Middle Eastern and North African Jewish Masculinities
Bodies of Knowledge across Generations and Geographies

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1 Jewish MEN(A): An Introduction

> While he descended the air stairs, we were all excited and anxious to feel the appeal of Israel that we had dreamed of. […] Before we knew what was happening – a white cloud of DDT enveloped Abu Shaul, a man both respected and influential within Baghdad community. Through this cloud we saw my father lift his hand towards the spray gun; it was a silent protest. Hair, moustache and eyebrows turned white. The silk tie, the starched shirt and his elegant suit instantly changed into dusty rugs. After that humiliating moment and them treating him like the head of a herd of animals, I saw my father, silently, try to maintain his dignity by refusing to sneeze. Tears streamed from his eyes, his face muscles contorted like a tormented mask…and everything seemed disfigured, ugly and revolting. The spasms lasted only a few moments, but my father had won, he hadn't sneezed. There and then I witnessed the last victorious moment of Abu Shaul's life. The creature that later left the airport was no longer my father, all that remained was his pride.
>
> (Sami Michael, *More and More Equal*, 1974)

Sami Michael's scene captures not only humiliation but a moment of masculine transition. This well-known episode of the DDT spraying – a disinfection procedure applied to new immigrants arriving in Israel in the early 1950s, meant to prevent disease but remembered by many as a deeply degrading ritual – has been widely read as a symbol of the immigrant experience, as Michael himself presents. Yet it can also be read through the lens of masculinity, revealing how the figure of the father becomes central in recounting migration's hardships. As Abu Shaul steps through the mist, the man who once embodied authority and respect in Baghdad enters a new social order where those very qualities collapse. His silent defiance – refusing to sneeze – becomes a fragile act of control amid the unmaking of patriarchal power. Migration here is not only a passage between places but a reordering of gendered hierarchies.

This passage resonates with the broader interpretive frameworks that have shaped how Jewish masculinities – especially those rooted in the Middle East and North African (MENA) context – have been understood and represented. On the one hand, Orientalism (Said

We extend our sincere gratitude to Nancy Berg and Sarah Imhoff for their careful reading and insightful comments, which have substantially strengthened this introduction. The book employs a simplified version of the scientific system for transliterating Hebrew into English. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Hebrew and other languages are provided by the respective chapter authors. All terminological designations used throughout the chapters reflect the analytical decisions of the individual contributors.

1978) produced ranked stereotypes about race and gender – casting "Eastern" men at times as weak and feminized, at other times as hyper-virile and threatening – which shaped how colonial and later national societies judged and valued MENA Jewish men (Khazzoom 2003). On the other hand, Jewish thought also offered different models of masculinity. As Daniel Boyarin describes, this "unheroic masculinity" valued learning, gentleness, and openness – an alternative to the modern, militarized image of the strong male (Boyarin 1997). Aziza Khazzoom's sociological account of Israel's internal "chain of Orientalism" shows how such hierarchies became institutionalized in the 1950s, mapping old European stereotypes of the "exilic Jew" onto Mizrahim as "dirty, unhygienic, uneducated", even when their bodies were conscripted as sturdy national labor (Khazzoom 2003). In Connell and Messerschmidt's terms (2005), this represents an example of hegemonic masculinity in formation: a dominant style (European-Zionist, *sabra*) legitimates itself by subordinating others, including "Oriental" Jewish men.

The title of this volume, *Middle East and North African Jewish Masculinities: Bodies of Knowledge across Generations and Geographies*, captures our added perspective: a cross-generational, transregional lens that contextualises these national voices within wider cultural dynamics, showing how MENA Jewish masculinities continually translate and reshape belonging across time and place.[1]

The contributions straddle diverse academic fields such as gender studies, migration studies, Jewish history, and literary criticism, where each offers distinct analytical tools for understanding the experiences and representations of MENA Jewish (including Mizrahi) men through generations and in various geographical and historical settings. Moreover, the title points to the centrality of the body and of embodied experience to gain knowledge about masculinities: the ways in which masculinity is lived, negotiated, and manifested in the physical bodies of MENA men, shaped by history, social context, and personal narrative.

1 The heterogeneity of the texts gathered in this volume – spanning multiple disciplines, geographies, and historical moments – makes it challenging to settle on a single term that would adequately encompass all the communities discussed. Contributors consistently and productively employ Mizrahi in their individual chapters, reflecting the term's centrality within Israeli sociological, political, and cultural discourse. Yet as editors, we also sought language that would acknowledge the non-Israeli contexts from which many of these communities emerged and the broader regional frameworks within which their masculinities were historically shaped. For this reason, while individual authors specify how and why they use Sephardi, Mizrahi, or both, our introduction adopts a more capacious vocabulary – drawing at times on MENA (Middle East and North Africa) and at times on Sephardi – to better reflect the diverse pre-Israeli trajectories of the communities represented. This terminological tension is itself reflective of the communities' historical complexity: their identities have been shaped across multiple homelands, regimes, and languages.

MENA Jewish Masculinities follows MENA Jewish masculinities as they move in varied historical contexts – across ports and barracks, through transit camps, protest squares, family apartments, and on to the pages of novels and poems. Read chronologically, the chapters trace how ideas of 'being a man' are made, unmade, and remade as Jews travel from the Arab–Ottoman world into the British Mandate, the State of Israel, and contemporary diasporic locations in the Americas. Diaspora theory in particular helps us rethink masculinities as contextual and emerging "in movement" at contact zones. In Gilroy's terms, we are reading masculinity along "routes" (Gilroy 1993), which is precisely what marks it as a "travelling concept": portable, translatable, and continually renegotiated across settings (Clifford 1994, 308). Thus, two overarching aspects run through the volume: the migratory context that represents the travelling of concepts; and the historical-literary framework that informs our understanding of the prominent narratives of MENA Jewish masculinities across generations.

2 Masculinities On the Move

Most of the contributions in this volume address the complex historical process that, by the 1970s, had nearly brought an end to Jewish life across the Middle East and North Africa. In the late 1940s, hundreds of thousands of Jews still lived in Muslim-majority countries throughout the region. Yet within a few decades, a series of intertwined regional and global developments – political upheavals, wars, decolonization, and rising nationalisms – disrupted these long-standing communities and compelled many to leave their countries of origin. As a whole, these migrations represent a profoundly intricate phenomenon that defies a singular definition. Scholars have shed light on various facets, including the role played by the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Israeli establishment (Tsur 2000; Laskier 2006), and the involvement of Jewish organizations (Messika 2020). Recent advancements in Jewish studies scholarship have taken a more micro-historical analytical stance and have focused on representations of these migrations in retrospect in various contexts (Boum 2013; Baussant 2019; Miccoli 2024). In this vein, scholars have drawn upon various disciplinary ideas (or "bodies of knowledge") such as concepts from migration studies, placing a greater emphasis on comprehending these migrations from the immigrants' perspective rather than from the outside (e.g. Moreno 2020; Sadjed 2021; Rossetto 2021). Most recent developments in the study of Jewish migrations from the Middle East and North Africa, draw on frameworks such as "the 'emotional turn', the 'spatial turn' and the 'mobilities turn' […] to reconsider how migration stories are narrated, remembered, and silenced, and how

these processes are spatialized through texts, artworks, embodied memory, and performance" (Moreno; Rossetto; Galilee 2025, VIII).

Migration scholars have indeed emphasized gender-specific coping strategies during migration, highlighting how women often adapt more effectively to challenging circumstances (Franz 2003; Korać 2003). Memories of their childhood lead MENA Jews to vividly recall how their parents navigated these challenges differently (Luzon 2017; Mishal 2022; Shlaim 2023), grappling with the "expectations of recognition and its absence" (Markussen 2020, 1446). Recognition is a "vital human need" (Taylor 1992, 26) and a crucial asset for intersubjective identity formation (Honneth 1995). Individuals build their intersubjectivity through love-, legal-, and solidarity-based relationships and, through them, grow in self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, respectively (Honneth 1995; Markussen 2020). How, therefore, did MENA Jewish men address the challenge, recurrent in migratory processes, of downward mobility and the "drop in wealth, status and recognition" (Jansen 2008, 186; Al-Rasheed 1992)? Fathers, in particular, faced profound challenges related to "misplaced masculinities" (Jansen 2008). As Sami Michael's powerful opening scene echoes, many MENA Jews experienced migration as a moment of both promise and rupture – and thus remember the struggle of men, especially fathers, to establish themselves in their host countries, whether in Israel, Europe, or elsewhere. Remarkably, many of these men, despite not being biologically old, were considered too aged to adapt to their new circumstances. The body became the place where this struggle materialized, resulting in severe consequences, including depression and, tragically, death.

Building on these ideas and cross-disciplinary readings, *Middle Eastern and North African Jewish Masculinities* aims to advance the evolving terrain where Jewish migrations across the Middle East and the Mediterranean intersect with gender studies (Dahan-Kalev 2001; Motzafi-Haller [2012] 2018; Oppenheimer 2014) and it does so by specifically delving into the understudied realm of masculinities.

3 Literary Generations

The representation of Mizrahi masculinity in Hebrew literature has undergone numerous transformations over the years, particularly with increasing migration of MENA Jews to Israel in the 1950s. While the Ashkenazi-Western-Israeli male figure has been the subject of extensive scholarly discussion, the genealogy of Jewish-Mizrahi masculinity remains largely absent from literary research (see discussion on Mizrahi masculinity: Berg 1996; 2005; Ben Haviv 2002; Shimoni 2008; 2018; Alon 2011; Oppenheimer 2014; Shabat Nadir 2001). Increasingly, scholars trace the connections between pre- and

post-1948 Jewish-Arabic writing and other literary and artistic expressions of MENA Jews, situating them within transnational and multilingual networks rather than a solely national frame (Starr 2020; Behar; Evri 2020).

Studies addressing Ashkenazi–Jewish–Israeli masculinity often share the assumption that the discursive formation surrounding the Jewish male body, beginning in the early twentieth century, is structured between two poles. At one pole stands the ideological image of the Zionist body, symbolizing health, strength, naturalness, beauty, vitality, and youth. At the opposing pole stands the diasporic body, which the Zionist consciousness sought to reject and erase. The diasporic body image shaped within the framework of Western antisemitic culture penetrated the Jewish national self-critique articulated by Jewish intellectuals and writers since the nineteenth century (Raz Krakotzkin 1993; 1994; Khazzoom 1999). This figure represents a "delayed" or pathological Jewish masculinity, associated with illness, corruption, artificiality, ugliness, and weakness. According to this view, the pioneering life in the Land of Israel was expected to "correct" the "corrupted" corporeality of the Diaspora Jew. Hence emerges the centrality of the narrative of bodily rehabilitation within the Israeli cultural space, conceived as the locus where such restoration could take place (Oz 1997; Boyarin 1997; Gluzman 2008; Oppenheimer 2014).

Whereas such Israeli mainstream narratives – dominated by images of the "Ashkenazi Jew" – move between the figure of the weak "diasporic Jew" and that of the "new Jew", the sabra, the Mizrahi and Sephardi narratives may offer a different historiographical framework exemplified by several contributions in this volume. This perspective is better grasped against the backdrop of the generational frameworks shaping literary works about Mizrahi masculinity. By dividing the literary field into generations, it is possible to contextualize these works with greater nuance, considering the historical events, literary traditions, influences, and opportunities unique to each cohort.

A first category, referred to as "generation zero", can be divided into two main geographical and cultural spheres: writers who wrote in Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine; and, in parallel, Jewish writers in Muslim-majority countries, some under Western colonial rule (British or French) and others, later, under emerging local national regimes in the Land of Israel/British Palestine. Writers like Yitzhak Shami ([1923] 2015) and Yehuda Burla (1939) depict forms of masculinity situated within a changing world and grappling with tensions such as those between tradition and modernity, patriarchal society and emerging matriarchal shifts, or tradition and personal desire and love.

These representations of masculinity often encounter moments of crisis brought about by the transition to modern society and the

subsequent decline in male authority within the family structure. Jewish writers born in Arab countries, such as Egypt and Iraq, often depicted Jewish masculinity as an integral part of the modern urban landscape. Orit Bashkin (2012), for example, argues that Jewish male identity in Iraq was shaped as part of a modern, urban, and Arab identity. Similarly, Lital Levy (2013) contends that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish intellectuals in Egypt and Iraq were involved in the Nahda movement (Arab cultural renaissance), took part in the Arab literary discourse, and developed models of modern, educated masculinity as part of local Arab national projects, rather than in subordination to European Jewish discourses. Jewish masculinity, in this MENA context, is portrayed as urban, educated, multilingual, rational, and modern, often embodied in the figure of the journalist, teacher, publicist, or clerk. This is a masculinity that seeks to participate in the new Arab cultural sphere, not to exist outside of it (Rejwan 2004; Somekh 2007; Naïm Kattan 2007).

The migration of Jews from Muslim-majority countries in the second half of the twentieth century – one of the most significant demographic transformations in modern Jewish history – also had a profound impact on literary poetics and creativity in general, and on the shaping of Israeli literature in particular. Writers who were born in countries of the MENA region before the establishment of the State of Israel (1948) and most of whom immigrated to Israel afterwards, are usually referred to as "the first generation" of MENA Jewish immigrant authors. At the time, Hebrew literature was written primarily by authors whose first languages were European (especially Russian, Yiddish, and German) and who were steeped in those literary traditions. Writers of this first generation depict in their works the hardships of immigration to Israel and the profound transformations in living conditions and social status that accompanied it (Berg 2005).[2] At the same time, Mizrahi masculinity was not represented solely by first-generation immigrant writers but also by the hegemonic Israeli literary canon. Literature scholar Batya Shimoni examines the representation of Mizrahi masculinity in the hegemonic Western-Israeli literature of authors such as Yigal

2 Israeli fiction by first-generation immigrants from Muslim-majority countries often explores their efforts to assimilate into Israeli society while highlighting ongoing discrimination against Mizrahi communities. Shimon Ballas's *The Transit Camp* (1964) depicts immigrants' attempts to gain rights and dignity amid bureaucratic obstacles and internal conflicts. Sami Michael's *More and More Equal* (1974) shows a Mizrahi man whose ambition to improve his social status through romance is thwarted by persistent inequality. In contrast, Eli Amir's *Scapegoat* ([1983] 1987) presents young immigrants adapting successfully to Israeli society despite cultural and religious tensions. Overall, these works illustrate the struggles of the first generation in balancing tradition with integration, often at the cost of traditional Mizrahi masculinity.

Mossinson, Yoram Kaniuk, and Amos Oz (Shimoni 2018). Shimoni argues that the literature of the 1950s and 1960s portrays Mizrahi masculinity in an ambivalent and threatening manner: on the one hand, as heroically fighting for the borders of the young state, and on the other, as a force perceived as threatening the cultural and social boundaries of the dominant Ashkenazi-Israeli identity (Shimoni 2018; see also Mendelson Maoz and Ben Yehuda in this volume).

The second generation, born in Israel and educated in Hebrew mainly during the 1960s and 1970s, was distanced from the Arab world and its cultural legacy. Raised under Zionist ideology as the "generation of the land" (*dor ba-aretz*), they were expected to help build the new state. Their education centred on early Hebrew literature and the Palmach generation's works, mainly Ashkenazi writers shaped by the 1948 War. During this time, the sabra – a native-born Israeli figure rooted in socialist, secular, male, and Ashkenazi ideals – became the national archetype, emphasizing veteran settlers over new immigrants (Oz 1997). Within this ideological landscape, second-generation writers depict Mizrahi masculinity through two opposing poles, both positioned as "others" in relation to the dominant narrative of the Western–Israeli sabra. Raz Yosef argues that hegemonic Israeli masculinity – Ashkenazi, heterosexual, and national – was constructed through the exclusion of Mizrahi masculinity. On one side, Mizrahi masculinity was perceived as primitive and hypersexual; on the other, it was viewed as effeminate, broken, castrated, and repressed (Yosef 2004). In this context, Dror Mishani contends that the Mizrahi body was perceived as a re-emergence of the repressed diasporic Jewish body, intruding into the Zionist-Israeli space. This binary system of imagery was powerful and persistent enough to position the Mizrahi body in a role analogous to that of the diasporic Jewish body (Mishani 2006). The Mizrahi body was portrayed as tied to an outdated, old, and religious culture, in contrast to the "Israeli body", associated with modernity, youth, and strength. The Mizrahi body was thus represented as the successor to the diasporic body: both were objects of rejection and corrective practices (Oppenheimer 2014).

The third generation in the chain of Jewish immigration from MENA countries to Israel marks the emergence of a significantly different underexplored masculine configuration (see Consoli in this volume). Despite the lack of scholarly works on the topic, it is evident, however, that the third generation is reclaiming its place within Israeli culture (Shely-Newman 2019). A striking example can be found in the protest poetry of the Ars Poetica group, particularly in the writing of Roy Hassan and Shlomi Hatuka, which signals a new phase in the Israeli cultural sphere: a Mizrahi masculinity with a distinctly visible presence – black hair and black beard – that is unapologetic and asserts its rightful place in Israeli culture. Hassan and Hatuka

highlight the persistent inequalities within Israeli society, but rather than internalizing the Western gaze directed at them, they reclaim Mizrahi identity and place it once again at the centre of cultural discourse.

Taken together, these generational trajectories show that MENA Jewish masculinity is not just a reflection of social reality or response to Ashkenazi-led narratives but an active force in shaping cultural belonging across generations. From the urban modernities of Baghdad and Cairo to immigrant neighborhoods and protest poetry in Israel, they trace an ongoing struggle between exclusion and self-assertion. In line with the spirit of this volume, these narratives position masculinity as a site of translation – between homelands, generations, and shifting cultural worlds.

Middle East and North African Jewish Masculinities: Bodies of Knowledge across Generations and Geographies seeks to shed light on the nuanced experiences of MENA Jewish men during their migration journeys and what hence unfolded, contributing insights to Jewish, migration and gender studies in the literature. The chapter sequence below shows how regimes of knowledge (e.g., Orientalism), state-building (e.g. Zionist remasculinization), migration and class, queer visibility, and post-memory together reconfigure 'being a man' across time and space.

4 Structure of the Volume

Nancy Berg's "*Abu banat*: The Mizrahi Father of Daughter/s" offers a cross-generational perspective that can serve as an introductory case for the volume's broader themes. Moving across a century of Hebrew fiction – from Yitzhak Shami (1888-1949), Shimon Ballas (1930-2019), and Sami Michael (1926-2024) to Orly Castel-Bloom (b. 1960), Ronit Matalon (1959-2017), and Shani Boianjiou (b. 1987), with a poetic detour through Vicki Shiran (1947-2004) – Berg traces the evolving figure of the Mizrahi father. As she notes, modern Hebrew literature has long been a literature of fathers and sons; yet the father of daughters – *abu banat* – reveals shifting patterns of paternal power. Early stories attempt to restore the patriarch's control, while later works invert the script: daughters speak, and fathers appear vulnerable, caring, or flawed. The patriarch thus moves from a sovereign ruler to a remembered and contested figure, his authority unsettled by class, migration, and ethnic stigma. In this literary lineage, qualities such as care, listening, and tenderness emerge as new measures of masculine strength.

Sarah Imhoff's chapter, "Neither the New Jew nor the Old Jew: 'Oriental' Jewish Masculinity in Zionist Texts", starts in the 1920s-40s, where British Mandate officials and Zionist ideologues imagined

men from "the East" as paradoxical: brawny, sun-hardened workers and yet culturally "backward". The chapter's disability studies lens makes legible how this double vision – useful bodies, suspect culture – sorted Sephardi men beneath "Ashkenazi normativity" and paved the way for later struggles over belonging and worth.

"Racing Pianos at the Harbour: Sephardi Jewish Masculinity Put to the Test" by Shai Zamir takes us from early Zionist discourse to the docks of 1930s Salonica and Haifa, where Sephardi post-Ottoman stevedores literally performed strength in public contests to secure immigration slots and maritime jobs. The "Mediterranean sailor" trope is here inhabited and tweaked – neither the effete figure of antisemitic fantasy nor the passive "Oriental", but modern, sea-seasoned, and strategic. In other words, this chapter helps us see how the same male body is re-coded as it crosses regimes: first as Levantine labour, then as Zionist pioneer, then as mythic proof that Jews can "conquer the port".

Adia Mendelson Maoz's chapter, "Beyond the Myth: Kaniuk's Critique of Jewish-Israeli Masculinity", examines Yoram Kaniuk's literary reworking of Israeli masculinity, particularly the sabra ideal, while shifting the lens from the battlefield in 1948 to the bohemian streets and jazz clubs of New York. Rather than treating Kaniuk's texts as simple autobiography, Mendelson Maoz shows how his fiction–memoir hybrids fracture the image of the heroic fighter through wounded bodies, post-traumatic memories and the figure of the wandering artist abroad. In this reading, the sabra ideal is neither fully rejected nor affirmed: it is exposed as unstable, shaped by trauma, migration, and melancholic wandering. New York becomes a key site where the "new Jew" meets the diasporic, insecure, sexually searching man, and where toughness is constantly undercut by vulnerability and failure. Read alongside Boyarin's notion of "unheroic" Jewish masculinity (1997), Kaniuk's work reintroduces gentle, bookish, and receptive male figures into Israeli literature, unsettling the familiar opposition between diasporic "weakness" and national "strength".

Haim Bitton's chapter, "Re-Masculinizing Immigrants: The Moroccan Troubadour Sliman El-Maghribi's Social Ballads", widens the scope into the 1950s transit camps of Moroccan migrants on their way to Israel; there Jewish Moroccan men find patriarchal authority and economic standing shaken. Ballads, jokes, and laments in Moroccan Judeo-Arabic turn the stage into a workshop of dignity-production in a familiar diasporic language. Here masculinity travels into a more vernacular performance: public weeping, satire, and communal laughter assemble a "fringe" masculinity that counters the sabra ideal without simply reversing it.

In "The Construction of Non-Ashkenazi Homosexual Masculinity in Israel", Dotan Brom and Yuval Yonay look at Israel in the 1970s,

when the sons of earlier Mizrahi immigrants grew up alongside two major shifts: Mizrahi rights activism and gay liberation. The chapter follows two groups – men who came of age before the 1970s and those who did so after – to show how Mizrahi gay men faced two kinds of stigma at once: ethnic prejudice and homophobia. Many were treated as "less-than men", yet they still built Mizrahi queer spaces in which to belong and be seen.

Omri/Hannah Ben Yehuda's essay, "Returning to Ben Hamo: Dror Mishani and the Demon of Israeli Literature", revisits Yehoshua Kenaz's famous belly dance scene in *Infiltration* (1986) through the lens of ethnic and gender politics. Engaging Dror Mishani's overlooked 2006 study on Mizrahi representation, Ben Yehuda shows how the scene's reception reveals the tensions shaping Israeli literary culture. The Mizrahi male body, he argues, becomes a site of subversive performance – its sensual visibility unsettling the boundaries of the national.

Erica Consoli's chapter, "Grandfathers, Fathers and Sons in Contemporary Mizrahi Poetry", further explores and complicates Mizrahi masculinities through the lens of generations and the chain of transmission. Her chapter provides a glimpse into the 2000s, when poets Almog Behar, Mati Shemoelof, and Shlomi Hatuka look past their fathers toward their grandfathers – the migrants who carried Arabic, prayer, and loss. Through post-memory they adopt a diasporic discourse inside Israel, crafting tender, multilingual masculinities that reclaim what assimilation repressed and teaching sons to inherit a language of feeling as much as a lineage. Here masculinity moves from "muscles" to memory: from public proof to intimate cultural transmission. Clifford's "routes" are audible in these poems, where Judeo-Arabic words, synagogue melodies, and family anecdotes circulate across generations as masculine resources.

"'The Great and Mighty Body of Writing': On the Writing Body in Sami Berdugo's *All Five of Us*" (2022), by Hadas Shabat Nadir, continues with the generation of Mizrahi writers in Israel. This study interrogates Sami Berdugo's novel *All Five of Us* through the theoretical construct of the "writing body", which synthesizes narrative poetics with embodied experience. Shabat Nadir contends that the writing body operates as a dynamic locus of trauma, concealment, affective intensity, and generative potential. The novel's disjointed narrative architecture reflects corporeal fragmentation, reconfiguring these ruptures into a mode of literary agency and subversive resistance.

In the appendix, we include a text by journalist Shirley Nigri Farber entitled "Memories from My Family's Migration from Lebanon to Brazil". Born in Rio de Janeiro, Nigri Farber grew up in a Lebanese Jewish household rich with Arabic language, music, and food. Her contribution explores the migration of Lebanese Jews to Brazil and Israel, weaving together family testimonies, immigration records,

and historical documents in relation to their migrants' masculinity, tracing how the journey is remembered primarily through the actions and responsibilities of men – fathers who led departures, brothers who secured work abroad – while women's experiences surface at the margins, highlighting the gendered ways in which migration stories are told and transmitted across generations.

Read together, these studies trace a long arc. They show how MENA Jewish masculinities travel across places, regimes, and generations – performed in labour and dance, remade in song and poetry, and reimagined in prose – revealing a diasporic, continually transforming field of meanings. The study of masculinities requires an openness to multiple perspectives and methodologies, as well as an attentiveness to the ways in which gender, generation, migration, and culture are inscribed on and expressed in and through the body. Only by engaging with this plurality of "bodies of knowledge" can we begin to appreciate the intricate realities of Sephardi, Mizrahi other forms of ethnically inflected masculinities in their historical and contemporary contexts: as they migrate, translate, and hybridize; as they move across empire, nation, and memory – even when framed against Zionist imaginaries of Jewish exile.

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