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**Getting away from the noise: Jewish-Muslim interactions & narratives in E1/Barbès**

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La Goutte-d'Or in Paris and Brick Lane in London have become iconic sites for public debates about integration and multiculturalism and, more recently, the place of Islam in Europe. The proper nouns La Goutte-d'Or and Brick Lane – as titles of popular representations of immigration, as Disneyfied paradigmatic spaces of diversity, as indices of inflated property prices, or as destinations for gastro-tourists looking for a taste of exotic diversity – have become synecdoches for wider cultural malaises around the place of cultural difference in the body politic. Intensive gentrification both capitalises on the cultural diversity of the areas and displaces it. Nostalgic narratives of ethnic succession (a romanticised Jewish immigrant past linked to a story of assimilation and success) compete with panicked narratives of Islamic proselytism and home-grown terror. Since 2000 the lived realities of Jewish-Muslim interactions in these areas have been overshadowed by geopolitical and ethnoreligious tensions, overdetermined by the Israel/Palestine conflict, the War on Terror, and national debates on extremism, integration and *laïcité*. All this creates a noisy media/political narrative, augmented rather than subverted by the gaze of the tourist-academic, obscuring the banality of everyday life experiences and intercultural and interreligious relationships in these two neighbourhoods.

To get away from the noise of national meta-narratives and to map such interactions both historically and ethnographically, this article sketches a rigorous study of the two areas and tracing encounters that cross established community and cultural boundaries by tracking both organic interactions and exogenously encouraged voluntarist relations. We do not argue that the two sites can be equated to each other – for instance, we note the very different migration histories (in Paris, a common Maghrebi origin links the main Jewish and Muslim populations of the neighbourhood, whereas in London the Eastern European background of the Jewish population and South Asian background of the Muslim population is part of what shapes them) and the apparently very different national philosophies of integration in France and Britain – but we show that similar forms of intercultural practices have emerged in them.

Specifically, we posit three modes of intercultural exchange which thrive on the streets and behind closed doors in our two sites: commercially-mediated interaction combining negative representations of the other with mundane intimacy; a voluntaristically staged and partially institutionalised intercultural or interfaith encounter, which draws in local elites; and an emerging but still fragile constituency for a more meaningful form of encounter partly motivated by an intergenerational and highly mediated form of nostalgia for an imagined 'authentic' past. Within constraints of space, we sketch out how these possibilities might be moulded, enabled and constrained by national and local state policies and by forms of urban restructuring.

Understanding intercultural encounter requires research methodologies for qualitatively investigating conviviality, cohesion and indifference in contexts of intense demographic, religious and linguistic diversity, revealing the granular texture of micro-scale sites but also

the transnational flows and historical traces present in them. The empirical claims on which this article are based are drawn from our parallel long-term ethnographic immersion in these two sites: intense anthropological fieldwork since 2002 in Paris and a more extensive but less intensive engagement with East London since 1991, between them totalling several hundred hours of fieldwork, over 200 formal and informal interviews, and considerable archival research.<sup>1</sup> When writing of the ethnographic experience of each author, we use the first person singular which refers to **E.** in Paris and **G.** in London. However, to break down the dichotomy between researcher and resident and so lend depth to description, this project works with and through meaningful local language that reflects lived reality. So instead of referring to ‘La Goutte-d’Or’ we use Barbès – or ‘Bès-bar’ in verlan (inverted French slang) – and similarly, instead of ‘Brick Lane’ we use Tower Hamlets (the name of the municipality) or the postcode E1 as familiar markers of self-reference. For residents of E1/Barbès, homes, family lives, socialisation and livelihoods cut across facile labels and often underline complex recurrent interreligious and intercultural interaction traversed by and interwoven with postcolonial histories and localised political and market relations. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the spheres of cultural, commercial and religious exchange and in the historical and relational overlap between Jewish and Muslim presences in the neighbourhoods.

### Barbès and E1

*A gauche, la rue de la Goutte-d’Or s’enfonçait, paisible, déserte, dans un coin de province, où des femmes causait bas sur les portes; à droite, à quelques pas, la rue de Poissonniers mettait un vacarme de voitures, un continuel piétinement de foule, qui refluaient et faisait de ce bout un carrefour de cohue populaire. Gervaise aimait la rue, les cahots des camions dans les trous du gros pavé bossué, les bousculades des gens le long des minces trottoirs, interrompus par des cailloutis en pente raide... (Zola 1868).*

*The Sunday Fair, so long associated with Petticoat Lane, ... is still vigorous; its glories were in full swing on the dull, gray morning when Moses Ansell took his way through the Ghetto... the throng was thickening momentarily. The vendors cried their wares in stentorian tones, and the babble of the buyers was like the confused roar of a stormy sea. The dead walls and hoardings were placarded with bills from which the life of the inhabitants could be constructed. Many were in Yiddish, the most hopelessly corrupt and hybrid jargon ever evolved. Even when the language was English the letters were Hebrew... modern banalities... in the sacred guise of the Tongue associated with miracles and prophecies, palm-trees and cedars... Moses stopped to read these hybrid posters... as he slouched along. (Zangwill 2009:51).*

La Goutte-d’Or was a peripheral arable site of a mere five windmills in the early nineteenth century. Today, this densely populated area is renowned for both its historic working class misery and the social mobility of its inhabitants (Breitman et al. 1988, p.30). The hustle, bustle, and constant change evoked by Gervaise’s description of the streets around rue de la Goutte-d’Or in Zola’s novel *L’Assommoir* (1877) remain a feature of the neighbourhood today. If Gervaise’s view of Barbès would have been populated by internal French migrants from Alsace and Brittany, by the early nineteenth century they were joined by Belgians, Italians, Spaniards and Jews from present-day Poland and Moldova, such as refugees of the Kishinev pogrom who would build the Kedouchat Levy synagogue in 1935. Since the mid-

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<sup>1</sup> The London ethnography is partly drawn from the Leverhulme Trust’s ‘Religious faith, space and diasporic communities in East London’ project, part of the Oxford Diasporas Programme, whose team included Nazneen Ahmed, Jane Garnett, Alana Harris, Michael Keith, Simon Rowe and Gil Toffel. For details on the methodology, see Ahmed et al 2015, 2016; Gidley 2015. For details on the methodology used in Paris, see Everett (2014; 2018).

twentieth century, the neighbourhood has come to symbolise demographic patterns of northern and, more recently, sub-Saharan African immigration to Paris (Pinçon 2008, p.31). By the 1950s, it was no longer rue de la Goutte-d'Or that referenced the ethno-religious heterogeneity of the neighbourhood but the boulevard Barbès. The neighbourhood's inhabitants, at least among themselves, thus became *Barbèsiens* or *de Bes-bar*. Today, referring to the neighbourhood as la Goutte-d'Or instead of Barbès distinguishes outsiders from insiders.

Similarly, the area around Brick Lane and Petticoat Lane in East London, as described by Israel Zangwill in the passage above, is the symbolic centre of London's garment sector, populated by a polyglot migrant population. Sephardic Jews from the Low Countries, French Protestant Huguenot refugees, Irish Catholic migrant workers and internal migrants from the countryside of England were joined in the late nineteenth century by larger numbers of Ashkenazi Jews fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe and seeking economic opportunity, such that by Zangwill's *fin de siècle* moment the area was seen as a Jewish ghetto. In much-rehearsed accounts of the East End, these Jews over time settled, moved up, moved out: assimilation and social mobility were accompanied by residential moves first to nearby Hackney and newer suburbs further East, and later Northwest to London's interwar Metroland. Confounding that chronology, a Bengali Muslim population lived among the area's Jews from the nineteenth century, as signaled by sites such as Mr and Mrs Roger's Ayah's home and job centre on the corner of India Street and Jewry Street in the 1890s, just west of Brick Lane, or Ayub Ali Master's seamen's café in Commercial Road in the 1920s and Shah Jalal Coffee House, also called the Ayub Ali Dining Rooms, at 76 Commercial Street (Ahmed et al 2015).

In the postwar period, black postcolonial migration grew, and after the violence of the Bangladeshi independence struggle of 1971 the area became as iconically 'Asian' (specifically Bengali) as it was once 'Jewish'. With a population drawn mainly from the Sylhet region, Brick Lane has been redubbed 'Banglatown' and made famous by Monica Ali's eponymous hit immigrant novel of 2003 and its film adaptation of 2007. While 'Brick Lane', like, increasingly, 'la Goutte-d'Or', draws tourists and leisure consumers, locals tend to use the postcode E1 (East 1, sometimes détourned by local youth as B1 – Bangladesh 1) or the municipality's name, Tower Hamlets.

Although it is received knowledge that Jews and Muslims have become increasingly estranged in contemporary France, one specificity of Barbès is that Maghrebi Jewish-Muslim relations remain the norm. As we will describe below, from within the dress shops along rue de la Goutte-d'Or – despite intergenerational shifts in these relationships predicated on a North African Jewish class-based assimilation into French society accompanied by the partial rejection of an Arab past – we can still see patterns of intercultural sociality that defy the idea of Jewish and Muslim cultures as fundamentally at odds. Similarly, in parallel to the received narrative of East London as a site where Bangladeshi Muslims have replaced Jews, who no longer feel welcome in the area, there also remains a subterranean sociality, often obscure to the tourist or academic gaze.

### **From mongrel subjectivities to suspect communities**

The migrant quarter as a site of mixing and creativity – exemplified by the connections between the Jewish past and Muslim present – has become part of the DNA and brand of the two areas. This element of the sites was foregrounded in the 1990s in a very particular cultural moment. For a brief time, reaching a high point between 1994 and 2000, the two

areas were the stages for an assemblage of vital cultural and theoretical developments. Both neighbourhoods witnessed the phenomenon of eclectic ‘sound-systems’ (bands without fixed membership) such as Asian Dub Foundation in London and L’Orchestre Nationale de Barbès (ONB) in Paris, both associated with home-grown second generation youth. Barbès was an epicentre of the vital French hip-hop and raï genres. Its most notable musicians are the rap collective Scred Connexion (from the verlan *scred/di-scret*) established in 1994 and the *châabi* collective Orchestre Nationale de Barbès (ONB) established in 1996. *Châabi* was a music genre born out of a shared cultural scene in turn of the century Algiers, put on the ‘world music’ map later by artists such as the Jewish pianist Maurice El Medioni. Riffing on the social critique of early 1990s gangsta rap, Scred Connexion took the motto *jamais dans la tendance mais toujours dans la bonne direction* (never in trend but always on the right track) from the song ‘*L’Impertinent*’ by Fabe (perhaps the most widely recognised rapper of the collective), which gives a sense of how they wanted to use hip-hop as a vehicle for social good rather than self-enrichment.

The ethos of their music-making was to produce independently and write collectively. Still today several members of the collective tour France conducting writing workshops with young people from poor neighbourhoods. Like Scred Connexion, ONB are a collective of evolving membership. Multi-ethnic in makeup, their sound, somewhere between the Maghrebi genres of gnaoua, raï, and chaâbi, mixing North African (Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian) and Spanish peninsula sounds, represent what a ‘national’ orchestra of Barbès might sound like. Their name, like Scred, is both suggestive and subversive—nothing is uniquely national about their makeup or sound—keying in to a mode of diasporic being that expresses difference in a post-racial, convivial capacity, as discussed by Paul Gilroy (2004). This fusion was also embodied in the triumphant 1998 World Cup *Black-Blanc-Beur* French football team (featuring the goal-scoring of Zinedine Zidane, the child of Harki migrants from North Africa to France – see Back et al 1998), and the similarly zeitgeisty 1995 film *La Haine*, written and directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, in which the characters Saïd, Vinz, and Hubert represent a young French group respectively of Arab, Ashkenazi Jewish, and African descent.

At exactly the same moment in the UK, British-born predominantly South Asian artists developed musical genres that mixed emergent electronic forms, such as drum and bass, and African-American and African-Caribbean forms, such as ragga, with idioms from the Indian subcontinent, such as bhangra (Sharma et al 1996). The scene was termed ‘the Asian Underground’, from the subtitle of the 1997 compilation album released on Mango records by East London-born table player Talvin Singh, *Anokha: Soundz of the Asian Underground* (Singh 1997). Anokha music nights at the Blue Note in Hoxton Square, East London, hosted by Singh, Indian-born, London-raised Sweetie Kapoor and resident DJ Sam Zaman (aka State of Bengal), provided a platform for bands such as Joi and Asian Dub Foundation (ADF, whose rapper, Deeder, was Zaman’s brother) and DJs such as DJ Pathaan and Earthtribe. Joi’s Deep Asian Vibes nights at the Bass Clef were a street away in Hoxton, and Swaraj club night (its name taken from the Hindi for self-rule), was at 93 Feet East on Brick Lane. Asian DJs also had residencies in nearby bars such as Herbal in Shoreditch and the Vibe Bar in Brick Lane.

DJ Ritu co-founded Outcaste Records in 1994, which recorded multi-instrumentalist Nitin Sawhney. ADF and Sawhney were both nominated for the prestigious Mercury Music Prize in 1998; Singh’s debut solo album *OK* won the Prize in 1999. ADF performed a live re-score of *La Haine* at the Only Connect festival in London in 2001. State of Bengal’s ‘IC 408’

(State Of Bengal/Future Soundz Of India 1998), a collage of Hindi film singing and drum and bass rhythms, opening with the flight announcement for Indian Airlines flight 408 to Calcutta, Bengal, was the Anokha club anthem, exemplifying the ‘outernational’ or diasporic sensibility of the scene (Alexander and Kim 2014, p.355). This diasporic sensibility (prioritising ‘routes’ rather than authentic ‘roots’, in the terminology borrowed by Paul Gilroy from Iain Chambers) was also grounded in the East End’s local (what we might call ‘rooting’ – see Gidley 2003). Just as Paris bands of this moment emphasised locality – the Barbès in L’Orchestre Nationale’s name or the postcode for Sarcelles evoked in Ministère AMER’s album *95 200* – so songs by ADF and Joi Bangla namechecked local locations and postcodes (Huq 2006:21).

And, not dissimilar to the ethos of Scred connexion, many of the artists in the scene had been youth workers, working with second and third generation Bangladeshi youngsters around Brick Lane, and drawing on their syncretised cultural expression. The League of Joi Bangla Youth was a collective set up in 1983 to promote Bengali culture to East London youth, which launched the Joi Bangla sound system and then the band Joi (Ullah 2017). Minto, of Joi Bangla, had been active in the Bangladesh Youth Movement (BYM) based in Cannon Street Road, Wapping, and worked in the Montefiore Centre (an originally Jewish settlement house) for the Federation of Bangladeshi Youth Organisations (Swadhinata Trust 2006a). Aniruddha Das (Dr Das) and John Pandit of ADF ran workshops at Community Music House at Farringdon (where Deeder Zaman was a young user) before ADF started their own youth work arm, Adfed (Swadhinata Trust 2006b).

As with the Barbès scene, there was a minor Jewish presence in the Asian Underground scene. The mainly Jewish band Oi Va Voi, signed to the key Asian Underground record label Outcaste, had the same soundsystem sensibility and drew on similar drum and bass idioms, but hybridised with klezmer and other Jewish forms (Oi Va Voi 2003). Oi Va Voi recorded with MoMo (Music of Moroccan Origin), a London-based North African collective (Oi Va Voi 2001; Oi Va Voi and Momo 2001), and featured alongside Asian artists such as Nitin Sawhney on the influential *Futuro Flamenco* compilation which explored the connection between the Asian Underground sound and Iberian/Maghrebi flamenco traditions (Various Artists 2002). The Jewish-led YaD Arts collective, whose strapline was ‘Radical Diaspora Culture’, hosted ‘East End Sound Clashes’, featuring both Jewish and Asian acts.

Much as Gilroy expressed his suspicion of the biological metaphor of hybridity because it implies two anterior ‘pure’ forms, Anokha’s Sweetie Kapoor rejected the idea of ‘fusion’ in favour of a more multiplex image of syncretism: ‘Anokha style borrows from many cultures... It is international rather than just a combination of Asian and British. I don’t believe in this fusion thing’ (Sherwood 1997). The East London and Barbès artists were influenced by a parallel body of work in social theory, which in turn reflected on and celebrated their music. Theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Avtar Brah, Gilles Deleuze, Clifford Geertz, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall and Gayatri Spivak developed a series of theoretical interventions around diaspora, creolisation and hybridity in this period, which sought to decentre and uproot fixed essentialist narratives about identity and instead highlight the fluid, syncretic, impure, mongrel and emergent dimension of new ethnicities and transnational cultural formations. This ‘diaspora turn’ impacted too on how Jewish identity was theorized in the 1990s, as symbolised for example in the key text of the new Jewish cultural studies, *Modernity, Culture, and ‘the Jew’* (Cheyette and Marcus 1998) with its foreword and afterword by Bhabha and Gilroy. The diaspora turn in theory and the raï/Asian underground moment also found resonance with a brief opening of both UK and to a lesser extent French

policy-making to ideas about multicultural (Bozec and Simon 2014, Jensen and Gidley 2014), as signified for example by the celebration by the UK's Blair government in of a mongrel 'cool Britannia' or the state-supported Parkeh report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain, which proposed a conceptualisation of the UK as a 'community of communities'. At the same time, as Mavrommatis (2006, 2015) has shown, the exoticism, coolness and glamour around the scene undoubtedly contributed to rising property values and perceived safety of the area that would later squeeze the cheap, underground spaces where intercultural innovation could take place.

This moment closed in the early years of the current century. Although innovation continued, shifts in musical culture and cultural politics meant the space of possibility opened by these scenes was no longer present. The Second Intifada of 2000 triggered a spike in antisemitic hate crimes in the UK and France that would be repeated with successive intensifications of the Israel/Palestine conflict. The 9/11 attacks and subsequent 'homegrown' terror attacks led to a War on Terror in which British and French Muslims, and Islam in general, became the focus of mainstream moral panics. Urban and periurban violence (England's northern milltowns in 2001, the French *banlieues* in 2005) did not affect our two specific sites directly, but made their inhabitants symbolically central to debates about integration and security. The brief experiments with commitment to multicultural and diversity in French and British policy-making came to an end as mainstream politicians from across the spectrum hurried to declare multiculturalism dead; new policy discourses around community cohesion, shared values and renewed republicanism became dominant in both countries.

The mainstream of the London and Paris Jewish communities increasingly withdrew from the multicultural project into the perceived security of mono-ethnic Jewish communal space, increasingly synchronising diasporic Jewish identities with the Zionist project and a putatively Judeo-Christian or Republican Euronationalism defined against a Muslim other, while the range of hybridised identities available to French- and British-born postcolonial subjects increasingly crystallised around a more monolithic resistant Islamic identity.

By 2011 far-right groups had seized upon both the issue of 'visible Islam' in new construction (or renovation) and street prayer in E1 and Barbès, a dominant narrative of securitised and insecure communities suspicious of each other (in both communities and overdetermining frame of war on terror) had become prevalent. In France at least, there has been sufficient change in public opinion for the closure of an important landmark of migration, the predominantly Senegalese mosque El Fath on rue Polonceau, perpendicular to rue de la Goutte-d'Or, to be received with indifference (see Milne REF). Amongst liberal circles some relief came in light of its replacement by l'Institut des Cultures d'Islam (ICI), notwithstanding the project as a whole being hotly debated. But in reality, given the lapse between 2011 and 2013 when the prayer room on the second ICI site opened, the central mosques of Barbès had been marginalised to an army barracks on the *periphérique* (the circular highway that surrounds inner Paris); the symbolism has not been lost on many scholars and commentators (see Fernando 2014 in particular). Similarly, in E1 the year 2011 and again 2013 saw the far right English Defence League attempt to march on the East London Mosque intensifying community tensions in the area, capitalising on persistent panics about Islamists rendering E1 a 'no-go area' for Jews and other non-Muslims, or even a patrolled 'Sharia zone'. While such discourses make the Jews remaining in the area increasingly insecure, the noise around these narratives contributes to the securitisation and surveillance of local Muslims.

It is now routinely observed that Jewish and Muslim communities in contemporary London and Paris suffer from acute racism towards one another (Arkin 2013; Jikeli 2015; Egorova and Ahmed 2017). As such the majority constituencies of these groups – in France both of North African and predominantly working people (particularly upon arrival to the country), and in the UK from different geographical locations but initially from similar migrant economic locations – have increasingly self-segregated in line with an increased exposure to a discourse of securitisation. Yet, as we show in the following sections, sites of co-presence and interaction persist, hidden in the shadows away from the tourist gaze in Barbès and E1. In the following section, we show how a close-up ethnographic lens on micro processes of interactions bely national discourses of parallel lives. We focus on three modes of interaction (all ambivalent, in different ways) visible in our sites: a form of commercially mediated mundane exchange, a top-down institutionalised mode of intercultural/interfaith association, and an emergent form of nostalgic re-appropriation.

### **Textiles, beigels and msemen!**

The Asian Underground scene mentioned in the previous section was grounded in the retail and wholesale garment outlets that flourished in the area around the nightclubs. The father of Haroon and Farook Shamser (Joi) ran a sari shop at 55 Brick Lane, E1 (now Ambala Sweets, a couple of doors from the Brick Lane mosque), which also sold Indian instruments and Hindi 45s (Perrone 1999). The *Independent* article cited above noted:

*Among the biggest, with more than 10,000 saris in stock, is the Modern Saree Centre (the spelling of Saree is variable) in Brick Lane. Owner Bodrul 'Tito' Mazid says, 'In these three square miles there are over 48 sari shops. I don't want to boast, but we have everything from a pounds 4.99 polyester chiffon sari to a pounds 400 pure gold embroidered, satin wedding sari here' (Sherwood 1997)*

The garment and leather trade, and to a lesser extent the food sector in the same areas, have provided platforms for exchange and mundane interdependence and intimacy between minorities often imagined as antagonistic. In this section we discuss such spaces, and argue that the form of sociality present there is ambivalent, because it co-exists with, rather than breaks down, negative representations of the other, and these representations occasionally flare into tension and violence, exemplifying the 'metropolitan paradox' identified by Les Back: that the most intimate forms of proximity are often accompanied by the most brutal forms of violence and exclusion.

Barbès is well known for its textile industry, from Tati to the Maghrebi dress shops on rue de la Goutte-d'Or that sell wares for Muslim ritual celebrations (marriage *matzawwaj* and circumcision *l-khitan*) — often transformed into telephone shops — commonly owned or overseen by Maghrebi Jews. These are sites of commercial exchange predominately between Maghrebis both Jewish and Muslim. In E1, similarly, Jewish commercial space was also re-activated by the Syhleti community, particularly the garment and leather industries.

Along rue de la Goutte-d'Or and beside the travel agencies promoting cheap trips to northern and sub-Saharan Africa, there are several North African Jewish run telephone stores that sell telephone cards, prepaid SIM cards, mobile telephones and telephone accessories. Many of these stores were previously North African dress shops that were converted into telephone stores in the 1990s. Four Jewish-run shops continue to sell *les robes orientales* (Maghrebi or North African dresses). They sell of fabrics (hereon 'textiles' to render the more all-encompassing French '*le textile*'), dresses, and accessories there.



Godefroy El Khiyat was one shopkeeper in particular with whom I would become very close during my time of intensive fieldwork between 2011 and 2016, and with whom I would share *msemen* or *rghayf* (different names, same cake) with honey and drink hot sugary milky coffee (*b'hlib*) bought from Golden Agah café when there was a lull in trade. During these times Godefroy would leave me in charge of his shop, since in addition to buying us food he would also run errands such as taking dresses to the seamstress or going to speak with friends and family in adjacent textiles and telecoms shops. The history of the Franco-Maghrebi textile and garment industry, anchored in la Goutte-d'Or through the sale of traditional North African garments, made from the fabric traded in the more central le Sentier district, links a North African material culture and daily artistic practices, sometimes referred to as 'craft': fabrics and dresses such *takshaytat* (traditional North African wedding dresses) embroidered by Jews are sold to Muslims for weddings and other life-celebrations.

The vast majority of the shops' trade is conducted with Maghrebi Muslims, and the Maghrebi Jewish shopkeepers often employ North African Muslims. These employment practices follow a pattern of indigenous consensus in colonial and immediately post-independence North African cityscapes (Tapia 1986; Simon 1998). In the dress shops on *la Goutte-d'Or* close working relationships ran deepest with Muslim colleagues who ensure that the shops remain open during holidays (religious and otherwise). Perhaps more intimate still are long-standing relationships, vital for the smooth running of these shops, with various local Algerian Muslim seamstresses. One in particular, Mme Belkaïd, a veritable *ma'allma* (virtuoso artisan), worked hand in hand with many of the shopkeepers, including Godefroy, providing assistance with elaborate dress changes beyond the embroidery capacities of Godefroy and his near family, relating, for example, to frills, lace, or extra intricate embroidery.

Historian Emily Gottreich makes the point that the hyphenated ascriptive and self-ascriptive Arab-Jew label reflects a strong historical current of North African pluralism both ethno-religiously and in terms of heterodoxy (2008:445). The artistic and material culture of *le textile* bolster this claim through their transnational and intergenerational transmission. Godefroy explained to me that *le textile* and Maghrebi dress-making had run in his family for generations. These skills genealogically inhere within his Maghrebi subjectivity, from his forbearers in the Moroccan high-Atlas mountains, to his grandparents in Marrakesh, through to his own passage with a family from Casablanca to Paris in the late 1970s. In both craft and commerce, Barbès reinforces the two-way understanding binding together Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi migratory trajectories and the plural cultures radiating from these. Hence these shops continue to demonstrate an historically anchored interreligious Arab syncretism, stitching together sentiments of solidarity and demonstrating co-operation, familiarity, and cordiality between Jews and Muslims from North Africa.

Such commercially mediated intercultural traffic between Jews and Muslims is less common in London's textile sector, but it remains real. In the period from the end of WWII until recently, Jewish-Asian co-working was the norm in the area. A 2018 oral history interview with a Sylheti garment worker who arrived in the area in 1974, conducted by the Survey of London, included these details:

*[The house] used to be owned by Jewish people, very rich people. They used to collect the rent from the landlord who used to come... the Jewish people, they used to own this place. Our Asian people, like Bangladeshis and the Pakistani or Indian people, they used to work for the Jewish people, Jewish firms. The main trade was in the control of the Jewish people. Indian people or the Bangladeshi people used to work directly in the factories or [if] the factory was owned by the Asian people, Bangladeshi people, the supplies used to be [by] Jewish people.*

*Slowly gradually, these Asian people tried to expand their businesses and tried to do their own, establishing their own businesses and trade slowly, gradually...The Turkish people also started coming in, getting in to this trade...*

*[We] rented a place, and also rented machines from the machine shop. Rented, because we were not able to buy it and own it. I was doing it until 1989. That many years, you know? Then we changed from clothing to leather. Again, we used to work for a Jewish person, big boss. He used to supply the leather and we used to cut, make and trim...*

*And I did work up to 2004 in tailoring and then I started working for a firm called 'Al Furniture' that is owned by a Jewish person. I worked for them up to 2012.*

There is still one Jewish-run garment business on Brick Lane, Epra Fabrics at 52-56 Brick Lane. Its owner, Leo Epstein, is a locally-born Orthodox Jew, who continues to staff this wholesale business with his son Daniel. Interviewed in 2011, Epstein noted the conviviality of the area: 'We all get on very well... As one of my Bengali neighbours said to me, "On Brick Lane, we do business not politics."' And: 'Many of the Asian shop owners come in from time to time and say, "Oh good, you're still here! Why don't you come and have a meal on us?" You can't exist if you don't get on with everybody else' (The Gentle Author 2011). In ethnographic conversations with Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in the sector, it became clear that these kinds of patterns are widespread. Off Brick Lane, there are more Jewish garment businesses, as well as businesses owned or part-owned by Jews and staffed by Bengalis, businesses where the landlord or freeholder is a descendent of a former Jewish garment trader on the site, and Bengali businesses in regular trade with Jewish businesses further up or down the supply chain.

If the garment and leather trades sustain sites of behind-the-scenes Muslim-Jewish commercial sociality, the food business does so too. Mid-way along the rue de la Goutte-d'Or, the Golden Agah is a large café-diner selling a selection of North African *shorbat*, salads, couscous, *ghrifat* and *msemen* for people living and working locally. Dozens of men sit sipping coffee and mint tea in groups outside the café and along the street. The Djerbian 'kosher' grill (known as Djerba Casher or 'Chez Guichi' — the restaurateur's name is Yaacob Saghoun, Yaacob being the Hebrew for Jacob, cognate with the Guy or Guichi) is a popular Jewish-run restaurant in Barbès servicing local Jewish shopkeepers but also a 'mixed' majority Jewish and Muslim clientele. The staff at Chez Guichi are either Jewish or Muslim. For example Miloud and Séidou, who are Muslim, both clean, and occasionally wait tables. Guichi's specialities are his grilled meats that he and Dov, his old friend from Djerba, handle and cook, behind the scenes, Khadija and Fatima prepare couscous, including the famous Tunisian fish one, and assorted salads called *kemia*. Like Miloud and Séidou, they appear only from time to time and remain in the background.

Similar patterns can be seen on Brick Lane in London E1. The 24-hour Beigel Bake on Brick Lane is widely seen as a key element in the 'patrimony' or 'folklore' of Brick lane. However, while Barbès remains largely off the tourist radar (although not for Parisians), it has become a 'cultural experience' to eat bagels purchased on Brick Lane, and it features in many London guidebooks, as do the Bangladeshi-run 'Indian' curry restaurants along the street and central to the commercial branding of "Banglatown". Although the conventional mythology of the East End relegates Jewishness to the past, the most iconically and visibly contemporary Jewish presences on the street are relatively modern, although yellow-fronted Beigel Shop at 155 Brick Lane claims to have been opened in the 19th century, the white-fronted Beigel Bake at 159 Brick Lane, locally considered to be more "authentic", was only opened in 1974; it was founded by Asher and Sammy Cohen, Israeli migrants, who had previously worked for an older brother at the Beigel Shop. The manager since 1976, Sammy Minzly, known locally as Mr Sammy, told me he was from Yemen, where his first language was Arabic, and that he

learnt Yiddish to learn the bagel trade when he came to London. While the women serving customers are mainly Irish, in the kitchens many of the (generally male) staff are North African Muslims, with whom Sammy converses in Arabic and French. In contrast, the (usually female) front-of-house staff are mainly non-Jewish and non-Muslim English or Irish. Thus the bagel bake, while iconically “Jewish”, and indeed specifically Ashkenazi, from the perspective of the tourist gaze, turns out – like Chez Guichi – to represent a more complex identify formation, in this case drawing in Sephardic Jews, Arabic culture, intercultural contact and multiple migration routes.

The street’s shopkeepers told me that the reason that Guichi and Dov don’t have the Beth Din certificate of kosher status is that in Djerba Jews would self-accredit, a practice not acceptable to contemporary French Jewish orthodoxy. This resonates with the way in which some East End Muslims have told me they will eat kosher food if no halal food is available (a practice with precedent in the earlier period of Muslim settlement in the area, when there were no halal butchers and the founders of what became the East London Mosque habitually used kosher butchers – see Ahmed et al 2016), or the way in which some East London Jewish or Muslim food businesses seek certification (or to use certified products in their supply chain) from the other faith in order to maximize their markets, drawing them into intimate commercial relationships with suppliers but also clerics of the ethno-religious other. A priori assumptions about the religious dietary requirement as orthopraxical are confounded by a vernacular market logic and messy quotidian pragmatism that enable a common maghrebicité or East Endness to trump the orthodoxies of identitarian belonging.

These backroom commercially mediated relations in the garment and food sectors have happened despite rather than because of the prevailing national models of integration in the two countries – in Britain a shift from loose assimilationism to a patchy multiculturalism and back, in France an assimilatory republicanism tempered by more openness to pluralism at a local level (Bozec and Simon 2014, Jensen and Gidley 2014). They take a banal, spontaneous form.

But these forms of interaction are not just banal; they are also ambivalent. Many of the characters we have discussed turned out in our ethnographic encounters to be personally ambivalent about difference, often articulating negative representations of the various others with whom they daily relate, despite their positive interactions, sometimes spilling into racialising banter with customers that can exceed and upset the delicate choreography of mundane conviviality. That is, the intimacy and trust required for deep relations of interdependency are perfectly compatible with less positive representations of the others.

The quotidian patterns of ambivalent intercultural intimacy in these commercial sites are precarious when national contexts and state practices overdetermine or undermine the commercial base on which this superstructure is erected. These mundane interactions flourished most in a period before urban change increased the land value of the garment districts and (especially in London) brought both an in-flow of tourists, leisure consumers and gentrifiers that is destabilising long-established patterns of conviviality as well as triggering changes of use from textile workshops to upmarket eateries. And, as we will see in the next section when the 2011 closure of mosques around Barbès drained clients from local businesses, this signalled a larger shift in the relationship between state, religion and ‘culture’.

### Interfaith from above

Until 2011 Jewish-Muslim commercial interdependence in Barbès was supported by the practice of Islamic prayer—the local mosques, El Fath (majority Senegalese) on rue Polonceau and Khalid Ibn Walid (majority Algerian) on rue Myrha were closed—indirectly increasing trade to the Jewish-owned shops, particularly on Friday. Also, the nearby predominantly Muslim Maghrebi food market, stretching from la Chapelle to Barbès, held on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, not to mention the *marché des voleurs* on rue Caplat and the young North African hawkers, all strengthen the flow of customers to the shops on rue de la Goutte-d’Or.

In the period of our parallel ethnographies, both areas saw a shift from the kind of informal grassroots devotional practices associated with these sorts of mosques to an ideologically driven or voluntaristically staged interculturalism that formally narrates and curates intercultural contact in the urban areas. Meanwhile, as the generations turn, those with personal memory of migrant journeys to the area, who have built up the kind of intimate trust described in the previous section, pass their businesses on to a homegrown generation with different (often faith-based) identity orientations. These generations have been shaped by patterns of insecurity and securitisation described above, undermining the ambivalent intimacies that spontaneously arose in the garment and food sectors. As the communities are increasingly seen as antagonistic, local and national states increasingly invest in formal attempts to stage possibilities for positive contact.

Until recently, formal interfaith initiatives were relatively rare among recent Jewish and Muslim populations in France (see Downing 2016) and in the UK tended to be the province of more securely established faith communities than the working class immigrant congregations of the East End. In the last decade, though, interfaith initiatives have been increasingly promoted as a way to break down the more antagonistic Jewish-Muslim relationship. In Paris, this is the model for the Institut des Cultures d’Islam, set up as an Islamic arts and culture centre and to replace local prayer spaces, or at least to assuage the numbers of faithful for *jumoua*’ prayers on Fridays (see Milne REF). However, such voluntaristic endeavours to bring about encounter have on the one hand become compromised by indirect state-sponsorship through the huge investment in countering ‘radicalisation’ and on the other, all too often, rely on a discursively problematic narrative that reifies religious identities to give a moral leverage to some groups over others or that is perceived to be paternalistic in trying to teach tolerance to Muslims.

Our London example of ‘interfaith-from-above’ is the work of the East London Mosque, on Whitechapel High Street, just south of Brick Lane (see also Ahmed et al 2015). After the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, the mosque was a target for Islamophobic reprisals, but has also been the focus for political solidarity with representatives of the transnational Islamic *ummah* perceived to be under attack in the global war on terror. In 2010, the mosque and its neighbouring synagogue, Fieldgate Street, signed an interfaith statement on community cohesion, noting the difficulty of overcoming these tensions, but also celebrating local histories of co-existence that pointed to more positive possibilities:

*We are aware that the tragic situation in the Middle East and the devastating human consequences gives rise to strong feelings. We are, however, proud of the history of positive relationships between the diverse communities in our borough, which have in the past helped us remain resilient and unified in difficult times (Tower Hamlets Inter-Faith Forum 2010).*

The mosque’s 2015 Ramadan fundraising focused on the acquisition of the Fieldgate Street synagogue, and £400,000 was quickly raised through a televised campaign on a British Bengali-language satellite channel. The mosque’s website announced it had been successful

in purchasing the building, stating that ideas for its use would involve ‘a balanced development that fits with ELM ethos and history, which include community use, preservation of heritage, interfaith use – as well as to help generate income for the mosque’s sustainability and its debt repayment’ (East London Mosque 2015). Clearly, this language is framed in a way that calibrates well with national agendas around interfaith contact and community cohesion.

The former synagogue space re-opened as the Zakat Centre two years later. Although the architecture of the mosque was designed to create a relationship with the synagogue and the structure of the synagogue was retained, its devotional furniture was removed and its external visibility has been diminished by a new shopfront. There is a tension between the official interfaith and heritage conservation role pitched towards state actors and the daily reality of functioning as a monolithically Muslim space.

Each of these sites of contemporary European Islam make claims to safeguard endangered local histories — Jewish for the ELM and Islamic for the ICI — indicating the complexity of working together on these projects either inter-communally or with local government that have different secular/religious prisms. In contrast to Paris, however, in London more grassroots religious spaces – mostly small Muslim congregations, but also the remaining synagogues in the area – have benefited from resources channeled through faith-based municipal programmes. This means that, despite demographic changes, Judaism continues to have a vestigial presence. In both neighbourhoods, away from the tourist gaze on Brick Lane and rue de la Goutte d’Or, locally rooted Jewish practice continues and, though discreet, demonstrates surprising levels of diversity.

In London, on Commercial Road and Nelson Street, in an area to the South of Brick Lane with particularly high concentration of garment and leather wholesalers and a low tourist footfall, two synagogues survive, the Congregation of Jacob and the East London Central, both formed in the early twentieth century and augmented by the amalgamation over the years of several smaller Eastern European hometown-based communities (Gidley 2013). Interestingly, both practise liturgies that combine elements of Ashkenazi and Sephardic tradition. Similarly, away from the hubbub of la Chapelle, the Kedouchat Levy synagogue, which was formerly eastern European, today has a predominantly North African attendance. At the same time, gentrification has brought some Jews (typically the grandchildren of the last generation to live in the neighbourhood) ‘back’ to the East End, revitalizing synagogues such as the formerly Dutch Sandy’s Row synagogue in Spitalfields. These demographic shifts, which both maintain and transform Yiddish and Maghrebi patrimony, ground the third form of intercultural contact to which we turn in the next and final section.

### **A return to new ethnicities: Intercultural nostalgia from below?**

In this final section, we raise the question of whether there is an emerging, if fragile, constituency for which the conceptualization of identity associated with the diaspora turn, discussed above, might resonate, grounding an alternative modality of Muslim-Jewish interaction in London and Paris.

In Paris, Godefroy’s daughters would often ask me what was of interest for me along the street and if I was not afraid of conducting interviews and observing interactions there. Representing a specific threat they informed me on repeated occasions in 2011 was the concentration of the Muslim faithful in the neighbourhood on Fridays. However, in opposition to this apparent fear of Muslims, perhaps related to the upward social mobility of

Godefroy's daughters—they had 'moved up and out of such working class neighbourhoods', they told me—other shop-owner children and grandchildren visiting their relatives' shops showed distinct attitudes. These were perhaps also socio-economically predicated as social difference had abstracted them from a shared Jewish-Muslim North African Arab past, but importantly, they did not reject such a connection. For example, Jonathan Quizgan, the grandson of the shop at the other end of rue de la Goutte-d'Or, would tell me that his presence—other than myself, he was the 'grandchild' that I would most often see in the street—derives from a curiosity for 'what came before' in North Africa; that is, by coming to see his grandmother, shopkeeper Michèle Quizgan, regularly, he wants to witness, as he puts it 'Jewish-Muslim' inter-relations played out *in situ* and mostly in Arabic, on the street and in the shops. Equally, at other times and in spite of those prejudices voiced against the neighbourhood, visits were made by second and third generations, that is, the children and grandchildren of Godefroy and Michèle, to enjoy Maghrebi food, particularly the Golden Agah's honey-coated pancakes bought and distributed amongst the shopkeepers for their families on Friday mornings. Often these were purchased for young relatives for Friday dinners or else as treats for occasions like birthdays.

In parallel to kind of emic curiosity that Jonathan and Zeroual demonstrated and with which I identified, the shopkeepers themselves also interact dynamically with a France-born Maghrebi Muslim clientele. Often, young, well-dressed, professional women would accompany their mothers and/or elderly female relatives to purchase dresses and accoutrements. As the shopkeepers were aware of the purchasing power of second and third generations, Godefroy would target these women, often traditionally dressed to a high standard (he, unlike me, could recognize expensive fabric), as they returned to purchase other dresses and accessories. In multiple instances, these women, who, like him, would seamlessly code-switch between Darija and French, appeared to be aware that the shopkeepers are Jewish and Maghrebi and would show signs of enjoying the *mise en scène* of jovial bartering by taking their time and speaking at length about the occasion in question (for which the dresses were to be bought). For these new generations, the desire to feel and perpetuate what would be officially known as voluntaristic *relations interreligieuses* (interfaith relations), appear to be connected to individualist and consumerist choices, a display or performance of being North African.

All the shopkeepers related their children's social mobility with great pride. As shopkeepers, already in the industry from before their arrival in Paris, it was made quite clear that the aspiration of their children to 'go beyond' dresses, embroidery, and textiles was important to them. Several quite simply beamed when they recounted that their children have become 'successful members of French society'. However, these elderly Jewish shopkeepers also acquiesced to a derided inferior indigenous-like status ascribed to them by their own children, accepting a form of Arab Other-ness as necessary to ensure the brighter future of the next generation.

In London, a similar pattern obtains. Younger generation Jews, often brought up one or two generations removed from the East End, have increasingly taken interest in the area's Jewish history. As well as the revitalization of Sandy's Row Orthodox synagogue mentioned above or the continued 'return' of new generations of North London resident Jews to the bagel shops of Brick Lane, an LGBT-friendly liberal Kehila (community) grows in nearby Hackney, the radical Jewish group Jewdas hosts anarchist Purim balls in East London; the Great Yiddish Parade of 2017 was a re-enactment of a Victorian immigrant protest march

with brass band and Yiddish song; Katsha'nes stages irreverent 'Cockney-Yiddish music hall' performances.

But, more strikingly, increasing number of young South Asian East Londoners from Muslim backgrounds are present at these events. As Amina, one young local woman of Syhleti background, told me, 'I am fascinated by the way that the local Jewish history seems to familiar for Bengali families who came here, and I love to experience a taste of that.' And as Rafi, from a similar background, said, 'We face the same racism and same shit they did, and I think it's really important to know about each other's culture.'

In 2010, an East London Sukkah, organized and attended by both Jewish and Muslim East Enders at a local urban farm, included halal catering from the mosque, klezmer music, and talks on local Jewish history. In 2016, there was a large local Muslim presence at the commemorative march for the Battle of Cable Street, celebrating a predominantly Jewish local anti-fascist victory of the 1930s. In 2017, local young Muslim women working through Muslim Aid's Abraham Initiative conducted a cleaning day at the Nelson Street synagogue.

These encounters are more spontaneous than those discussed in the previous session; organized from below, they escape the securitizing agendas of the local and national state. But, interestingly, they are predicated on nostalgia, on the transmission of selective memory of a Jewish history focused on migrant resistance. These examples, like the Paris examples discussed in this section, are nourished by an affective engagement with selectively drawn instances from an imagined heritage of Jewish-Muslim togetherness. They are also inextricable from patterns of gentrification and upward mobility, and are perhaps more accessible to the economically more secure homegrown Jews and Muslims (whether visiting from the suburbs or moving back to an increasingly expensive inner city) than to increasingly squeezed working class Muslim residents of the area.

## **Conclusion**

All of the three forms of intercultural encounter discussed in this article are ambivalent. The commercial interdependencies involve negative racialising banter and stereotyping as well as deep intimacy and trust. Voluntaristic interfaith-from-above is shaped by state agendas which essentialise the other and lock both communities into a relationship of suspicion even as they produce conviviality and meaningful contact. The emerging interculturalism-from-below is marked by nostalgia and a highly selective reading of local heritage.

Understanding them requires a more sophisticated account of the relationship between processes of gentrification and possibilities for interreligious/intercultural living together – gentrification (and the socio-economic diversity and cultural capital it brings to an area) can both enhance and undermine mundane practices of conviviality. The forms of encounter we described are moulded and constrained by urban restructuring, squeezed by rising property prices, but also renewed by population flows shaped by changing patterns of globalization and gentrification. But they all offer resources for hope that confound the pessimistic clash-of-civilisations narratives that dominate mainstream accounts of Muslim-Jewish relations in both countries.

More broadly, we hope our account has provided a template for understanding the lived experience and conditions of possibility for intercultural and interreligious encounter in urban contexts in France and the UK, despite the areas' manifest differences. We have sought to contribute to developing a *comparative lens* that would bring into focus the commonalities

and specificities of different national and municipal contexts, how neighbourhood-level dynamics reflect but also escape national models of integration, and how specific historical sediments, local narratives, urban morphologies, demographic conditions, migration trajectories, economic relations and municipal policies make a difference. In doing so, we have sought to overcome the sharp disciplinary and methodological divides that work to separate research on Jewish histories and cultures, Muslim communities, immigrant quarters, and postcolonial/minority ethnic contexts, by showing on how local historical memories are maintained despite demographic shift, how spaces are reinvested and revalued through this process, how intercultural encounters in sending contexts reconfigure relations in the arrival context, and how quotidian commercial, gastronomic and religious spaces sustain mundane encounter despite spectacular accounts of conflict.

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