

golden embroidery. And perhaps it is due to my mother that I so love and absorb western culture, East and West dwelt with us in mutual respect, and continue to live within me in peace, on condition that neither insult the other. I believe that in this too I am like my brothers. In our home we used to listen to Edith Piaf, and Maurice Chevalier was a regular visitor, but we also listened to Abdul Wahab as well as Adisi. Adisi has been forgotten, but when I was a child in Aleppo he was famous and well-loved. I used to sing his songs so often that they began to call me "The Little Adisi". I loved singing as a child, even in public.

A propos East and West. In 1975 I was in Paris and went to see the Twentieth Century Ballet of Maurice Bejar. I saw a wonderful piece called "Golestan" (The Rose Garden). This genius of a choreographer had fused a modern western element with an ancient Persian "Kana", using an orchestra he had brought from Iran playing on their original instruments – the result was stunningly beautiful. The blend of an ancient Persian musical work with modern western dance bore superb fruit, something quite new. The audience cheered with enthusiasm. Paris knows how to exploit the best of the encounter between cultures. Many of the greatest of Parisian artists, in all fields, including a number of Jews, do this consciously and with much success. The encounter between different, strange and distant cultures, is very fertile. Great cultures have been born as a result of such encounters, sometimes accompanied by friction and conflict.

In my parent's home there was a true encounter between cultures: East and West, Hebrew, Arabic and French cultures. My father had two suits of clothes, which can be seen in old photographs. He had a *tarbush* and an *umbaz* tied with a wide girdle, and he also had a western suit and bow-tie. His selection was made according to the company to which he had been invited, and the type of event. Mother always dressed in French clothes. She never wore oriental clothes, but always dresses that were made up at home according to journals from Paris, stylish hats and coats, with a great deal of tinkling gold bracelets, the sound of the orient, and perfumes and rouge direct from Paris.

The atmosphere was basically Levantine, but its degree varied from community to community, from one neighborhood to another and from house to house. It is too simplistic to assume that Levantinism has no content or interior. It merely emphasizes the shell, the facade, more than the interior. Let us take as an example the city of Paris which I have already mentioned. There they restore ancient buildings and put in modern, sophisticated plumbing. But a municipal law insists that the facade of the building be preserved as it always was. Only the facade is preserved; can this be called an uncultured phenomenon? The danger, of course, is that due to too much concern for the facade, for the external glitter, one may lean to the superficial, to falsity, pretence, hypocrisy; one may, but one does not have to. We must give the credit that is due to those Alliance schools which trained children to love Racine, Molière and La Fontaine, to love beauty and freedom, and which gave an education to nearly every Jewish child in the east.

The move to Israel was the realization of a great dream, but at the same time it was an awakening from that dream. The greatest wonder for the Jewish child from the Diaspora was a city wholly Jewish, entirely Hebrew – Tel Aviv. The experience of redemption, for me, focussed on the Hebrew language. But together with the joy of redemption, the intoxication of finally being in *Eretz-Yisrael*, there crept in the painful feeling that I was being looked down upon. True, this was done fondly, paternally. People would say: You don't look at all like a Syrian. Were you really born in Aleppo? It's hard to believe! You don't look . . . You don't sound . . . Yet the person who says such things, says them honestly, with good-

