered into colonial and anti-colonial cultural politics in the interwar period (Seroussi, 2010; Glasser, 2012; Théoleyre, 2016). Once again, this is not unrelated to the notion of identity and assimilation along Viveiros de Castro's model, but the form of assimilation in this variant is one of hierarchical subsumption or encompassment, in which a nested sense of groupness is emphatically maintained. As in the first version of the institutional approach, Jews and Muslims are linked through the broader social web, and not by music per se, but here the web tends towards the vertical rather than the horizontal. In this respect, the hierarchical option shares with the emblematic approach an emphasis on discrete Muslim and Jewish groupness, although on unequal terms.

This hierarchical option brings me to my second vignette featuring the same *algérois* aficionado whose comments about Charles Sonigo I recounted in the previous section. This time, however, we are in the office of one of his relatives. Without my prompting, my friend asks if I've ever heard the Israeli ensemble. He shows me a video clip on the computer, explaining that this is the 'l'école andalouse israélienne' ['the Israeli school of Andalusí music']. The clip is of a female vocalist, accompanied by an ensemble, singing 'Yā nāss mā ta'dhirūnī' ['O people, Do Not Blame Me'], from the Andalusí repertoire of Algiers. I point out some of the unidiomatic elements of the instrumental accompaniment and of the singer's vocal timbre, and he explains that yes, Jews played this music, but it was never theirs.

And so the institutional approach leaves us in a strange position. On the one hand, it is far richer than the emblematic approach with regard to musical specifics. On the other hand, we should be wary of where it is taking us. Is it saying that the idiom of ‘brotherhood’ does not go far enough – that in fact we should not get hung up on separate Muslimness and Jewishness or even ‘fraternity’ tout court, but rather should pay attention to the luxuriant diversity of musical practices on the ground? Or is it saying that that very diversity provides the building blocks (or at least the refractions) of a hierarchical relationship – neither between siblings nor between affines but, as illustrated in my friend’s dismissive comment regarding the Andalusi Orchestra of Israel, between patrons and clients? In other words, it raises the question of whether we should be thinking of Jewish specialization in professional music-making as a sign of marginality rather than of integration, of outsider status rather than insider status, of dhimmi status rather than equality, of exogeneity rather than indigeneity, of hierarchy rather than intimacy, and of difference rather than sameness.

### **Towards a Conclusion: The Affinal Alternative**

The problem with all these approaches lies in the way they limit us. In the emblematic approach, we were stuck with a simplistic view of music and of the social terrain, and only the options of sameness of relationship and assimilation. The institutional approach offered a richer, more thoroughly contextualized musical map with two paths. In one, a thoroughgoing, multilayered assimilation was triumphant, while in the other, hierarchy reigned. The valuable critique offered by the institutional approach notwithstanding, in a sense this approach puts us back to square one in the literature on the Muslim-Jewish interface. It seems to close off the possibility of non-hierarchical forms of difference; it focuses almost exclusively on Jewish participation in profane Arabic-language repertoires at the expense of liturgical and para-liturgical musical practice; and it brings to mind the old zero-sum game that pits integration against conflict (Stillman, 1977; Deshen, 1989; Bilu and Levy, 1996), leaning either in the latter direction or in the direction of that vague sense of ambivalence that seems to pervade the literature on Muslim-Jewish relations in North Africa (Gottreich and Schroeter, 2011).

In a way, even the emblematic approach already unloads us of the assumption that intimacy and difference are opposed, in that the closeness of Muslims and Jews around the third term of music assumes that we are dealing with two collective subjects in relationship. But how can we keep this insight in mind while taking into account the generic and other social subtleties associated with the institutional approach? And, moving beyond

the latter, is there a way to think about difference that does not only take the form of hierarchy or simple nominalism? One helpful precedent in the North Africanist literature on Muslim-Jewish relationships is Lawrence Rosen's work on Sefrou, Morocco (1984), where he suggests that Jewish-Muslim separation in the realm of kinship and its accompanying domain of competitive exchange facilitated Jewish-Muslim friendships, even if some of these friendships took a hierarchical form through Muslim patrons' protection of Jewish subjects. In other words, difference facilitated intimacy (including hierarchical forms of intimacy) in a way that actual non-metaphorical agnation made difficult. But how might we translate Rosen's ethnographic insights into a response to the questions at hand? This is where the idea of music as a medium of relatedness becomes useful, as a kind of sonic alternative to the bonds of kinship. And it is in this medium that Viveiros de Castro's affinal alternative becomes most promising. If the emblematic approach was all about the idiom of 'brotherhood', in which '[two] partners in any relation are defined as connected in so far as they can be conceived to *have something in common*, that is, as being in the *same* relation to a third term', meaning that '[to] relate is to assimilate, to unify, and to identify' (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: 18), the institutional approach tended to emphasize relationality through hierarchy, or to dissolve the possibility of talking about Muslim-Jewish relationality at anything beyond an atomistic level altogether. But what about the possibility of a non-hierarchical form of relationality? Is there an echo of the Amazonian ontologies here, and their postulation of 'difference rather than identity as the principle of relationality', in which 'a relation can only exist between what differs and in so far as it differs' (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: 18)?

In many ways, such an approach has not yet been fully articulated in the academic literature, although the comments of Rachid Aous (2002) come close, as does the work of Maya Saidani (2006) on Constantine, particularly in her discussions of pre-1962 Jewish performers and of post-1962 women's versions of urban repertoires. However, in my experience as an ethnographer, something like affinity or what Ella Shohat has called 'differentiated commonalities' (2017: 169) is strewn throughout people's discourse and practice, even if it is not named as such. Take, for example, the ubiquitous phenomenon of *contrafact*, including the sharing of melodies across profane Arabic and sacred Hebrew texts. One of the things that is liberating when thinking about such sacred-profane communication is the way that it allows us to consider much more than the profane, Arabic-language repertoire, and start to consider both Jewish and Muslim sacred practice in relation to each other and in relation to that more public domain. Anecdotes of Muslims frequenting the Jewish sacred sphere, in which the synagogue

serves as a space of exportation, are particularly evocative. In some cases, these anecdotes deal with parody, in which auditory proximity leads to the capacity to imitate the singing of *piyyuṭim* (para-liturgical repertoire). In other anecdotes, listeners learn aspects of Jewish liturgical practice in order to adapt it to the profane sphere. In some instances, I have heard the colloquial Arabic word ‘shnūgha’ – generally meaning synagogue – used to refer specifically to liturgical and para-liturgical singing, as in “andu shshnūgha dyal lihūd”.<sup>6</sup> But one of the most suggestive of such anecdotes, one that we can think of in terms of affectionate theft, came from the late Sid Ahmed Serri, dean of the Andalusi tradition of Algiers, who recounted to me how he used to eavesdrop with friends in a foyer adjoining the small synagogue in Bab Azzoun in the centre of Algiers, in order to listen in on what was being sung on the other side of the wall.

Much more can and should be said about contrafact, including the trope of borrowing and its ideological implications. But for the purposes of our discussion here, I would like to point out the way in which the melody’s imputed unity across texts is intertwined with the difference in words and their context, not unlike the cross-cousin relationship in much of Amazonia, whose closeness lies precisely in the linkage through parents who are cross-sex siblings rather than two brothers or two sisters. Or take the question of what made and makes a Jewish voice, and why Muslim listeners would have found a Jewish voice attractive; one Algerian Muslim singer explained to me that one of the things that made Jewish singers attractive was their difference in pronunciation, so that this ‘faisait partie du charme’ [‘was part of the charm’]. In other words, the melody and text may have been more or less the same, but it was its passage through the Jew rather than the Muslim that made its performance attractive to the latter. This is not about sameness through and through; nor is it about hierarchy per se, or a narrowed frame of Jewish ‘participation’ in the profane, at the expense of Jewish specificities, whether liturgical, para-liturgical, or extra-liturgical. While musically there is ‘something in common’, it is emphatically not a question of Jews and Muslims bearing the ‘*same* relation to a third term’ (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: 18), but rather of their bearing a somewhat different relation to that third term, and thereby producing somewhat different versions of it.<sup>7</sup> As opposed to the model

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<sup>6</sup> ‘He has [knowledge of] the liturgy of the Jews’.

<sup>7</sup> This is a simplification, in that the third term (‘music’) is itself fluid and incomplete, and in that Jews and Muslims do not preexist the musical field but rather both make it and are in part made by it. Nevertheless, my reading here is an approximation of a widespread insider model, as well as a sketch of a possible map of a *longue durée* social dynamic. Note, furthermore, that relationship

of unanimity sometimes ascribed (often rightfully) to the Algerian political ethos (McDougall, 2006; Goodman, 2013a; 2013b), this is a model that posits a heterophonic cultural politics, in which multiple (although collective) voices that only approximate a common theme provide the dominant aesthetic.

Musically or otherwise, such affinity is not devoid of tension – indeed, it depends on tension. And in this respect, it is useful to return one last time to my interlocutor in the car in Algiers. Later in our conversation on the way to the centre of Algiers, just after he had asserted that Jews like Charles Sonigo ‘étaient des algériens, ils étaient d’ici’,<sup>8</sup> he also said that that was ‘la belle époque, les années 30, quand il y avait une concurrence entre juifs et musulmans en ce qui concerne la musique.’<sup>9</sup> Indeed, according to him, this rivalry moved things forward. In other words, discreteness and sharing can easily shift into agonism, into competitive exchange between equals or near equals.

This comment about rivalry also demonstrates the way in which the three approaches mapped in the preceding pages might easily blend into one another in practice, so that my friend’s statement about the belle époque can coexist with his statement that Jews played this music, but it was never theirs, and even with his assertion that Jews ‘étaient des algériens, ils étaient d’ici’.<sup>10</sup> Linkage and separation, each in their various forms, are indissociable. My friend’s three assertions – that Jews were the same as Muslims, that this music was not theirs, and that a shoulder-to-shoulder rivalry between Jews and Muslims was good for music – are signs not so much of his contradictions but rather of the energies of closeness, of three potential aspects of relationality, three possible answers to the question of what it means to say people are more than friends.

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through the third term of music does not negate relationship through the broader third term of society.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Jews were Algerians, they were from here’.

<sup>9</sup> It was ‘the belle époque, [during] the 1930s, when there was a rivalry between Jews and Muslims with regard to music’.

<sup>10</sup> ‘were Algerians, they were from here’.

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