

**The Geography of the Memory:
The Representation of the Pre-Holocaust Salonican Jewish Community
in Post-Holocaust Sephardic Poetry**

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1. The geographic-historical borders of the literary discussion

A discussion of Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) literature, which developed in the region known today as Greece, first requires a delineation of geographic and historical framework in which this literature flourished. Large expanses of the region we now call Greece were once part of the huge Ottoman Empire, and the Sephardic, Ladino-speaking Jews who lived within its borders were effectively Ottoman subjects. The historical circumstances that led to growth of the Greek national state also resulted in the gradual inclusion of these Jews in the citizenry of the young Greek country. Even so, their literature continued to display a connection to the Pan-Sephardic tradition that developed throughout the empire. For the purpose of the subject of this proposal, the official borders of contemporary Greece will serve as the framework for an examination of the Ladino literature produced by the Jews of that region — despite our awareness from the outset of the artificial nature of those borders, which resulted from the separation of the Greek national state from the general expanse of the Ottoman Empire (see Seroussi 137).

The Sephardic geographic space, in the borders of what would become the Greek national state, was exposed to earthshaking events that led to geopolitical changes and transformations. I propose dividing the decades between the early 19th century and the early 20th century, based on the geopolitical processes in each time frame. These processes in turn led to accelerated and highly dynamic cultural processes that brought many changes, especially in the context of the subject of our discussion here.

The establishment of the Greece state was a direct result of the economic and political waning of the Ottoman Empire. After a century of decline, the empire was forced to contend with a new Europe, which began to change following the French Revolution and the spread of the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. The old Ottoman order was exposed to the winds of change, and especially the idea of nationalism. In the first quarter of the 19th century a movement arose in Greece for the national-cultural revival of once glorious Greece that had sunk into the depths of history, partly due to the rise of the Turkish Empire. There were similar sentiments in Russia, and the yearning of both these peoples for Christian religious institutions led to the strengthening of the Slavic and Greek cultures in their joint struggle against Islam. The anarchy that prevailed throughout the Ottoman Empire following its wars with Russia and Austria led to the eruption of the rebellion in the Peloponnese region of Greece, in the spring of 1821. That war ended in 1830, and at the London

Conference it was decided that Greece would be an independent kingdom, free of the Ottoman yoke. In 1832 the initial borders of the Greek state were delineated — Old Greece — being central Greece, the Peloponnese and the islands. Still, the northeastern regions, where vast majority of the Sephardic Jews lived were not included in the borders of the “Old” Greece. Cities with a Sephardic majority, such as Salonica, only became part of the Greek national state several decades later. At the beginning of the 20th century there were some 15,000 Jews in “Old Greece,” and most of them were not Ladino-speaking Sephardim. Only after the Balkan wars in 1912-13, when the “new” Greek regions of Epirus, Macedonia and the islands of Crete and the eastern Aegean Sea were added, did the Jewish population of Greece swell to 100,000, of whom 75,000-80,000 were in the renowned Jewish community of Salonica. The Jews of “New Greece” were officially subjects of the Greek state, but in practice they continued to maintain their Sephardic lifestyle, which they had developed during hundreds of years of Jewish life in the bosom of the Ottoman Empire. In many senses, Greek Jews preserved the Sephardic cultural patterns common among all Sephardic communities in the Balkans, including the well-established Ladino literary models (see Rivlin 12-25).

I propose dividing the years between the early 19th and mid 20th centuries into four main periods: 1832-1912 (from the beginning of the independence for “Old Greece” to the establishment of the “New Greece”); 1914-1923 (from the beginning of WWI, the Greco-Turkish War, great fire of Salonica in 1917, the refugee population changes from Asia Minor and eastern Turkey to Greece, to the deep economic crisis); 1924-1935 (from the days of the Greek Republic to the early days of the monarchy and the Metaxas dictatorship); 1935-1941 (from the days of the dictatorship to the beginning of the Bulgarian, German and Italian conquest of Greece during WWII).

The rapid succession of historical events in Greece in the non-Jewish context caused changes in the internal Jewish-community context. The Greek Jewish communities, which on the whole had conducted their affairs quietly and peacefully, found themselves in the eye of the storm and had to find ways to adapt to the changing models of life on the one hand and to preserve the historic Sephardic spirit, on the other.

The final quarter of the 19th century was a time of modernization and the establishment of new socioeconomic avenues. In 1882 the Greek state recognized the legal status of the Jewish communities and the community, which was defined as a religious body, began to be managed by an elected committee. The Greek authorities were suspicious of the traditional cooperative activities between the Greek Jewish public and the various Jewish communities throughout the Ottoman Empire, and antagonism gradually began to develop toward the Jewish community due to that the pent up tensions between the Greek public and the Jewish community. Greece’s War of Independence led to an intensification of anti-Semitic sentiments and increased anxiety within the Jewish community. Jewish emigration from Greece shifted into high gear, with many Jews immigrating to Turkey. Among the émigrés were many

socioeconomically established families who sought to rebuild their businesses far away from the gathering conflict (see Mazower 161).

The Jewish community of Salonica was particularly affected by the turbulence of those times, and the upheavals would have a direct effect on the cultural mood and the literary works in Ladino in that part of Greece. Salonica, which quickly became a military, trade and industry center, especially in the decades between the fire of 1890 and the fire of 1917, became a Jewish center that underwent frequent changes. The Greek-nationalist public had great difficulty accepting Greece's Jewish citizens, especially the Jews of Salonica, who at the flourish of a pen were transferred from the old Ottoman rule to the new, foreign and alien Greek rule. Inter-religious strife, blood libels, harsh anti-Semitic outbursts, the rising power of the Zionist movement on the one hand and the demand for the establishment of a Greco-Jewish identity on the other, coupled with the rising status of the Alliance movement prompted more than a few Sephardic Ladino-speakers to depart the old Sephardic domain in Greece, in favor of cities and regions throughout Europe and the Land of Israel. The resulting population changes led to the weakening of Ladino as the ethnic language of Sephardim and the rise in the prominence of French as the cultural language and Greek as the language for everyday communication.

Under such complicated circumstances of events and upheavals, the Ladino literature written in the region called Greece was obviously subject to dramatic changes in the basic format of its thematic genres.

2. Language as a geographic definer

In the absence of clear geographic borders, and in light of the frequent changes in the geopolitical conditions, Ladino-speaking Sephardim who lived in Greece prior to WWII remained faithful to their ancient Judeo-Spanish language (Ladino), and used it to attempt to define new borders of cultural geography. Ladino was perceived as mighty and unchanging, and was very useful in connecting Sephardim to many geographies at once — to ancient Spain (from which they were exiled), to the Land of Israel (the focus of their prayers) and Greece (in whose changing borders they lived and worked). This extra-territorial behavior prompted one of the pioneers of Sephardic research to define Sephardim as “Spaniards without a homeland,” and this idea was expressed by Senator Ángel Pulido (1852-1932) in his audacious book *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí*, published in Madrid in 1905. Pulido meant that the Sephardim remained Spanish in their souls even when they had actually been away from Spanish culture for over 400 years. Some Jews viewed his words as an invitation to return to the Spanish homeland — an invitation that was never realized.

Sephardim preferred to maintain their extra-territorialism, and every time, in keeping with their psychological need, they chose another territory with which to identify. In the meantime, Ladino served as a liaison between the various geographies and territories in which the Sephardim lived. Life in an extra-territorial and supra-

geographic space continued until the terrible Holocaust, and the Sephardim did not feel the approaching disaster, among other reasons because they were not used to viewing themselves as belonging to one geographic border or another, to one territory or another. They interpreted the historic events of WWII as events firmly connected with European territories and geographies, while viewing themselves as a partly Ottoman, partly Israeli, partly Greek and partly Spanish. They retained this jumbled perception of geographies and identities until they were sent to the extermination camps, and only the reality of Auschwitz-Bierkanau slapping them in the face gave them a clear geographic definition — they were Greek. Thus Auschwitz-Bierkanau forced the Sephardim to choose one geography and stick with it.

3. The geographical paradox and its reflection in the Ladino poems on the Holocaust

A close examination of the corpus of Ladino poems on the Holocaust, brought together in my book *Un grito en el silencio: la poesía sefardí sobre el Holocausto*, published in 2008 in Barcelona, shows that many of the authors wrote about cities in the Sephardic geography, lamenting the destruction of these places — cities that were symbols and personifications of Sephardic life before the Holocaust. Salonica, for example, features in many of the Ladino poems on the Holocaust, and many of these poems place the city at the center of the poetic experience. It is not, however, a Salonica that is meant to represent the Greek state and its geographic borders, or a Salonica that one can point out on a map, but rather a Salonica molded by the powerful melding of its various components — a Salonica fashioned with an identity that was partly Ottoman, partly Jewish, partly Spanish and lastly, somewhat Greek. This is a Salonica fashioned by the intensity of the experience forced on its Jews by Auschwitz-Bierkanau — which compelled them to be identified with a territory, but they preferred to turn it into a supra-territory, or, if you will, a non-territory.

4. Space, cognition, literature

Before we focus on the ways in which Salonica is presented in the poetry of Ladino speakers, it would be fitting to tarry a moment on an explanation of two concepts that will be used during this discussion: *space* and the *cognitive map*.

Space plays an important role in the design of literary works, and even though this concept is imported to the world of literature from non-literary fields, such as the exact sciences, we must explain its meaning in the context of literature. Space is a dimension of reality. It is a broad and multidisciplinary concept, and in literature it is evident in only one of its applications. “Space for the mathematician is not the same as for the geographer, philosopher or artist,” says Israeli researcher Gabriel Zoran, who has dedicated much of his research to the subject of literary space (Zoran 14). According to Zoran, the concept of space covers a whole array of places, relationships

and coordinates. Space is a reality, but can also be a metaphor, and its literary contexts have been discussed in depth by Bachelard, who opines that literary space is not necessarily characterized by mathematical order; rather, its uniqueness lies in its metaphoric strength; in the creation of space by literary artists, or its erasure by those same artists. Literary space can describe reality, but can also fabricate, distort, enlarge or reduce it; make significant points in space insignificant in the literary work, or the opposite. Space is the location in which the literary work ostensibly takes place, but at the same time it can also be the location where the literary work will not take place or which the author wishes to avoid, by escaping into an alternative, imaginary space. Zoran asks the meaning of the concept “the space of a world fashioned in a text.” He surmises that the world in the text is a reconstructed reality, a reality not actually included in the text, but rather a series of potentials formed by the reader while reading (Zoran 25). Even when the literary work accurately “reconstructs” the geographical space, it is actually recreating it, inventing it, reconstructing it, to meet the needs of the literary text. A literary work will never be an exact reflection of reality, because the author’s personal viewpoint gives reality added value that does not necessarily exist. This is all the more so when the literary text takes place in an imaginary space completely disconnected from reality. In such cases, the literary text uses seemingly realistic concepts but the space is merely an invented space.

Unlike space, which can reflect reality more or less accurately or be completely imaginary to suit the needs of the literary work, a cognitive map must be supported by an actual cartographic map. Cognitive maps are dynamic maps that people draw for themselves after they have been in a specific place and want to etch it on their memory. A cognitive map is not a cartographic map that exactly mimics reality, but rather a map formed from people’s personal experiences. People tend to remember certain places and perceive them as major sites while others will perceive the same places as marginal or less important. A cognitive map results directly from the structure of human memory, which is built from all the experiences a person has accumulated relating to the specific space he is etching on his own personal cognitive map.¹ Cognitive maps are also known as mental maps or mind maps and are a way of mentally processing spaces that we have personally experienced in the past.

The credit for the creation of this term is given to Edward Tolman. Cognitive maps have been studied in various fields, such as psychology, education, archaeology, planning, geography, cartography, architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, management and conspiracy theories. As a consequence, these mental models are often referred to, variously, as cognitive maps, mental maps, scripts, schemata, and frames of reference. Putting it into simpler terms, cognitive maps are a method we use to construct and accumulate spatial knowledge, allowing the “mind’s eye” to visualize images in order to reduce cognitive load, enhance recall and learning of information. This type of spatial thinking can also be used as a metaphor for non-spatial tasks, where people performing non-spatial tasks involving memory and

¹ On cognitive mapping or mental mapping, see Kitchin and Tolman.

imaging use spatial knowledge to aid in processing the task. The oldest known formal method of using spatial locations to remember data is the “method of loci”. According to what we find at the Wikipedia (dated Sept, 2011), this method was originally used by students of rhetoric in ancient Rome when memorizing speeches. To use it one must first memorize the appearance of a physical location (for example, the sequence of rooms in a building). When a list of words, for example, needs to be memorized, the learner visualizes an object representing that word in one of the pre-memorized locations. To recall the list, the learner mentally “walks through” the memorized locations, noticing the objects placed there during the memorization phase.

5. Judeo-Spanish cities and their poetic representation

We will now examine the nature of the representation of the Judeo-Spanish cities in poetry. We will address several aspects, including the cities mentioned in the poems; the purpose they fulfill; whether all the poems mention the cities in the same manner; and the relationship of the poets to the cities about which they write. We will try to apply two theories — one literary and the other psychological. The first is connected to the poetics of space and the representation of geographic space in literary texts, while the second is the theory of cognitive mapping, also called mental mapping. The cognitive map is connected to the way in which the human mind filters, processes and records geographical information in its memory. This is a kind of cartographic map that is drawn according to the person's specific needs — the needs of the soul. It is a map born from the experiences a person has endured throughout his life.

The Judeo-Spanish cities that mentioned in the corpus of Holocaust poetry in my book *Un grito en el silencio* are those cities in the Judeo-Spanish space where Jewish life flourished before the Holocaust and which were damaged during it, such as Athens (Refael, poems 24.3, 28.2, 28.6), Belgrad (poems 4.2, 24.3, 24.7), Cavala (poem 1.1), Comotini (poem 1.1), Drama (poem 1.1), Florina (poem 24.3), Larissa (poem 28.2), Novi Sad (poem 24.3), Rode (poems 1.1, 6.1, 21.1), Salonica (poems 1.1, 4.1, 7.1, 14.1, 14.2, 19.1, 20.1, 24.1, 24.3, 24.6, 28.1-5, 34.5, 34.7, 35.1, 37.1, 39.1), Sarajevo (poems 24.3, 33.1), Tirana (poem 24.3) and Xanti (poem 1.1).

6. Salonica - from urban space to poetic space

As noted above, Salonica is the city mentioned most often in poetry and the poets clearly do not present it in the same manner. There are four ways in which Salonica is represented in Holocaust poetry:

1. The erasure of the city from cognitive memory;
2. The remembrance of the city in a general, non-detailed manner;
3. The remembrance of the city alongside its forgetting: the city and the poet - relationships of closeness and distance;

4. The recreation of a Jewish city or the creation of an urban space ex nihilo.

The following are examples of the different representations in these categories, from a few of the poems.

A. The first group is poets who explicitly note in their poetry that they do not want to be reminded of Salonica — the city that lies in ruins, and where Jewish life has been silenced. They would even prefer to erase the city from the map of their memory and they refer to Salonica in the past tense rather than the present tense. Rita Gabbai-Simantov and Matilda Koén-Sarano are exemplary of this group (see Refael, poems 14.1 and 24.1, respectively). Some particularly powerful lines from Koén-Sarano's poetry:

No quiero, Salonic,
no quiero ver tus calles,
tus palacios, tus boticas,
no quiero ver tu mar
de la color del cielo,
tus luces encendidas.

¿Cuálo son estas risas,
estas palabras, estos cantes?,
ellos vienen a mí
con una cola de lloros.

Para mí tú sos
una ciudad de muertos,
un recordo de vida
que nunca va tornar,
que spira a mi derredor
y no me deja reposo. (*Apud* Refael, poem 24.1)

B. The second group is poets who mention Salonica in a general way, without any detailed references such as names of neighborhoods or streets and Jewish sites. These poets mention the city only at the level of collective representation without any cognitive cartography. The urban space is represented only via the city's name — Salonica, in a variety of spellings that reflect chapters in the city's Jewish history; for example *Salonique*, *Salonic* — two forms that are pronounced identically, influenced by French culture; *Thessaloniki* — whose pronunciation was influenced by Greek culture; *Saloniqui* — the pronunciation influenced by Hebrew. There seem to be sufficient forms of Salonica to reflect this space in all its detailed appearances. The poets who make do with representing the city solely by mentioning its name are Jeni Adato Tarabulus, Gloria Ascher, Rita Gabbai-Simantov, Haim Hazan, Matilda Koén-

Sarano and Judá Perahiá (see Refael, poems 1.1, 4.1, 14.2, 20.1, 24.3 and 34.7, respectively). The common thread among the poets in this category is their use of the name Salonica as a single geographical marker in a huge space of Jewish destruction in the Holocaust era. Through “making do” with the name Salonica they attempt to reflect an entire world. Salonica in their poetry is a symbol. When any of these poets uses the name Salonica, he is actually expressing a whole world and expects the reader to know how to fathom that world in all its depth, without the poet having to specify what Salonica is in his eyes and what makes it unique. The use of Salonica as a symbol of a Jewish city stems from the fact that the enormity of the catastrophe that befell the city and its inhabitants is indescribable. Thus, instead of describing the indescribable in a great many words, the poets make do with a general mention of the city, in the expectation that the reader will have the knowledge to fill in the missing details on his own. One such example is the poem by Jeni Adato Tarabulus:

Cómo se fueron,
 cómo se fueron,
 ¡oh, mis hermanos!,
 hermanos en Grecia:

de Salónica y de Lárisa y de Cavala,
 de Xanti y Rodos y de la Drama,
 y de Atena y Comotino
 y de las islas,
 las islas de Grecia. (*Apud* Refael, poem 1.1)

Other poets, too, follow a similar principle. Rita Gabbai-Simantov writes about the young women of Salonica who were sent to their deaths but she actually seeks to use these girls as an expression of all the Sephardic girls who were murdered in the Holocaust. Here are the first lines of her poem.

Niñas lindas de Salonic
 regaladas de sus madres. (*Apud* Refael, poem 14.2)

C. The third group is poets who two-faced approach to Salonica, — a sense of closeness on one hand and distance on the other. They emphasize the duality of their relationship with the city — the city that they feel has changed beyond recognition, estranged itself from its Jewish past and greatly confounded those who so yearned to etch its memory onto their cognitive map. On one hand they feel that they want to bring Salonica to life as a city in their personal memory and on the other hand they feel a desire to erase it from their memory because of the weight of the historical events. The poets Moshé Bachar, Elie Hassid and Shlomó Reuvén are examples of these sentiments (see Refael, poems 7.1, 19.1 and 37.1, respectively). Here are a few

lines from the poetry of Eli Hassid, followed by the first lines by Shlomó Reuvén. Both these examples demonstrate the principle that we are attempting to portray in the current category.

Vieja Salonic, dulce patria ande nací,
dame atrás las alegrías que un tiempo alcancí.
De mi chiquez te amaba ¡oh, civdad mía!,
me alegraba o lloraba sigún tu pasadía.

Amaba tus viejas murallas de Yedí-Kulé,
la Cámara, los parcos de Beas-Kulé,
me placían tus casas altas de el molo.
¡Ah, creiya que nunca me vas a dejar solo!

Ma hoy todos estos recodros me parecen lonjanos,
sos culpable Salonic por la piédrita de mis hermanos.
Tomates a mis queridos, cercanos y amigos,
y los dates en las manos de nuestros enemigos.
Vites la tragedia de la deportación
y no dates una mano de ayudo y salvación.

Ma, ¡Salonic!, civdá ande me engrandecí,
¿es que te aborrezco? No quiero decir ¡sí!
Me acodro de tus hermosuras, de tu cielo, de tu mar,
y no sé en mí mismo cuál con mi boca esclamar:
¿Te amo o te aborrezco, vieja Salonic? (*Apud* Refael, poem 19.1)

and here are the opening lines from Shlomó Reuvén's poem:

No, no es esta la civdad onde vide el día,
no son estos los hombres que conocí en mi chiquez.
No es este el sol que entonces ardía,
ni es este el cielo que me hinchía de borrachez.

Y yo creo vivir en una otra planeta,
onde en cada paso me parece a mí ver
solombras que defilan en un número sin cuenta
y sus vista me hace profundamente esmover. (*Apud* Refael, poem 37.1)

D. The last group has two poets who wish to raise Salonica from the ashes of its destruction, revive it through poetic means, and thereby merge the present with the Jewish past that was erased. The interesting thing is that this is a group of poets who

are using their poetry to revive a city in which they were not born or raised, but rather their parents or relatives. Their poetic expression is intended to enable these poets, through their poetry, to visit a city that was once a bustling Jewish urban center, to commune with it anew — via the words of a poem — and to grant it new cartographic life — life that is entirely the fruit of the imagination of those seeking to revive it through the stories on which they were raised. The two poets Margalit Matitiahu and Avner Pérez are in this category (see Refael, poems 28.1-5 and 35.1, respectively). In the interest of brevity, we shall present only a few examples from Matitiahu's poetry. Her work has been the subject of considerable research and she is a central figure in the revival of Judeo-Spanish poetry. Matitiahu's poetry is unique in many respects, but their relevance in the current discussion lies in the fact that although this poet was not born in Salonica, she considers it her duty to revive the city that was etched on her mother's cognitive map, and to relate to that map as if it were her own. Matitiahu's poems are a voyage to her mother's home, to the regions of her mother's memory. Although her mother refused to return to the city of her birth, her daughter feels compelled to visit the city and bring it back to life in her personal memory, as she notes in the first poem of her poetic journey:

Antes de arribar a Saloniqui

Antes de la partencia al portal de tu chiquez
vine, madre mía,
a batir enriba la piedra de tu casa eternal
y decirte que me vo
ande se crió tu alma,
ande tu padre plantó en ti simiente de poesía.
Me acerco de tu sufrienza callada
y de las piedras que no tienen luz.
Ma todo no fue en vano,
vo a murmurar en tu oreja de tierra. (*Apud* Refael, poem 28.1)

As the poetic journey progresses, the poet succeeds in reconstructing markers in her mother's personal memory and to bring her own cognitive map to an astonishing level of accuracy, as if it were her mother's memory map. She succeeds, for example, in identifying her mother's childhood home at 59 Odos Theoyenos Harisis Street. Here is an excerpt from that poem:

Saloniqui (En la calle que se engrandició mi madre)

La calle parecía hincharse de mis hondos sentimientos
en caminando y buscando mi viejo nombre.
Las solombras de la tadre

empezaban a caer sobre las casas.
 Las ventanas cerradas parecían metersen
 en una guerra muda contra el tiempo pasado,
 mezo las memorias plantadas en mí por mi madre
 vía la casa que súbito se enchequiciya
 hasta tocar la tierra del curtijo
 ande las voces de lo pasado quedaron en el aver.
 Y sintía la prononzación de un nombre
 como una campana
 cunándose en el tiempo y diciendo:
 Thessaloniki, Odos Theoyenos Harisis 59. (*Apud* Refael, poem 28.4)

Readers of Matitiahú's poetry will notice that she uses markers from the urban space to reconstruct her mother's cognitive map — city routes, squares, street names and even inner courtyards do not escape the eyes of the sensitive poet. When the journey ends at one of those courtyards, the poet feels a strong desire to flee and escape the city — probably due to the fact that the intensity of the memories weighs heavily on her. We will conclude with a final example from the title poem *Curtijo quemado*:

Curtijo quemado (El esfueño)

Me topaba en tierra ajena
 en un estraño curtijo
 arrodeada de barracas pretas
 y de colonas en desorden espartidas.

Dientro mí lo sabía
 que en otros lugares
 los colores brían
 y el selencio reina
 con calma y siguridad.

A mi esprito quería dar
 la libertad de fuir,
 el curtijo quemado
 me hacía signos
 sin dicir. (*Apud* Refael, poem 28.7)

7. Cartography of Memory — from erasure to re-creation

An interesting conclusion is reached through the study of the poetry, which can be diagrammed in the following manner:

Erasure of the past → remembrance → ambivalent memories → re-creation

Erasure of the past is explained in the work of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub as a result of trauma (76):

The very act of telling the story can itself become traumatic, when the price of speaking necessitates reliving the past — there is no relief, but rather a repeated traumatization. [...] some poets “broke the silence” and perhaps paid for this with their lives.

From here it will be understood why most of the poets prefer either to forget the city or to mention it in general terms. For them, any attempt to revive any cognitive map in their personal memory comes with a terrible price. They prefer to see the space as an amorphous space devoid of definitive identifying marks. A small group of poets summon the courage to conduct a polemic dialogue with their past, and for the purposes of our discussion here — with the city of their birth. They take it to task and demand an explanation for the injustice done to the city’s Jews. Although they are not bringing the city to life again in their cognitive map, they are prepared — in the words of Felman and Laub — to pay the price and clear their conscience. This process culminates with the creation of the city and its renewed placement on the cognitive map — not of those who grew up in the city, but of those who grew up on its stories, like Margalit Matitiahu for example. Matitiahu’s poetry is characterized by what Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman (77) call “externalizing the event,” that is, composing a narrative and reconstructing history. This process can occur only when the survivor succeeds in expressing the story, transmitting it and passing it on in words to someone beyond himself — so that he can then retake it for himself and internalize it. Matitiahu received a narrative inheritance from her mother, who preferred to pass on her story to her daughter — the poetess — who through her poetry tells both the story of her mother and her own story. Thus Salonica in Margalit Matitiahu’s poetry becomes a city with cartographical identifiers — a city created from the nothingness.

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