



PROJECT MUSE®

"Rosy, White, and Clean Pages of History": Jojo Eskenazi's
"Moiz Plays" and the Politics of Contemporary Jewish Theatre
in Turkey

İlker Hepkaner

Comparative Drama, Volume 52, Number 3 & 4, Fall & Winter 2018, pp.
323-347 (Article)

Published by Western Michigan University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2018.0014>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/729542>

“Rosy, White, and Clean Pages of History”: Jojo Eskenazi’s “Moiz Plays” and the Politics of Contemporary Jewish Theatre in Turkey

İLKER HEPKANER

Introduction

Approximately 18,000 Jews currently live in Turkey, comprising one of the largest Jewish populations living within a Muslim majority society.¹ In this community, there are multiple amateur theatre groups, either housed in clubs open only to Jewish community members based in İstanbul or staging their plays under the auspices of the Jewish Community of Turkey (Türkiye Musevi Cemaati)² and the Chief Rabbinate. Despite its popularity among members of the community, contemporary Jewish theatre in Turkey has received little attention from scholars working on theatre in Turkey or on Jewish identity in theatre in national and transnational contexts. Among the Jewish theatre groups’ activities, Jojo Eskenazi’s comedic “Moiz plays” stand out for their consistent performance schedule and the support they receive from Turkey’s Jewish community leaders and members, particularly for their political messages and community-building function.³ These plays are centered around İstanbullu Manifaturacı Moiz (Moiz the Draper from Istanbul), played by Eskenazi himself, and Moiz’s wife Kleret, played by Fani Bonofiyel. Analysis of the texts, recorded performances, playbills, and introductory remarks by the organizers before performances of these plays unravels their wider functionality within the Jewish community and the theatre scene in Turkey.⁴ Moiz plays staged in the last twenty years crystallize

how Jews of Turkey engage with international Jewish, Turkish-national, and communal identity discourses; partake in the contemporary efforts of preserving Judeo-Spanish through bilingual performances; and contribute to transnational connections among Jews of Turkey in Turkey and Israel.⁵ When Moiz plays are analyzed in relation to the cultural context in Turkey and not as isolated cultural products only by/about/for the Jewish community in Turkey, the contemporary Jewish amateur theatre proves to be an important part of Turkey's theatre scene, a scene which needs reframing outside mainstream institutions and practices—that is, only consisting of performances in the Turkish language or staged by state institutions.

Focusing on Jews' transition from an Ottoman *millet* (confession-based community) to a modern Turkish minority or their emigration to Europe, the Americas, and Israel, contemporary studies have investigated Jews' self-positioning within the modern Turkish context from a state-minority relations perspective. Jews' cultural production in Turkey has been analyzed only as those of a minority, almost completely isolated from the majority cultural context, not in relation to and as part of the context that is dominated by the Sunni-Turkish majority's cultural conventions.⁶ Discussing the political repercussions of studying "Arab-Jews," Shohat argues that segregating Middle Eastern Jewish cultures from their local contexts has served Eurocentric and Zionist interpretations of history, especially in the light of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. By selectively reading Judeo-Muslim histories through a "pogromatic" discourse which only focuses on contentions and not on collaboration between Jews and Muslims, the Euro-Israeli historiography has subsumed the Jewish histories in the Muslim lands to a "universal" Jewish experience defined by the European Jews' history.⁷ Such discourse rejects "an Arab and Muslim context for Jewish institutions, identities, and histories."⁸ Instead of these deliberate distortions, Shohat argues for investigating Jewish history and culture in the Middle East in relation to their Muslim majority contexts. Such an approach based on relationality resists glorifying Judeo-Muslim history, which whitewashes Jewish-Muslim relations and is often used for nationalistic interpretations of history.⁹ Not dismembering Jewish culture and history from its Muslim contexts reveals this community's own positionality in Turkish culture, which needs to be analyzed apart from Eurocentric imaginations or nationalistic impulses projected onto it.

In this light, contemporary Jewish theatre should be considered as part of Türkiye Tiyatrosu (Theatre of Turkey) a theatre scene which includes more than plays and performances staged only for the Turkish-speaking majority. There are multiple examples of “Theatre of Turkey” which are multilingual and multiethnic yet engaged with the mainstream Turkish theatre scene. In the late 2000s, the Istanbul cultural scene witnessed the blooming of theatre companies and performances outside the mainstream as a result of the European Union accession efforts and the Justice and Development Party’s minority policies, which supported non-Muslim and non-Turkish ethnic minorities’ cultural initiatives in the early years of the party’s rule.¹⁰ For example Elif Baş documented the flourishing of Kurdish theatre in Istanbul at the end of the 2000s.¹¹ In 2008, during the Kültürel Çoğulculuk Bağlamında Tiyatro Günleri (Theatre Festival in the Context of Cultural Pluralism), theatre professionals from the Jewish, Armenian, and Greek Orthodox communities discussed ways of opening minority theatres to majority audiences. Until the early 2010s, Berberyan Company, an amateur theatre troupe of Armenians in Istanbul, was still active and staging plays.¹² Inspired by Jewish amateur theatre groups, İzmir Amateur Levantine Theater, an amateur theatre group consisting of Catholics and other non-Muslims, started staging plays in Turkish in 2007.¹³ In 2018, this group has donated their performances’ revenues to multiple charity organizations in the city very much like their Jewish counterparts in Istanbul.¹⁴ These productions construe “Theatre of Turkey” not in opposition to the mainstream Turkish theatre, but in relation with it.¹⁵ The scope and reach of these performances can be limited, but their relatively small audiences or lack of institutionalization are not detrimental to rethinking their importance.

It is imperative to look at the Jewish amateur theatre in relation to the Turkish context also due to the importance of Jewish performance practices in the formation of theatrical performance in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. Theatre historians have suggested interaction and mutual progression between Jewish and Muslim theatre performances in the Ottoman Empire, starting with the Jewish migration following the 1492 Expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁶ According to Metin And and Olga Borovaya, when Sephardic Jews immigrated to the Ottoman Empire, they changed theatrical performances across the empire.¹⁷ According to And, Jews contributed specifically to the development of *Orta Oyunu* (theatre-in-the-round) performances, a traditional performance style

in the Ottoman Empire and the early republican era. First emerging as “kol oyunu” in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire and changed throughout the centuries, Orta Oyunu kept specific form and staging conventions.¹⁸ Sephardic Jews’ performances in the sixteenth century, in structure, physical staging, and narrative, immensely resemble Orta Oyunu, resulting in the historians’ conviction on the connection and interaction between the two traditions.¹⁹

The Sephardic theatre tradition, which established the basis for twentieth-century Jewish amateur theatre practices, simultaneously emerged in Salonica (Saloniki), Istanbul, and Izmir (Smyrna) in the late nineteenth century. The Sephardic theatre evolved to have two communal goals: to educate the Jewish community to bring them to the “European level of civilization” through theatre, and to increase their political awareness, especially after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution in the Ottoman Empire, which chipped away at the Sultan’s absolute reign and devolved power to elected officials.²⁰ Thus Sephardic theatre and drama in the Ottoman Empire was the direct result of the political environment and the Jewish community’s self-positioning in the rapidly changing society of the late Ottoman Empire. Following the dissolution of the empire, this tradition continued in the former Ottoman Empire nations until World War II and in the Americas, where Sephardic Jews emigrated.²¹

Despite sharing origins with the transnational Sephardic theatre—a tradition not limited to the modern Turkish context²²—the contemporary Jewish theatre in Turkey is almost completely ignored in the scholarship on “global Jewish theatre,” which covers (Eastern) European, North and South American, and Israeli traditions. This exclusion clearly contributes to the Eurocentric historiographical tendencies.²³ Against this tendency, Moiz plays and contemporary Jewish theatre in Turkey in general should be considered as part and parcel of transnational/diasporic Sephardic and global Jewish theatre traditions. Moiz plays are staged in Turkey, Israel, and Europe, in Judeo-Spanish and Turkish to majority Jewish audiences. In addition to their audience and linguistic make-up, Moiz plays should be included in the category of “global Jewish theatre” because they also tackle issues related to transnational and communal identification issues regarding Jewish people around the world.

Contemporary Jewish Cultural Context in Turkey

Most Jews living in Turkey are descendants of Sephardic Jews who relocated in the Ottoman Empire after the 1492 Expulsion of the Jews from the Catholic kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. When the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, Jews of Turkey primarily spoke Judeo-Spanish. The new republic's society was being engineered into a Sunni-Turkish majority from its multi-ethnic, linguistic, and religious makeup in the former Ottoman territories, and Jews of Turkey sought to integrate into this majority. In 1926, the Chief Rabbinate of Turkey denounced most of the legal and cultural rights granted to Jews by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Intense Turkification policies in the first decades of the republic condensed the Jewish population into two large cities, namely Istanbul and Izmir, while large Jewish groups emigrated to the Americas, Europe, and Israel.²⁴ In addition, the "Turkification process" dismantled the urban Jewish population's larger role in economy and imposed on them the Turkish nationalist discourses, which paradoxically did not exclude Jews from "Turkishness"—a category that was initially reserved by the Republican elite for ethnically Turkish, religiously Sunni majority.²⁵ Turkification also forced this group to abandon speaking French, Judeo-Spanish, and other vernacular languages of Ottoman Jews, such as Arabic, Kurdish, and Greek, and forced them to begin to speak Turkish. This linguistic shift allowed the demise of Judeo-Spanish among Jews of Turkey. Today, although some Jews identify as "Turkish," this identification category refers to belonging to the linguistic/cultural/citizenship sphere of Turkey, not the ethnic-religious connotation.

In this historical trajectory, language preservation has been central to the heritage practices of Jews of Turkey.²⁶ Although younger generations of Jews now speak with their elders exclusively in Turkish, a considerable portion of the Jewish community in Turkey continue speaking Judeo-Spanish.²⁷ Between 1969 and 1973, approximately 8,000 Jews moved to Israel from Turkey, creating the largest wave of emigration to Israel since 1949–1951.²⁸ This erosion of Judeo-Spanish speakers resulted in attempts to preserve the Judeo-Spanish language through music and theatre in Turkey, beginning in the late 1970s.²⁹ According to Rivka Bihar, the theatre professionals turned to Judeo-Spanish also because the

actors' Turkish carried a heavy Jewish accent and was deemed unpleasant on the stage.³⁰ Judeo-Spanish musical performances of Jews of Turkey continued into the 1980s and gained national and global recognition with the Quincentennial Celebrations of the Ottoman Welcome in 1992.³¹ Today, the Jewish Community of Turkey (Türkiye Yahudi Cemaati) actively supports initiatives to protect the Judeo-Spanish language via community events such as the annual "International Ladino Day."³² The Turkish weekly newspaper *Şalom*, which caters primarily to a Jewish readership, publishes one page per week in Judeo-Spanish. Theatre is still an important artistic genre where Judeo-Spanish is actively used in Turkey and Israel. For example, in March 2010, the amateur theatre group of the Union of Immigrants from Turkey staged Molière's *Le Médecin malgré lui* (The Doctor in Spite of Himself) in Judeo-Spanish.³³ In September 2011, the amateur theatre group of the Bat-Yam Cultural Club staged "Amor en la Zinganeria," an original play written by Albert Anah in Judeo-Spanish, which tells a love story set in Istanbul.³⁴ Jojo Eskenazi's Moiz plays are among those theatrical performances which use Judeo-Spanish on stage, serving to preserve the language in Turkey and elsewhere.³⁵ In addition to language preservation, the Moiz plays, within the Turkish and Jewish theatre traditions, also engage with political, social, and economic positions of Jews and the middle-class in Turkey.

What Are Moiz Plays?

Jojo Eskenazi started doing amateur theatre in the early 1970s at Dostluk Yurdu Derneği (Dostluk Yurdu Association), a Jewish association in Istanbul, which used to organize community-building activities such as amateur theatre, women's meetings, and youth activities.³⁶ This association's members are mostly Jewish but theatre groups include non-Jewish cast members, especially semi-professionals, in order to enhance the production quality.³⁷ The "Moiz" character was initially created by İzzet Bana, Jojo Eskenazi, Selim Hubeş, and Yuda Siliki for the play "Kula '930," which was first staged in 1978 in Istanbul.³⁸ Eskenazi continued playing the Moiz character later on. According to Eskenazi, the plays are often written collectively by the actors in Judeo-Spanish and Turkish, although a comparison between the text and the performance points to

heavy improvisation in his acting while other actors stuck with the text most of the time.³⁹ Between 1978 and 2013, the Dostluk Yurdu Derneği staged thirteen different Moiz plays.⁴⁰ Since the club's closing in 2013, Eskenazi and his group stages Moiz plays with the support of the Jewish Community of Turkey and the Chief Rabbinate of Turkey.⁴¹ Despite the change of supporting institution, the production was still widely covered by *Şalom* and it also traveled to Israel.

Moiz plays focus on the funny adventures of the main character, Moiz the Draper from Istanbul, and his family. Moiz is a middle-class Jewish businessman. He lives in Turkey and speaks in Judeo-Spanish with his wife Kleret and his elders. The couple speak Turkish with their children, in-laws, and neighbors. Moiz's paternal role in the family is eclipsed by the strong female characters of the household, namely Moiz's wife and mother. This is one of the main sources of both comic relief and conflict in the plays, which are usually resolved by the love and affection shown to Moiz by his wife, mother, and children at the end. Some Moiz plays incorporate song and dance numbers, often not directly related to the play's main narrative. For example, a comedy about intra-family tension over the redecoration of their apartment, called *Moiz Hayata Şükret* (Moiz Be Thankful to Life), featured numbers from the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.⁴² As such, the Moiz plays can be considered "family comedies" with slapstick undertones and occasionally a vaudevillian structure. Their satirical tone and political undertones strike a strong parallel with the Sephardic theatre and Ladino drama traditions of the late Ottoman Empire.⁴³

Jojo Eskenazi's plays portray and are part of Jewish cultural life in Turkey, which cannot be thought of separately from cultural life in the Turkish national context. Despite the paradoxical nature of the nationalist category of Turkishness and the Turkish state's oppressive policies towards them, the Jewish Community of Turkey in particular repeatedly states its identification with the Turkish state's cultural politics, such as celebration of religious diversity, the government's cultural policies based on a selective, official historiography, etc. However, the relationality of Jewish artists and cultural production with the larger Turkish context is not limited to this state-minority institution relation. A number of Jewish authors and artists have gained prominence in Turkey's cultural sphere,

such as Dario Moreno, a singer and actor who performed in multiple languages in the 1950s and 1960s; Beki L. Bahar, poet and playwright whose works and plays have been recognized by awards from multiple state institutions;⁴⁴ Mario Levi, who writes in Turkish and in 1990 was awarded the Haldun Taner Short Story Prize, one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Turkey.⁴⁵ There are also acclaimed Jewish stage, TV, and film actors and producers. One of them is Nedim Saban, an actor and producer, who gained mainstream success in 1990s TV and currently runs *Tiyatrokare*, a successful theatre company in Istanbul.⁴⁶ Rozet Hubeş, who also participated in the production of a number of Moiz plays, has been recognized for her excellence in stage acting with multiple awards, including the Afife Jale Theater Awards—Turkey’s most prestigious award in the field of theatre—in 2005.⁴⁷ Among these examples, songwriter and singer Can Bonomo has arguably the highest profile. Maintaining a successful singing career in Turkish pop music circles since early 2010s, Bonomo was selected by the Turkish State Television to represent Turkey in the Eurovision song contest in 2012.⁴⁸ Jews of Turkey’s contribution to the cultural sphere in Turkey are not the contributions of (outsider) Jews to a national culture,⁴⁹ but their participation in cultural and social life is as members.⁵⁰ Moiz plays may not be geared toward a general audience in Turkey, given their linguistic marking and politics and conditions of staging; nevertheless, the plays’ narratives and political engagements are still legible to a Turkish-speaking audience. Someone who doesn’t understand Judeo-Spanish can still follow the story.⁵¹

Moiz plays are also modest facilitators of community building for Jews of Turkey. Many paratextual elements praise the staging of the plays for their contribution to the Jewish community in Turkey. For example, performances in 2013 and 2015 were organized with the intention of fundraising for scholarships for the students at the Jewish private school in Ulus, Istanbul. The philanthropic dimension of Moiz plays have been repeatedly praised by community members in Turkey and Israel.⁵²

Moiz plays’ community-building impact is not limited to Istanbul’s Jewish community, even in an ad hoc manner. When *Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın* (Moiz, Show Them the Virtues of Humanity) played in Izmir, *Şalom* reported that many Jewish community members in Izmir

thanked the actors and producers for bringing the Jewish community of the city together for a good cause.⁵³ The Jewish community in Izmir lacks cultural institutions and events, other than religious events organized in the synagogues. Unlike Istanbul, the number of occasions where the approximately 2,000 members of the Jewish community of Izmir may gather are extremely limited. In this context, the staging of a Judeo-Spanish/Turkish play by a Jewish neighborhood club from Istanbul became a rare occasion to bring the city's Jewish community together.

Jewish Self-Identification Discussions in Turkey and in Moiz plays

The content of Moiz plays crystallizes the Jewish community's engagement with international Jewish, Turkish-national, and communal identity discourses. For example, Moiz plays focus on a Jewish family in Istanbul, but the narratives of the plays position them within an international context—a result of Jewish emigration in the first half of the twentieth century. Moiz's relations with his relatives abroad suggest an internationally connected portrayal of the Jewish community in Turkey. The characters have maintained transnational ties with their family members in Europe, the Americas, and Israel. In *Ne İşin Var Evde Moiz?* (Moiz, Why Are You at Home?), Moiz's cousins have come from the United States and Italy to attend his surprise birthday party. In *Moiz Miliüm'de* (Moiz in Miliüm), Moiz finds himself in Israel when his son takes off to serve in the Israeli military. By portraying a Jewish family with multiple members outside of Turkey, the plays reveal the reasons for the Jewish emigration out of Turkey.

Multiple languages connect the Jewish diasporas from the Ottoman Empire and Turkey in the plays. Moiz and his family members living in Turkey communicate with their family members, who live outside Turkey, in Judeo-Spanish, English, and Italian. Such multilingualism can also be considered as a metaphor for the Jewish community's response to the Turkification policies, especially the monolingualism. Turkish is the language of the new generation and characters outside the family, while Judeo-Spanish, French, English, and Italian are still used within the family.

Despite this linguistic configuration, Turkish remains the language of the main character, Moiz, in which he delivers the most poignant messages of the plays.

In addition to such transnational family connections, Moiz plays also deal with issues central to the transnational memories of the Holocaust and their repercussions in Turkey. Although the official historiography in Turkey states that the Jews of Turkey averted the Holocaust due to the Turkish government's neutral stance in World War II, some scholars argued that Turkey's position was at best ambiguous.⁵⁴ With the Wealth Tax, the Turkish government stripped Jews and other non-Muslim minorities of their wealth and their role in the urban economy in Turkey. Those who couldn't pay their taxes were sent to Aşkale Labor Camp. During the Struma Incident in 1942, 781 Jewish refugees died en route to Palestine because the Turkish government denied assistance to the refugees on board and forced the ship into the Black Sea. In each of these instances, the Turkish government took an anti-non-Muslim/anti-Jewish stance and contributed to the loss of Jewish lives and property during the Holocaust. In the last twenty years, the Jewish Community of Turkey and the Turkish government have been commemorating the Holocaust in tandem without mentioning the Turkish government's responsibility in these events.⁵⁵

Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın suggests a strong connection between Jewish families in Turkey and the Holocaust. Moiz and his wife Kleret visit Moiz's aunt Tant Janti, who had moved to France before the World War II. When Tant Janti narrates her Holocaust memories, the play, which starts with a comedic tone, becomes somber and a scene from a concentration camp takes over. This play's narrative thus makes Moiz's family a part of the Holocaust memory in Europe. In this context, the political messages imbuing *Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın*, staged in the late 1990s, suggest an alternative to the memorialization of the Holocaust in official Turkish historiography and cultural discourses, which try to turn the Holocaust into an event from which the Turkish government was supposedly rescuing Jews, and not a total destruction that, inadvertently or not, it contributed toward. In a way, *Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın* attests to the inclusion of Turkish Jews in transnational memories of the Holocaust.⁵⁶

When Aleida Assmann explores the ways in which the memory of the Holocaust has "gone global," she states that:

In this form of cultural elaboration, the [Holocaust] memory transcends the quality of an historic experience and acquires that of a secular norm. This norm is based on a moral lesson, which is distilled from the Holocaust; it implies heightened vigilance against renewed impulses of anti-Semitism together with the protection of human dignity and the enforcing of human rights for endangered minorities.⁵⁷

When *Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın* connects a Jewish family in Turkey to the Holocaust in Europe, the play is also communicating this exact moral message to the audience. In the last part of the second act of the play, Moiz and Kleret stumble upon the filming of a World War II movie portraying Adolf Hitler in Paris. Moiz confronts the actor who plays Hitler in the film production. At this instance, Eskenazi conflates his role on the stage and his theatre actor/producer role in real life, just as Moiz cannot distinguish the historical figure of Hitler from the actor portraying him in the film. Protesting the reenactment, Moiz embarks on a heated monologue, completely delivered in Turkish, damning Hitler and the Holocaust. In this monologue, often interrupted by audience applause, Moiz ignores the film director and Kleret, who repeatedly try to tell him that the person Moiz is shouting at is not Hitler himself but an actor. In this sequence, the line between reality and performance of Hitler vanishes as it is unclear who delivers this rebuttal—the actor Jojo Eskenazi or the character Moiz, or both.

In the monologue, Moiz states that Hitler “[forgot] that Jews carried the love for Torah here (shows his heart) for the last 5700 years”⁵⁸ and Hitler “belonged to the bloody pages of history,”⁵⁹ a statement that also protests the cinematic representation of the dictator. Highlighting the importance of representation, Moiz Levi the character and/or Jojo Eskenazi the actor makes the following statement about the blurred line between the reality and the art:

If I, Moiz Levi the draper from Istanbul, can make 4000, 5000 people laugh every year, give some joy to their faces and some happiness to them, and if they please, get their applause (interruption with applause), then I belong to the rosy, white and clean pages [of history], and you will disappear in its blackest pages.⁶⁰

This calculated confusion is a moral and political commentary tool which emphasizes the political repercussions of the representation of Hitler, especially in Turkey, where seminal anti-Semitic texts such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* found a large readership

and numerous publication opportunities.⁶¹ Since 2005, *Mein Kampf* even occupies the bestseller lists and supermarket shelves in Turkey.⁶² Moiz's comparison of himself with Hitler in terms of the moral positions they (will) occupy in the pages of history attests to the impossibility of limiting them as isolated performances only for the Jewish community in Turkey. Indeed, this Moiz play makes a statement about the Holocaust and contributes to the memorialization of it in family, community, urban, or national contexts in Turkey and beyond.

Besides engaging with the memory of the Holocaust, Moiz plays address an audience that is very much integrated into the transnational cultural spheres through popular cultural products such as musicals and films. Moiz plays are citational as they employ direct portions of other cultural products. Because these deployments underline Moiz plays' and their audiences' connection with internationally circulating cultural products, these plays can even be considered "intertextual."⁶³ *Moiz i Hibernatus* (Moiz and Hibernatus) is an adaptation of *Hibernatus*, a French play that was later adapted into film, about a man who was brought into life after being frozen for 65 years. *Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın* and *Bu İş Burada Biter Moiz* (It Is Over, Moiz) incorporated musical numbers from *Fiddler on the Roof*; *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*; *Cabaret*; and *Irma la Douce*. These dance and song numbers are exclusively performed by young actors, and they do not necessarily contribute to the plays' main narrative. Such musical numbers also enable the participation of young members from the associations that staged the Moiz plays, since the plays' regular cast is smaller than those of the musical reproductions. Besides this communal function, such musical numbers possibly enhance the performances' entertainment value for every age group in the audience. In terms of intertextuality, these intersections emphasize the producers' and the audience's cultural repertoire, either by expanding it or by relying on it for increasing the entertainment value of the plays.

Moiz plays tackle the social issues of Turkey's upper middle class as well. Moiz usually clashes with his children and family members over social, economic, and generational issues. For example, in *Ne İşin Var Evde Moiz?*, Moiz protests when his daughter rejects coming home for Sabbath dinner and adopts a parrot instead of having a baby. Moiz also makes fun of his son-in-law, who presents himself as the CEO of a company

and speaks with English words dispersed in his Turkish sentences. The generational gap in newly regulated family activities and relations and the intrusion of English are topics that mainstream TV programs in Turkey have also covered in the past twenty years.⁶⁴ The use of technology and consumption obsession are two other sources of tension in Moiz plays which echo visual cultural products in Turkey. For example, in *Ne İşin Var Evde Moiz?*, Moiz protests when his wife buys the new model of an iPad or when his mother forces him to use Facebook. The play *Moiz Hayata Şükret* is entirely on the topic of redecorating the apartment, something Moiz deems unnecessary. Such tensions are used as comic relief; however, they also carry a social and political message, which is well received by the audience. Moiz's jokes about his rejection of technology and consumerism receive a lot of applause from the audience as a sign of approval.

Moiz plays cite Turkish performances as well. The second act of *Ne İşin Var Evde Moiz?* opens with Moiz's dream where each member of his family and neighbors have turned into characters from Turkish TV series. This play's intertextuality both employs characters familiar to the audience for their comedic value and brings out the critique of the play, which is the popularity of TV series in Turkey, deemed harmful to family relations. The first act of *Ne İşin Var Evde Moiz?* ends with Moiz suffering from being overwhelmed with his rising body temperature, his family's carelessness towards his looming health condition, and Moiz's lamentation about his mother and wife's obsession with technology and Turkish TV series. The second act easily reveals itself as Moiz's hallucinations under high body temperature, where his family members become characters from the historical drama set in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Magnificent Century); the action-drama *Ezel*; and the sit-com *Yalan Dünya* (Fake World). As Moiz snaps out of the cacophonous hallucinations, where each character of the play is now a character from a TV series, he delivers a monologue that criticizes society's obsession with these shows. In a play which takes issue with technology, Moiz delivers a critique of the television medium on the theatre stage. The play ends with this monologue, receiving a deafening applause from the audience.

Despite the international and national dimensions of Moiz plays, some linguistic and content-related elements are legible only to the Jewish community in Turkey. After all, the plays are in Judeo-Spanish

and Turkish. Some topics in the narrative or jokes also directly address a Jewish audience. For example, in *Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın* Tant Janti asks Moiz if he is from Balat, a neighborhood in Istanbul populated by Jews in the early twentieth century. Moiz replies to Tant Janti by saying that he is from Hasköy, insinuating the friendly rivalry between two neighborhoods.⁶⁵ In addition, paratextual elements shed light on the play's intended audience. Speeches delivered before and after performances by the leaders of the Jewish Community repeatedly praise Eskenazi and his troupe for the service they do for the "Cemaat" (Community). Among the services offered by Moiz plays, preserving the Judeo-Spanish language is particularly important.

Preserving Judeo-Spanish on the Stage

Eskenazi and his amateur group's performances partake in the contemporary efforts of Judeo-Spanish preservation. In Moiz plays, Moiz, his wife, his mother, and his older relatives speak in Judeo-Spanish and occasionally in Turkish among themselves. Although the content of the plays does not directly tackle language-preservation issues, the fact that Moiz plays are bilingual incorporates the performances into the efforts of preserving Judeo-Spanish. There are two reasons for using both languages. First, when the narrative needs to incorporate the younger generation or neighbors, Judeo-Spanish-speaking characters switch to speaking Turkish among each other and with the younger generation and neighbors. Second, the Turkish intervals shed light on the Judeo-Spanish dialogue before or after them. The plays thus establish a narrative coherence for those members of the audience who understand only Turkish, reserving the full meaning of the play for those who understand both Judeo-Spanish and Turkish.

At occasions that focus on language-preservation efforts, Eskenazi stages Judeo-Spanish-only performances. He has performed snippets from Moiz plays or staged new performances with Bonofiyel during the annual International Ladino Day celebrations in Istanbul for the last three years. In the fourth installation of the International Ladino Day Celebrations in Istanbul, Eskenazi staged a small play called *La Vida Judia de Ayer i Oy en la Famiya de Moiz* (The Jewish Life of Yesterday and Today in Moiz's Family). Other performances at this event included stand-up comics and bands who performed in Judeo-Spanish.⁶⁶

Eskenazi's efforts for the preservation of the Judeo-Spanish language were recognized outside Turkey, as well. In 2016, Jojo Eskenazi and Fani Bonofiyel, who plays Moiz's wife in the annual performances, were invited to the University of Vienna's Judeo-Spanish class by the instructor Ioana Nechiti. In a performance attended by the university students, including Jewish students from Turkey, Zali de Toledo, the president of the Union of Immigrants from Turkey in Israel, and Dr. Kurt Hengl, the ambassador of Israel in Vienna, Eskenazi and Bonofiyel performed parts from Moiz plays in Judeo-Spanish.⁶⁷ The attendance of these visitors from Israel point to Moiz plays' role in maintaining the cultural ties between the Jews in Turkey and immigrants from Turkey in Israel.

Bridge between Turkey and Israel

In addition to their importance for the Turkish context, Eskenazi and his amateur group's performances also establish a transnational cultural connection between Jews in Turkey and immigrants from Turkey in Israel. Multiple Moiz plays have been performed in Israel since the 1990s, in both Turkish and Judeo-Spanish.⁶⁸ The plays' producers were aware of the importance of these plays in Israel. For example, before a performance of *Moiz i Hibernatus* in Istanbul in 2007, the opening remarks made by a member of the Dostluk Yurdu Association narrate the importance of the performances in Israel with the following words:

We are meeting with you after our trip to Israel, which is very important for us. As you know, we went to Israel with a group of 45 people in order to entertain our relatives living far from us, to remind them their culture here [in Turkey], and to unite our hearts with 1500 people over there [in Israel]. And we returned proud for having completed our tasks.⁶⁹

Producers of Moiz plays ostensibly frame their performances in Israel as cultural events contributing to the relationship between Jews from Turkey in Israel and the Jewish community in Turkey. When asked by journalists, the producers have often expressed their enthusiasm. For example, producer Ceki Karmona narrated how the audience and the actors broke into tears after the last show in Israel because of the "flurry of emotions" (*duygu fırtınası*).⁷⁰ In an interview Jojo Eskenazi gave in 2013, he states that playing in Israel produces an "emotion like no other, an excitement like no other" and that the whole group was looking forward to their performances in Israel.⁷¹ When Nesim Güveniş reviewed *Ne İşin*

Var Evde Moiz? for *Bülten*, the newsletter of the Union of Immigrants from Turkey, he applauded the comedic value of the play as well as its social commentary on the everyday use of technology. Technology, just like language erosion, signifies an inevitable change in Jewish family life in Turkey, and, as Güveniş's commentary shows, Jews in Turkey and immigrants from Turkey in Israel share concerns over change and erosion in heritage and traditions.

Moiz plays are not the only cultural events that contribute to the relationship between Jews of Turkey and immigrants from Turkey in Israel.⁷² However, looking at the last twenty years, Moiz play performances occur more frequently than others, carving themselves a special place within the cultural sphere of Jews of Turkey in Israel. After Eskenazi started performing under the auspices of the Jewish Community of Turkey and the Chief Rabbinate, he continued performing in Israel.⁷³ Güveniş's review of *Ne İşin Var Evde Moiz?* repeatedly states that the audience in Israel was familiar with Moiz character, came to the performance with certain expectations, and left the auditorium with their expectations met.⁷⁴ The frequency of performances and the repeated positive reception of Moiz plays show that Eskenazi and his group's performances speak to a cultural sphere among Jews in Turkey and immigrants from Turkey in Israel. Thus, the cultural connection between the two groups does not consist only of social and digital media but also of multiple performative components in their transnational and common cultural sphere.

Conclusion

Moiz plays' performances and content show that Eskenazi and his group's efforts not only provide entertainment for the Jewish community in Turkey and immigrants from Turkey in Israel but also crystallize the inner workings of the cultural sphere of this transnational community. Moiz plays tackle issues on communal, national, and transnational self-identifications of Jews of Turkey. These plays actively participate in efforts to keep Judeo-Spanish a living language. According to Moiz plays, Jewish life in Turkey is very much in dialogue with the Turkish cultural context. The fact that Moiz plays have been staged in Istanbul and Izmir for over two decades underlines how theatre questions, if not undoes,

many assumptions about Jewish life in Turkey as isolated, introverted, and utterly oppressed. That said, Moiz plays are not state-sponsored performances of multiculturalism in Turkey as isolated fragments of Turkey's so-called multiple colors. They are in fact part and parcel of the theatre of Turkey, a lively scene which diversifies theatrical performance not only linguistically through non-Turkish plays but also with political engagement of marginalized groups such as non-Muslim and non-Sunni minorities and Kurdish people.

In addition to its particularity in the context of Turkey, the Jewish life portrayed in Moiz plays is transnationally connected. This connection is established through articulation and discussion of international and local discourses about Jewish culture and memory, especially of the Holocaust. Moiz plays show that although Jewish life and culture are parts of the Turkish context, as categories of practice and analysis, they are not confined to national borders, due to years of emigration.⁷⁵ The transnational dimensions of Moiz plays have echoed in the research phase of this article in the form of a paradox: I learned most about an amateur Jewish theatre group in Turkey from archives abroad. The most complete documentation about the plays and their paratextual elements, recordings of performances which come with community leaders' speeches before plays and interviews with the crew, is currently archived at Harvard College Library's Judaica Collection, thanks to a recent donation by the Chief Rabbinate of Turkey. The reception of Moiz plays is almost exclusively reported by *Şalom*, the Jewish newspaper in Turkey, and *Bülten*, the newsletter of the Union of Immigrants from Turkey in Israel. I used *Şalom*'s online repositories, but I read Moiz plays' reception in Israel only in *Bülten*, as found in the archives of the Union of Immigrants from Turkey, located in the city of Bat Yam in Israel. An amateur Jewish theatre group's plays and performances revealed their meanings and importance only through a transnational research trajectory.

In terms of writing the contemporary Jewish theatre in Turkey into the histories of the Sephardi Theatre traditions and contemporary global Jewish theatre, Moiz plays' content and performances show that as of 2018, there is still Sephardi Theatre happening outside of the United State and Israel, entirely in touch with its local, national, and transnational contexts. Moiz plays show that even when these performances are steeped in their

local and national cultural codes, they are still a part of the global Jewish theatre with their content and impact on the Jewish communities in Turkey and elsewhere. Their celebrated place within this tradition as an active amateur group which still performs in Judeo-Spanish is probably what Moiz/Eskenazi refers to as “the rosy, white and clean pages of history.” Moiz plays are entertaining yet also important historical notes about the complex cultural positionality of Jews of Turkey in this country and beyond.

New York University

NOTES

¹ “Turkey” World Jewish Congress Website, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/about/communities/tr>. The number varies vastly across media reports, but 18,000 is what most English-language media and the officials of Jewish Community of Turkey agree upon. Regardless of its elusive certainty, the number still places Jews of Turkey on top of the list of Jewish communities in modern Muslim contexts, followed by Jewish communities in Iran and Morocco.

² I use this term in order to refer to the unofficial confederation of charity associations (*vakıflar*). I capitalize the first letters in order to denote the institutionalized nature of this confederation. The Jewish Community of Turkey has a board and a president, who is elected by Jews in Turkey, but has no legal persona. Jews of Turkey usually refer to this institutionalized community as *Yahudi Cemaati*, which literally translates to “The Jewish Community” or simply *Cemaat* (the Community). Today, most Jews living in Turkey are of Sephardic origin, although there are also Romaniots, who trace their origins to the Byzantine Empire in Istanbul and Anatolia; Karaites, a Jewish group diverging from the mainstream Sephardic religious community with its religious doctrine and practices; and Ashkenazi Jews who fled from Eastern Europe to the Ottoman Empire over many centuries.

³ “Welcome Notes by Chief Rabbi Rav Ishak Haleva and President of the Jewish Community of Turkey Ishak Ibrahimzade,” Playbill of “Moiz Ne İşin Var Evde?,” Judaica Collection, Harvard College Library.

⁴ While this article will not provide a survey of the plays, I will draw on the playtexts, recordings of performances, and playbills produced between 1999 and 2017, located at Harvard University’s Judaica Collection. To understand the reception of the plays, I rely on archival materials.

⁵ I use the term “Jews of Turkey” when I refer to Jews who live in Turkey, or are immigrants from Turkey in Israel, and/or self-identify as *Türkiyeli* (from Turkey) as a neutral connotation of being a citizen of Turkey or having born in Turkey without necessarily complying with the Turkish state’s identity politics. This term refrains from imposing onto Jews the category of the “Turk/Turkish” that has often been used in an ethno-religious sense, defining people who are ethnically Turkish and religiously Sunni. In the Turkish national context, “Turk/Turkish” has been used to define other ethnic/linguistic groups of Muslims, such as Circassians, immigrants from the Balkans and Greece, etc. This category has often excluded those who were deemed unable to assimilate by the Turkish state such as non-Muslims and Kurds. *Türkiyeli* (from/of Turkey), on the other hand, is a term that underlines the ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity of the population in Turkey. At times,

the term *Türkiyeli* (from/of Turkey) represents resistance to assimilationist identification policies while maintaining a claim to citizenship rights. Most publications by Jews in Turkish and English use *Türkiyeli Yahudiler* (Jews from/of Turkey) rather than *Türk Yahudiler* (Turkish Jews). Instead of “Yahudi” (Jew), “Musevi” (the follower of Moses) has also been used by the Muslim majority and sometimes in Jewish publications. However, this use is not accurate because the term connotes a religious affiliation rather than an ethnic or communal one. When the term “Turkish Jews” is used, there is more connotation of citizenship or linguistic group. This difference of terminology does not mean that Jews of Turkey are completely out of Turkey’s cultural context.

⁶ In her ethnographic work, Marcy Brink-Danan explains the Jewish cultural context in Turkey as the application ground of a cosmopolitan set of knowledge, privy to Jewish citizens of Turkey, that is used in order to negotiate Jews’ position in the Muslim-majority society. Marcy-Brink Danan, *Jewish Life in 21st Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012). Rivka Bahar historicizes the development of Jewish theatre in Turkey by secondary source reading and interviews with theatre professionals. Rivka Bihar, “İstanbul Türk Yahudi Cemaati Tiyatrosu: Geçmişten Günümüze Gelişimi (1860–2008)” [Theatre of Istanbul Turkish Jewish Community: Its Progress from Past to Present] *Mediterráneo/Mediterraneo* 1, no. 4 (2009): 47–60.

⁷ Ella Shohat, “Introduction,” in *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 1.

⁸ Ella Shohat, “Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab-Jews,” in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 342. Shohat argues that the Euro-Israeli historiography denied the Arab-Jewish cultural context in order to facilitate the creation of the Israeli nation-state in Palestine by including Jews living in the Arab lands within the Zionist project.

⁹ Since the early 1970s, the Turkish state’s cultural policies self-glorify the Ottoman and republican Turkish states as Islamic contexts tolerant to non-Muslim communities. This self-glorification consists of producing discourses of rescue, harmonious coexistence, and benevolence towards minorities. To this end, a selective history of Jews in Turkey is used as a response to the calls for justice for the Armenian Genocide. For a historical account of the collaboration between the Turkish government and some leaders of the Jewish Community of Turkey, see Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Devlet’in Örnek Yurttaşları (1950–2003)* [Jews of Turkey in the Republican Years: The State’s Sample Citizens] (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2009). Moiz Plays have not been part of this collaboration between the Turkish state and the Jewish Community of Turkey, although the latter has been supporting these plays since 2013.

¹⁰ Deniz Başar, “Performative Publicness: Alternative Theater in Turkey after 2000s,” (master’s thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2014), *passim*.

¹¹ Elif Baş, “The Rise of Kurdish Theatre in Istanbul,” *Theatre Survey* 56, no. 3 (2015): 314–35.

¹² “İstanbul sergisi ütopiyalar ve panayırda kapanıyor” [Istanbul Exhibition Closes with Utopias and Fair], *Yeşil Gazete*, accessed February 21, 2018, <https://yesilgazete.org/blog/2014/02/20/istanbul-sergisi-bu-haftasonu-kapaniyor>.

¹³ “İzmir Amatör Levanten Tiyatrosu 5 Yıldır Sizlerle” [Izmir Amateur Levantine Theatre Has Been with You for Five Years], Levantine Heritage Foundation (website), accessed September 4, 2018, <http://www.levantineheritage.com/pdf/IzmirAmatorLevantenTiyatrosuIzmirLife.pdf>. I would like to thank Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay for his remarks on this theatre group.

¹⁴ “Levantenler tiyatrocu ruhunu yaşıyor” [Levantines keep the theatre spirit alive] *Hürriyet*, accessed September 4, 2018, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/levantenler-tiyatrocu-ruhunu-yasliyor-40758454>.

¹⁵ “Cemaat tiyatroları ve modern tiyatronun inşasına katkıları paneli” [The Panel on the Minority Community Theatres and Their Contribution to the Construction of Modern Theatre], *Şalom* (website), accessed February 21, 2018, http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-65409-cemaat_tiyatrolari_ve_modern_tiyatronun_insasina_katkilari_paneli.html.

¹⁶ Mukadder Yaycıoğlu, “Geçmişten Günümüze Türkiye’de Çokkültürlü Melez Sefardi Tiyatrosu” [The Multicultural Hybrid Sephardic Theatre in Turkey from the Past to the Present], *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 27, no 1 (2009): 61–124.

¹⁷ Metin And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu: Kukla, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu* [Traditional Turkish Theatre: Puppetry, Karagöz, Theatre-in-the-round] (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1969), 181; Olga Borovaya, *Modern Ladino Culture: Press, Belles Lettres, and Theatre in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 197.

¹⁸ Cevdet Kudret, “Orta Oyununun Oyun Yeri ve Bölümleri” [Staging and Chapters of Theatre-in-the-round] in *Orta Oyunu Kitabı* [Book of Theatre-in-the-round], ed. Abülkadir Emeksiz (İstanbul: KİTABEVİ, 2006), 25–34.

¹⁹ And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu*, 181.

²⁰ Borovaya, *Modern Ladino Culture*, 199.

²¹ Borovaya, 196.

²² Borovaya’s account of the Sephardic theatre and the Ladino drama shows the span of this tradition in the Balkans. Other scholars have documented similar traits across contemporary nation-state lines following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. For examples of transnational Sephardic theatre networks, see Mara Marie Lockowandt, “Ladino Theatre: Tragedy, Cultural Politics and Representing the Past in the Sephardic Jewish Diaspora” (PhD Thesis, Royal Holloway University of London, 2012); and Yitzhak Kerem, “The Greek-Jewish Theater in Judeo-Spanish 1880–1940,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 14, no. 1 (1996): 31–45.

²³ Nahshon argues that theatre by/for/about Jews could all be considered as “Jewish theatre,” but the edited volume lacks analyses on drama and performances in languages other than Yiddish, English, and Hebrew. Edna Nahshon, ed., *Jewish Theatre: A Global View* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 1–11. Lockowandt criticizes such conceptions of “Jewish theatre” as synonymous with “Yiddish” or “Hebrew” theatres and offers to include Sephardic theatre in such discussions.

²⁴ Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve “Türkleştirme” Politikaları* [The Wealth Tax and the Politics of “Turkification”] (Çağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), passim.; Rifat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni: 1923–1945* [Jews of Turkey in the Republican Years: A Turkification Saga: 1923–1945] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010), passim.; Christoph Giesel, “Status and Situation of the Jews in Turkey: Historical Lines of Development and Contemporary Circumstances in the Context of Socio-Political Transformations,” in *Turkish Jews in Contemporary Turkey*, ed. Rifat N. Bali and Laurent-Olivier Mallet (İstanbul: Libra, 2015), 23–81.

²⁵ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu argues that “Turkishness” was paradoxical in nature because it by definition excluded non-Muslim minorities but also forcefully included them into nation-building identification policies and practices. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Republic of Paradox: The League of Nations Minority Protection Regime and the New Turkey’s Step-Citizens,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 657–79.

²⁶ Nora Şeni, “Survivance de la Communauté Juive en Turquie” [The Survival of the Jewish Community in Turkey] in Bali and Mallet, *Turkish Jews in Contemporary Turkey*, 83–91.; Deniz Nilüfer Erselcan Ben Tov, “Turkish and Jewish Identity, Native Language, and Migration to Israel,” in *Judeo-Spanish in the Time of Clamoring Nationalism*, ed. Mahir Saul (İstanbul: Libra, 2013), 101–23.

²⁷ Although the Romance language spoken by Sephardic Jews of the Balkans and the Levant, who migrated to the Ottoman lands in the sixteenth century from the Iberian Peninsula, is often referred as Ladino in contemporary Turkey, I use the term “Judeo-Spanish,” which is the name given to spoken Spanish with some Greek and Turkish vocabulary. For a discussion of multiple names of the Judeo-Spanish language in written and spoken form in the Ottoman and contemporary Turkish contexts, please see Mahir Saul “What’s in a Name? Ladino, Espanyol, Djudyo, Judeoespanol, Sefaradi” in Saul, *Judeo-Spanish in the Time of Clamoring Nationalisms*, 179–253. For a linguistic analysis of Judeo-Spanish and its contemporary usage among Jews in Istanbul, please see Rey Romero, *Spanish in the Bosphorus: A Sociolinguistic Study on the Judeo-Spanish Dialect Spoken in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012).

²⁸ Walter Weiker, *The Unseen Israelis: The Jews from Turkey in Israel* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 22.

²⁹ Firat Güllü and Uluç Esen, “Ulus Özel Musevi İlk Okulu Tiyatro Çalıştırıcısı İzzet Bana ile Söyleşi” [Interview with İzzet Bana, the Drama Coach of Private Ulus Jewish Elementary School] *Mimesis* (website), accessed September 12, 2017, <http://www.mimesis-dergi.org/2010/03/ulus-ozel-musevi-ilkogretim-okulu-tiyatro-calistiricisi-izzet-bana-ile-soylesi/>.

³⁰ Bihar, “İstanbul Türk Yahudi Cemaati Tiyatrosu,” 60.

³¹ The Quincentennial celebrations were a series of events organized by Jews of Turkey in Turkey and the US to celebrate the Ottoman welcome of Jews who were exiled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. *500 Yıl Vakfı Tanıtma Kataloğu* [Quicentennial Foundation Promotion Catalogue], Judaica Collection, Harvard College Library. Community members, former leaders, and scholars such as Rifat N. Bali and Marcy Brink-Danan heavily criticized these celebrations due to their supposedly elitist and pro-government stance in representing Turkish state-Jewish minority relations. On the flip side, these celebrations arguably contributed to the visibility of Sephardic Jews of Turkey in the international arena and among transnational Jewish identification performances and discourses, which, according to Laurent Mallet, was among their aims. Laurent-Olivier Mallet, *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs: histoire, représentations, discours et stratégies* [Turkey, Turks, and Jews: History, Representations, Discourses and Strategies] (Istanbul: Isis, 2008), 335.

³² “Uluslararası Judeo-Espanyol/Ladino Günü bu yıl 4–5 Mart’ta kutlanıyor,” *Şalom* (website), accessed September 12, 2017, http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-102279-uluslararasi-judeoespanyol-ladino-gunu_bu_yil_45_martta_kutlaniyor.html.

³³ *Bülten*, the newsletter of Hitahdut Yotsei Turkiya BeIsrael [the Union of Immigrants from Turkey in Israel], June 2010, 13.

³⁴ “Amor en la Zinganeria,” Youtube, accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-FIHP68LpU>. The performances of the play, which took place on September 17 and 18, 2011, were announced to the subscribers of *Bülten*, June 2011, 12.

³⁵ Surveying the amateur Jewish theatre scene in Turkey, Bihar argues that Judeo-Spanish is used for comedic and nostalgic purposes. Bihar, “İstanbul Türk Yahudi Cemaati Tiyatrosu,” 66.

³⁶ Bihar, 60. According to one of the anonymous peer reviewers of this article, Dostluk Yurdu Association shut down in 2013. Sources wishing to remain anonymous have confirmed this via email.

³⁷ Bihar, 60.

³⁸ According to İzzet Bana, staging “Kula ‘930” facilitated the Jewish community of Turkey’s incentives in preserving the Judeo-Spanish language. The play also facilitated the foundation of “Los Paşaros Sefaradis,” a music band that would gain fame performing Judeo-Spanish songs internationally. Güllü and Esen, “İzzet Bana ile Söyleşi,” *passim*.

³⁹ I observed Eskenazi's improvisation by comparing performance recordings and play texts. In an interview, the cast also indicates that Eskenazi improvises heavily, but he warns his castmates beforehand. Some cherish Eskenazi's improvisation. For example, Fredi Levi states that some members of the audience watch the same play in consecutive nights for Eskenazi's improvisation. Sibel Konfino, "Dostluk Yurdu Derneği'nin beklenen oyunu Moiz i Hibernatus" [The Anticipated Play of Dostluk Yurdu Association Moiz i Hibernatus], *Şalom* (website), accessed September 11, 2017, <http://www.salom.com.tr/newsdetails.asp?id=64187>.

⁴⁰ Ester Yannier, "Eğlenerek Eğitime Destek Verin" [Support Education with Entertainment], *Şalom* (website), accessed January 2, 2018, http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-86082-eglenerek_egitime_destek_verin.html.

⁴¹ Yannier, "Eğlenerek Eğitime Destek Verin."

⁴² Script of *Moiz Hayata Şükret* [Moiz, Be Thankful to Life], 2009, Judaica Collection, Harvard College Library.

⁴³ Borovaya defines "Sephardic theatre" as the "popular practice of student and other amateur groups to stage Ladino [Judeo-Spanish] plays and perform them on days off and holidays before a local public, usually with charitable reasons." Borovaya, *Modern Ladino Culture*, 196. Borovaya distinguished "Ladino drama" from "Sephardic theatre" as the "heterogeneous corpus of texts" which were created as plays in Judeo-Spanish outside aesthetic forms and for communal and political functions (238). Within this definition, Moiz plays could be considered as part of the "Sephardic theatre," because they did not necessarily leave behind a corpus of texts outside the archive.

⁴⁴ Sevilyay Saral, "Beki L. Bahar Üzerine" [About Beki L. Bahar], *Mimesis* (website), accessed January 5, 2018, <http://www.mimesis-dergi.org/mimesis-dergi-kitap/mimesis-13/beki-l-bahar-uzerine/>.

⁴⁵ "Mario Levi Hakkında" [About Mario Levi], Mario Levi official website, accessed December 5, 2017, <http://www.mariolevi.com.tr/MLhakkinda.htm>.

⁴⁶ "Nedim Saban" *Tiyatrokare* official website, accessed February 21, 2017, <http://www.tiyatrokare.com.tr/nedimsaban>.

⁴⁷ Aksel Erbahar, "Hubeş, Rozet," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman. First published online 2010. Accessed June 29, 2018.

⁴⁸ Bonomo's participation at Eurovision Song Contest was not devoid of discussion regarding his religious background, especially with Islamist writers challenging his appropriateness to represent Turkey because of his religion. He responded to these remarks by stating that he grew up in the Turkish culture and expressed himself through his art as a member of the Turkish society. Thomas Seibert, "Turkey's Entrant for Eurovision Song Contest Has Country Divided," *The National* (website), accessed July 2, 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/turkey-s-entrant-for-eurovision-song-contest-has-country-divided-1.369072>.

⁴⁹ As Bihar described, from the 1960s onwards, Jewish theatrical performances increasingly included topics regarding life in Turkey. Bihar, "İstanbul Türk Yahudi Cemaati Tiyatrosu," 66.

⁵⁰ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for this point.

⁵¹ Eskenazi and his fellow actors perform only in Judeo-Spanish at events related to the preservation of the language. These performances are short, comedic sketches among many other theatre and musical performances. One of these performances, which took place on January 26, 2014, is available at *Jojo Eskenazi (Un chiko pasaje de Moiz)* [Jojo Eskenazi (A small passage of Moiz)], accessed December 5, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vtr8rL2kyFo>. The information on the date of the performance was taken from "Umor Sefaradi' - Sefarad Mizahı" [Sephardi Humor] *Şalom* (website), accessed May 13, 2019, http://www.salom.com.tr/arsiv/haber-89657-umor_sefaradi_sefarad_mizahi.html.

⁵² *Bülten*, July 2016.

⁵³ Ester Yannier, “Moiz Tiyatro Ekibi’nden kocaman bir ‘TEŞEKKÜR’” [From Moiz Theatre Group a huge THANKS], *Şalom* (website), accessed September 14, 2017, http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-89504-moiz_tiyatro_ekibinden_kocaman_bir_acutetesekkuracut.html.

⁵⁴ Against scholars supported by the Turkish government, such as Heath Lowry and Stanford Shaw, who argued that the Turkish state was not involved in the Holocaust and was even devoted to saving Jews from the Holocaust, Corry Guttstadt argues that the Turkish state did not have a concerted plan to save Jews. However, Guttstadt also argues that “World War II was the darkest chapter in the history of Jews in Turkey” because of the Wealth Tax and the Struma Incident. Corry Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 81. Bali documents that anti-Jewish propaganda, adapted from the Nazi Germany print media in Turkish, ran rampant in the Turkish print media, which was under the state’s oversight, until and during World War II. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 432. Historian Recep Maraşlı argued that the Turkish state sent Halûk Nihat Pepeyi, the Head of the İstanbul Police, and Selahattin Korkud, the Head of Minority Division at the İstanbul Police, to Nazi Germany for a research trip in 1943. These two bureaucrats later on played important roles in sending minority businessmen, who failed to pay the Wealth Tax, to labor camps in Aşkale in early 1943. Based on his archival research, Maraşlı argues that the Turkish government sought to align its domestic anti-Jewish policy with that of Nazi Germany, or at least acquired knowledge on technical ways of ethnic cleansing. Recep Maraşlı, “Varlık Vergisi ve Aşkale’nin mimarları Nazilerden ders almış” [The architects of the Wealth Tax and Aşkale (Labor Camp) learned from the Nazis], *Agos*, accessed September 4, 2018, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/821/varlik-vergisi-ve-askalenin-mimarlar-nazilerden-ders-almis>. I would like to thank Hülya Adak for helping me clarify this point.

⁵⁵ Şeni, “Survivance,” 91.

⁵⁶ There has been considerable scholarship on performances on the Holocaust, their spread across European, American, and Israeli stages, and their importance for memory practices, especially for political purposes. For a survey of Holocaust plays in Europe, the United States, and Israel, see Gene A. Plunka, *Holocaust Drama: The Theater of Atrocity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For the impact of the Holocaust on mainstream American cultural production, please see Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Idith Zertal argues that the memory of the Holocaust became a terrain on which the Israeli government has advanced its political agenda toward the establishment and expansion of the nation-state. Idith Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁷ Aleida Assmann, “The Holocaust—A Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community,” in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices, and Trajectories*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (Palgrave Macmillan: 2010), 113.

⁵⁸ Recording of *Moiz İnsanlık Sende Kalsın* [Show Them the Virtues of Humanity, Moiz], Harvard College Library Judaica Collection; “Beş bin yedi yüz senedir burada (kalbini gösterir) taşdıkları Tora sevgisini unuttunuz.” All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

⁵⁹ “Sen tarihin kanlı sayfalarında yer alacaksın.”

⁶⁰ “Ben İstanbullu Moiz Levi, manifaturacı, her sene 4000 5000 kişiyi güldürebiliyorsam, onların yüzüne neşe verebiliyorsam, mutluluk verebiliyorsam, eğer lütfederlerse bir de alkışlarını alabiliyorsam, (alkışlarla kesilir) işte o zaman o güzeller güzeli, bembayaz sayfalar var ya üzerinde de güller var, ben o sayfalarda Moiz Levi olarak yer alacağım, sen de kapkara sayfalarda kaybolup gideceksin.”

⁶¹ For a detailed publication history of these texts, see Rifat N. Bali, *Musa’nın Evlatları, Cumhuriyet’in Yurttaşları* [Moses’ Children, Republic’s Citizens] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014).

⁶² “Hitler’in ‘Kavgam’ı Türkiye’de süpermarketlerde satışta” [Hitler’s ‘Mein Kampf’ is on sale at the supermarkets in Turkey], IMC (website), accessed January 10, 2018, <http://imc-tv.net/hitlerin-kavgami-Türkiyede-supermarketlerde-satista/>. For current anti-Semitism in Turkey, please see the blog *Avlaremöz*, a website run by young Jewish and non-Jewish activists in Turkey. “Kategori: Afedersin Antisemit” [Category: Excuse me, Antisemite], *Avlaremöz*, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://www.avlaremöz.com/category/afedersin-antisemit/>.

⁶³ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this particular characteristic of Moiz plays. I use “intertextual” as in Julia Kristeva’s discussion, which encourages the cultural critic to look into which other texts have been configured into the analyzed text and why. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980 [1969]).

⁶⁴ On the TV hit *Çocuklar Duymasın* [Don’t Let the Kids Hear], Haluk, father of the house, practices English with his kids in order to curb his anxiety over his new boss, who is an American woman. The series originally ran between 2002 and 2005. It was revived twice, once between 2011 and 2013, and for the second time between 2017 and 2018. “Çocuklar Duymasın” (2002–), IMDb, accessed May 13, 2019, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0413623/?ref_=ttep_ep_tt. An edited version of the episode, which belongs to the original run, was available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUGZ2TXXtaU> (this material is now blocked by the copyright holder). Criticizing the use of English words in Turkish sentences was the main tenet of a number in a televised sketch show named “Güldür Güldür” [LOL] under the title “Plaza Dili” [The Office Language]. This sketch, filmed in front of a live audience in 2014, is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhumx8Ii5qs>.

⁶⁵ Ortaköylü Mişon, “Haliç’in Kaybolan Yahudileri: Balat ve Hasköy” [Lost Jews of the Golden Horn: Balat and Hasköy], *Avlaremöz*, accessed February 21, 2017, <http://www.avlaremöz.com/2017/03/31/halicin-kaybolan-yahudileri-ortakoylu-mison/>.

⁶⁶ “Ladino Day in İstanbul,” *Şalom* (website), accessed September 14, 2017, http://salom.com.tr/SalomTurkey/haber-98164-ladino_day_in_istanbul.html.

⁶⁷ “Viyanâ Üniversitesinden Bonofiyel ve Eskenazi’ye davet” [Invitation from the University of Wien to Bonofiyel and Eskenazi], *Şalom* (website), accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.salom.com.tr/newsdetails.asp?id=98066>.

⁶⁸ İnsanlık Sende Kalsın Moiz [Show Them the Virtues of Humanity, Moiz] was staged in Israel in 1998, *Moiz en Paris* [Moiz in Paris] in 1999, *Moiz Milium’de* [Moiz in Milium] in 2005, *Moiz i Hibernatus* [Moiz and Hibernatus] in 2007, *Moiz Hayata Şükret* [Moiz, Be Thankful to Life] in 2009, *Ne İşin Var Evde Moiz?* [Moiz, Why Are You at Home?] in 2013, and a cabaret show solely focusing on Moiz and Kleret in 2016. “Kısa Tarihçe” [Short History], İsrail’deki Türküyeliler Birliği (website), accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.turkisirael.org.il/tarihce>; Cem Rofe, “Moiz Hayata İsrail’de de Şükretti” [Moiz Thanked Life in Israel, Too], *Şalom* (website), accessed September 14, 2017, <http://arsiv.salom.com.tr/news/print/13863-Moiz-hayata-İsrailde-de-sukretti.aspx>; *Bülten* July 2016, 8. Some DVDs at HCL even document the crew’s trip to and tours in Israel. In these recordings, the producers’ and the crews’ enthusiasm about performing in Israel is palpable.

⁶⁹ Recording of *Moiz i Hibernatus* [Moiz and Hibernatus], Harvard College Library Judaica Collection; “Bizim için çok önemli olan İsrail gezimizden sonra sizlerle buluşuyoruz. Biliyorsunuz bayram döneminde 45 kişilik bir ekiple bizlerden uzak yaşayan akrabalarımızı biraz neşelendirmek, buradaki kültürlerini hatırlatmak ve sinemizle 1500 kişiyi bir araya getirmek için İsrail’e gittik. Ve görevlerimizi yerine getirmenin gururuyla geri döndük.”

⁷⁰ Yannier, “Moiz Tiyatro Ekibi’nden.”

⁷¹ “Moiz 8–9 Mayıs’ta İsrail’de” [Moiz will be in Israel on May 8–9], HasTurk Website, accessed September 14, 2017, http://www.hasturktv.com/israilde_gundem/6209.htm; “İsrail’de oynamak bambaşka bir duygu, başka bir heyecan.”

⁷² Other cultural activities which establish a cultural connection are Turkish traditional dance groups’ performances, music concerts in Israel by artists, and the Dostluk Yurdu Derneği’s theatre performances other than Moiz plays, such as their performance of “Pansion Belle–Vue” in October 2004. For more on these, see *Bülten*, June 2004, 6; *Bülten*, August 2007, 5; *Bülten*, August 2004, 5. “Kula ‘930” was staged in Israel as well. “Kula ‘930” Playbill for the 2002 Performance, Judaica Collection, Harvard College Library.

⁷³ “Moiz 8–9 Mayıs’ta İsrail’de.”

⁷⁴ *Bülten*, July 2013.

⁷⁵ For the distinction between “category of practice,” and “category of analysis,” see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47.