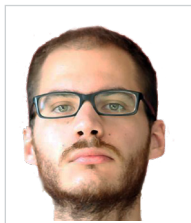# Identity, spectacle and representation: Israeli entries at the Eurovision Song Contest[1]

Identidad, espectáculo y representación: las candidaturas de Israel en el Festival de la Canción de Eurovisión

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Abstract:

Through a sophisticated investment, both capital and symbolic, the Eurovision Song Contest generates annually a unique audio-visual spectacle, debating concepts as well as community, Europeanness or cultural identity. Following the recent researches from the An-glo-Saxon ambit, we will research different editions of the show. Seeking out the movement-image paradoxes through the dialogue between nation and song, the participation of countries in the mar-gins of Europe and his victory –the winning country has to organ-ize the following show the next year– has decentred the host venue and the notion of Eurovision branding. We will focus on the Israeli entries (1973-2018) in order to make an issue on how in this me-ga-event the nation is narrated through the song.

Resumen:

A partir de una sofisticada inversión, capital y simbólica, el Festival de Eurovisión genera anualmente un espectáculo audiovisual en la televisión pública problematizando conceptos como "comunidad", "Europeidad" e "identidad cultural". Siguiendo las investigaciones recientes en el ámbito anglosajón, recorreremos sus distintas ediciones hallando las paradojas inherentes a la imagen en movimiento en el diálogo entre "canción" y "nación" con la participación de países "en los márgenes" de Europa, cuyo triunfo –puesto que el país vencedor ha de ser el organizador al año siguiente– ha descentrado la sede anfitriona y la "marca Eurovisión". Nos centraremos en las candidaturas de Israel (1973-2018) para debatir, por tanto, cómo esta nación es representada en dicho mega-evento a través de la canción.

Keywords:

Eurovision Song Contest; Israel; Nationality; Host; Show.

Palabras claves:

Eurovisión; Israel; nacionalidad; anfitrión; espectáculo.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Eurovision as a field of study

In his book *Identity* (2005), the philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman stated: "Patriotic feelings have been surrendered to (...) promoters of sports, of show business, of anniversary celebrations, and of industrial goods of interest" (Bauman, 2005: 66). Therefore, whereas big televised events such as the Olympic Games or the Super Bowl are a pertinent object of analysis since they congregate a crowd (Roche, 2000) momentarily united, with the community feeling appearing in an *aesthetisized* fashion, so seems to be the case with the international song contest on account of its longevity (62 uninterrupted years), its power to bring people together (about 40 countries take part annually), and the audience ratings. "More than 100 million viewers from over 60 countries" (Akin, 2013: 2303-2304), as Altug Akin (who has conducted the first PhD on Eurovision in Spain) points out.

In our country, the social phenomenon of *Operación Triunfo* (mainly in 2002 and more recently in 2018) has brought about a kind of revival of the Song Contest after decades of indifference (Savini, 2016: 32). However, it is hardly known that, having been born in 1956 alongside the expansion and revolution in telecommunications ("The Secret History of Eurovision", 00h 02' 20"), which generated an international audience (Tragaki, 2013: 17, Arnsten, 2005: 147), Eurovision has left an imprint at a diplomatic level, due to the fact that it is on behalf of nations that songs compete. Furthermore, it drew on the model of the San Remo Festival in Italy, a favourable scene for the creation of a national identity since as far back as Mussolini's time (Plastino, 2013: 112-115). Spain did not take part until 1961 (Gutiérrez Lozano, 2012: 13), when the opportunity of exploiting the brand image of the country was considered (notwithstanding the opposition of other participants on account of Franco's regime [Pinto Teixeira and Stokes, 2013: 224]). Thus, the politicisation of the contest is inherent to its conception.

1.2. Building a stable idea of nation through song

One of Eurovision's genuine traits is the convergence of various styles and languages in a single musical evening (Raykoff and Tobin, 2007: XVIII), in the shape of songs limited to two minutes into which "everything should fit" (according to the musicologist Philip V. Bohlman [2013: 42]), and in a single television show for a public television that was taking its first steps at the dawn of pop music and fan culture (Eurovision.tv, 2015). Although in the early stages the contest brought about the consecration of the West through its image, from 1989 (with the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc) the old enemy would "sneak home" in the form of songs, as Hilde Arntsen maintains (2005: 155). Hence the "nation's fiction", given that, in this contest, each country amounts to a song (Skey et al., 2016: 3384), regardless of its size (Yair and Maman, 1996: 313; Torres, 2011: 253).

"Fiction" also because those countries with fresh memories of their orbiting around the Soviet Union would now share the scoreboard with Russia, which, in fact, made its debut in 1994 (Meerzon y Piven, 2013: 115), with a song called *Eternal Wanderer*: "You are not with me, you are far away, It's not easy to live in different worlds", goes the first verse. As a matter of fact, that year Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary, in addition to the Russian Federation plus Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, filled half a scoreboard (Jordan, 2014: 53) so far not even showing nations' flags. New flags of which the Eurovision scoreboard would witness the evolution (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Scoreboards at Copenhague 1964, Luxembourg 1973, and Dublin 1994. The first two are more sober in style, whereas the third shows the respective flags, in a year when the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia predominated.

Source: author's own elaboration from http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/eurovision-siglo-xx/

Thus, that picture (the scoreboard, the flags, the design, the scenography and even the exhaustive repetition of every country's name with their diverse pronunciations hence the presence of English or rather "Populenglish", as Yana Meerzon and Dmitri Piven point out [2013: 115]) has, through its continuity in time, promoted "Western European Integration", as the expert Mari Pajala maintains (2012: 6). Besides, it tries to fix identities by discussing the idea of "national" representation through the constant creation of such a correlation and, therefore, a sense connecting both nation and song (Bohlman, 2013: 48).

1.3. State of the issue

Identity, spectacle and representation are three key concepts included in some of the most important volumes that deal with mega-events, among them Daniel Dayan's and Elihu Katz's *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History* (1992) and Maurice Roche's *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and expos in the growth of global culture* (2000). More recently, articles such as Martin Müller's and John Pickles's "Global games, local rules: Mega-events in the post-socialist world" (2015) have been made available. So do some titles on the issue of nation branding, from which I would highlight the ones by the creator of the term himself, Simon Anholt, such as *Brand New Justice* (2003) and *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions* (2007), as well as Wally Olins's *On b®and* (2004) and *Places. Identity, image and reputation* (2010).

Although the specific bibliography in Spanish on Eurovision is very scarce (Torres, 2011; Gutiérrez Lozano, 2012; Ortiz Montero, 2017; Panea, 2017), there are numerous materials in English. Nonetheless, the first research study on this topic was published in Swedish by the musicologist Alf Björnberg as far back as 1987. Not until 1995, from a statistical approach, would studies in English start to increase: "Unite, Unite Europe. The Political and Cultural Structure of Europe as Reflected in the Eurovision Song Contest", by Gad Yair (1995 and 1996, the latter in collaboration with David Maman), followed by others (Haan et al., 2005; Ginsburgh and Noury, 2005) that share references to Dayan's and Katz's (1992) influential volume.

From 2007 on, speci alised articles have proliferated, with collective volumes such as those edited by Ivan Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin (2007), Dafni Tragaki (2013), or Karen Fricker and Milija Gluhovic (2013). These authors belong to fields such as

cultural studies, anthropology, audiovisual communication, performance studies, or musicology, having provided materials used for master's theses (Meijer, 2013; Molineaux, 2015; Sanandrés, 2015) and doctoral theses (Wolther, 2006; Akin, 2011; Jordan, 2011). Also for seminars: *Singing Europe: Spectacle and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (University of Thessaly, 2008), *Visions of Europe in the Eurovision Song Contest* (University of Copenhaguen, 2014), *Eurovisions. Perspectives from the Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts* (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2018); or for official publications (O'Connor, 2007).

I would also highlight ESCToday (https://www.esctoday.com) or Wiwibloggs (https://www.wiwibloggs.com/) digital platforms, since they compile the information generated by Eurovision and constitute a space for the creation of a "community" beyond the televised event, by giving full coverage to every national final (Bohlman, 2013: 47) —with Youtube being an unmissable repository for the videos since its creation (Ivkovic, 2013).

2. Objectives

2.1. General objectives

Here I propose a genealogy of the Song Contest's history regarding both the participant songs and the management of the diverse stage designs and annual venues, exploring how the concept of "Europeanness" (allegedly championed by Eurovision) is challenged in the proposed case study, namely Israel as a participant country. We will discuss the problematic relationship, in the "European" competition, of a country *on the margins* of Europe with the "Western Bloc" that started the Song Contest precisely in order to fix its own identity as an "erasure", in Derridean terms: the being as the exclusion of everything determined as alien (Derrida, 1997). I claim this idea to be part of the cultural identity of that state, to the foundation of which the Diaspora is inherent (Belkind, 2010: 20).

2.2. Specific objectives

The relationship between song and nation will be established, given my belonging to the research field of artistic and visual practices, through the lyrics and the scenic designs, as well as the social or political references of the various entries; they will form the backbone of the text as a kind of chapters that will, in this way, challenge the idea of "narrative" —of how the nation is told in such a framework of enunciation. The scenographies in the two occasions when Eurovision was held in Jerusalem will also be analysed.

3. Methodology

80% of my analysis, of a descriptive nature, will be based on a review of the literature on the Song Contest in order to reassess it, unlike other writings that alternate it with more generic works (from sociology, queer theory, cultural studies, communication, or musicology) aligned with cultural identity-related concepts; I hope to contribute a compendium that is helpful and specific for future research. Nevertheless, I will save the remaining 20% of the bibliography for texts that, although not directly related to the topic, are like road maps on account of their scholarly relevance and conceptual proximity.

Starting from visual arts in connection with identity politics, the interdisciplinarity of the present text is imperative, given the nonspecificity inherent to research *based on* artistic practices, which thus become sensitive to an "identity" reinforced by Eurovision through moving pictures.

4. Discussion

4.1. The host venue takes in the rejected

4.1.1. Language issues

Eurovision, not just as a song contest but also as a contest of nations, is a breeding ground for the study of both "song's fiction" and "nation's fiction", together on the same stage. I borrow Jean Luc Nancy's ideas of "fiction" and "fictionalisation" to address the relationship between symbolic practices (audiovisual in this instance) and their truth content (or how representation has, through repetition, the power to create realities and identities [Nancy, 1994]). Therefore, language reveals itself as the truth that is wielded (in the sense, to keep the metaphor going, that diverse truths and countries compete) in order to differ from the rest. Likewise, Benedict Anderson's idea of language as "property" (as expressed in *Imagined Communities*, 124) is interesting: an invention of nationalisms that is able to forge "particular solidarities" (2006: 189).

Along these lines, in the early stages of the contest (Fricker and Gluhovic, 2013: 4), when virtually all Western Europe took part, every country's public television would put forward a song in its own official language, although they achieved differing degrees of success. Up to 1973, the first places were for the francophone bloc —Luxembourg (with 4 victories), France (3), Monaco (1), and Switzerland (1)— followed by the anglophone bloc —United Kingdom (2 wins) and Ireland (1)— and finally the Netherlands, already scoring 3 victories. The delegations of the Nordic countries (four in total) considered, after repeated failures, performing their songs in English (Jordan, 2011: 97). They even regarded their own languages as unsuitable for singing arguing "stylistic and aesthetic as well as semantic problems", explains Annemette Kirkegaard (2013: 86).

The voting system, in which the scoreboard shows the countries' names, not the songs', involves every country "giving" the rivals (self-scoring being not allowed) a fixed number of scores: firstly from 1 to 8, then from 10 to 12 (Yair, 1995: 149). This allows to draw an affinity scale (Björnberg, 2007: 17) divided into 10 positions, with the most voted countries having an advantage since they are two points above the rest. Up to the 1970s, around 14 countries participated in the contest: 5 francophone (France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Monaco, and Switzerland [Vuletic, 2018: 50-51]), plus the addition of their ally the Netherlands; 2 anglophone (the United Kingdom and Ireland); 2 Germanic (Germany and Austria); the Mediterranean countries Italy and Spain; and the systematically ignored Portugal (Yair and Maman, 1996: 314-315). Inevitably, language and cultural affinity issues were reflected on the scoreboard.

Facing such a map, the Nordic bloc, in spite of its having four members (Iceland did not make its debut until 1986) and their sharing out their votes among neighbours (Fenn et al., 2005: 585-586; Panea, 2017: 96), seemed "to sound not right" to the rest of juries on account of their languages, all of Germanic root except for Finnish. And that Germanic sound, given the not-so-far imprint of the fascist exploitation of symbolic productions (songs and the language itself), would turn out

to weigh heavily on everything German. In fact, Germany could extricate itself from this hindrance only by its tireless participation every year from 1956, to see its first win in 1982 (with a pacifist song) and a second one in 2010, sung in English (Rehberg, 2013: 185). What is more, the first victory in the contest for any song *in German* was awarded to Austria but with a title in French: *Merci, chérie*, which reflected the francophone tone the "chanson" had at that time (Torres, 2011: 251-252).

As early as 1965, Sweden had already brought to the competition a song in English. Likewise, when Massiel won for Spain in 1968 with her *La, la, la*, at the final encore of the gala she included a few verses from the English version (Sanandrés, 2015: 28). Soon afterwards, this trend consolidated. In 1973, Sweden, Finland, and Norway purposefully competed in this language, achieving 5th, 6th, and 7th positions respectively, out of 17. As a matter of fact, the 1974 edition was won by the Swedish band ABBA with *Waterloo*, the bronze being for the Netherlands with Mouth & McNeal's song *I See a Star* (so far, the first podium with two songs in English from non-English-speaking countries [Jordan, 2012]). Besides, it was precisely the Netherlands that, in English again, won the gold the following year, establishing a youthful, mixed, casual pop band style with no ethnic or local features. The very identity of the competition was starting to be restated (Björnberg, 2007: 21).

These facts would eventually led the organising body (the European Broadcasting Union, or EBU) to ban the "freedom of language" in 1977. The ban was later extended until 1999 (Kirkegaard, 2013: 86; Torres, 2011: 252): more than twenty years of entries forced to use their official languages in every song. Nevertheless, soon afterwards the Norwegian and Swedish televisions scored two victories each, which could refute my hypothesis. Anyway, both the titles and the choruses were (as is the case with *Diggi-lo diggi-ley* [Sweden 1984]) a mere humming devoid of sense (Raykoff, 2007: 2), and *Nocturne* (Norway 1995) a predominantly instrumental song (Björnberg, 2007: 21). With an increasing number of participants, the strategy consisted in distinguishing themselves from the rest with catchy compositions.

The restriction ended in 1999, and up to now most delegations have adopted English as their "official language" (Molineaux, 2015): the best chance for the "new states" to make room for themselves in the final scoreboard (Panea, 2017: 94). Since that year, after Israel's victory singing in Hebrew in the 1998 edition, ten out of the last twelve winners have made it in English, except for Serbia in 2007 and Portugal in 2017. At the same time, commercial pop prevails, in line with the increasing Americanisation of show business, the myths and "stereotypes" of which have reached European culture through "movies, literature and song movies" (Strand, 2013: 144; Meijer, 2013: 66).

4.1.2. Infrastructure issues

A victory in Eurovision is, as the writer Alisa Solomon explains, rewarded with the "traditional" (2003: 149) right to "bring home" an average of another twenty participants the following year (and up to forty since the implementation of the semifinals [Jordan, 2011: 42]). Usually a country's capital city (Yair, 1995: 149), the "Eurocity" to which "the (...) prefix 'Euro' draws attention to its complex relationship to geography" (Bohlman and Polychronakis, 2013: 62) must host the said delegations, during a few days in May in which the whole city centre (lined with official merchandising) is celebrating. In 2004, the introduction of the semifinals (Meijer, 2013: 11) modified the mechanics of the competition, going from being a single event to three: Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Some European tourist capitals such as Amsterdam or Paris have been venues more than once, but lower-profile ones have sometimes placed themselves on the map as well (Arntsen, 2005: 155; Jordan, 2011: 56). Occasionally, the winning country

has been unable or unwilling to host the contest the following year, having to resort then to an unplanned venue as a matter of urgency (as the contest historian Dean Vuletic points out [2018: 177]). This was the case with Israel, which, after its 1979 success, delegated Eurovision 1980 to The Hague.

Recently, after the resignation of the Ukrainian committee in 2017, Kiev was one step away from not being the organising city. However, as the stadium was already being put the finishing touches, a Swedish production team finally undertook the project (Jordan, 2017). Other countries, such as Estonia or Turkey, have hardly been able to organise the contest on account of their scarce resources (Jordan, 2014: 29; Akin, 2013: 2315). Anyway, what we can easily deduce from the construction of the stage is the consolidation of each host city's "own" image through their respective self-chosen slogans: "Celebrate Diversity" in Kiev 2017, or "Awakening" in the same city in 2005, in coincidence with the Orange Revolution (Jordan, 2011: 171).

Every stage poses a challenge to the delegation in charge, as it is meant to outdo the previous ones in addition to incorporate state-of-the-art technology, especially after the early 2000s' stadiums with a capacity of over 10,000 seats (Baker, 2015: 74), full of spaces inspired by local folklore elements (Panea, 2017: 90) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: 1994 venue in Dublin (left), inspired by the city's buildings at night, and Kiev 2017 (right), simulating Dnieper river banks.

Source: author's own elaboration from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddlOgvuBnf0>

In 2004, the EBU created a Eurovision logo to be used regardless of the particular thematic concept of each edition: a design that, showing the word "Eurovision" handwritten with vigorous strokes, gives the letter "V" the shape of a heart (Panea, 2017: 89-90; Torres, 2001: 251) —in reply to the inevitable politicisation of the competition, as the authors of "Staging and Engaging With Media Events: A Study of the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest" point out (Skey et al., 2016: 3389).

4.2. Israel in Eurovision

Let us picture an appealing scene while talking about cultural identity and Europeanness —the posing of "the question" at a get-together at home to watch the gala: "If Israel is not in Europe, how come it participates in Eurovision?" (Lampropoulos, 2013: 159). We will need to go back to the 1970s.

Since 1973, with the clash for the hegemony of the Mediterranean in full swing (as a "bastion" coveted by both Soviet and Western blocs [Huntington, 1997: 138]), precisely Israel, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and Malta brought themselves to take part in the competition, setting a precedent for the Balkan countries in the 90s (Fricker and Gluhovic, 2013: 4) and contributing music styles so far unseen in the event. Given the delicate political situation in these countries, their means were limited (Akin, 2013: 2307), but they did not fail to "send" their message (as it was the case with the Greek representative Mariza Koch in 1976, whose song was a metaphorical protest against the Turkish invasion of Cyprus [Raykoff, 2007: 3], or Ajda Pekkan for Turkey in 1980 with *Pet'r oil*: "a love story about petrol, so coveted by everyone" ["The Eurovision Song Contest 1980", 00h 11' 09"]).

The purpose of the gathering is brought into question; hence the doubt about where Europe starts or ends (as Dafni Tragaki [2013: 9] points out). The organising body (the EBU) does not keep to national borders but to a geographical scope that encompasses Europe, parts of Northern, Central, and Western Asia, and all countries washed by the Mediterranean (Haan et al., 2005: 63-64), and is "part of a group of institutions" (including the European Union or the European Central Bank) that have endeavoured to forge a new, cosmopolitan "sense of European Citizenship" (…) "but not always congruent" (Tobin, 2007: 35) –of which inconsistency I am going to detail the aesthetical and political paradoxes–.

Figure 3: Israel's participations in Eurovision

Year	Artist	Song	Final	Lang.	Año	Artista	Canción	Final	Semi	Idioma
1973	Ilanit	Ey Sham	04/17	Hebrew	1996	Galit Bell	Shalom Olam	X	28/29	Hebrew
1974	Kaveret	Natati La Khayay	07/17	Hebrew	1997	-				
1975	Shlomo Artzi	At Va'Ani	11/19	Hebrew	1998	Dana International	Diva	01/25	-	Hebrew
1976	Chocolat, Menta, Mastik	Emor Shalom	06/18	Hebrew	1999	Eden	Yom Hueldet/Happy birthday	04/23	-	H E
1977	Ilanit	Ahava Hi Shir Lishnayim	11/18	Hebrew	2000	Ping Pong	Sameyach	22/24	-	H E
1978	Izhar Cohen, Alphabeta	A-ba-ni-bi	01/20	Hebrew	2001	Tal Sondak	En davar	16/23	-	Hebrew
1979	Gali Atari, Milk & Honey	Hallelujah	01/19	Hebrew	2002	Sarit Hadad	Light a candle	12/24	-	H E
1980	-				2003	Lior Narkis	Milim la'ahava	19/26	-	H E
1981	Hakol Over Habibi	Halayla	07/20	Hebrew	2004	David D'or	To believe	X	11/22	H E
1982	Avi Toledano	Hora	02/18	Hebrew	2005	Shiri Maimon	Hasheket shenish'ar	04/24	07/25	H E
1983	Ofra Haza	Chai/Hi	02/20	Hebrew	2006	Eddie Butler	Together we are one	23/24	-	E
1984	-				2007	Teapacks	Push the bottom	X	24/28	E F H
1985	Izhar Cohen	Olé, olé	05/19	Hebrew	2008	Boaz Mauda	The fire in your eyes	09/25	05/19	H E
1986	Moti Giladi y Sarai Tzuriel	Yavo Yom	19/20	Hebrew	2009	Noa & Mira Awad	There must be another way	16/25	07/18	H A E
1987	Datner & Kushnir	Shir Habatlanim	08/22	Hebrew	2010	Harel Skaat	Milim	14/25	08/17	Hebrew
1988	Yardena Arazi	Ben Adam	07/21	Hebrew	2011	Dana International	Ding Dong	X	15/19	H E
1989	Gili & Galit	Derekh Hamelekh	12/22	Hebrew	2012	Izabo	Time	X	13/18	E H
1990	Rita	Shara Barkhovot	18/22	Hebrew	2013	Moran Mazor	Rak bishvilo	X	14/17	Hebrew
1991	Duo Katz	Kan	03/22	Hebrew	2014	Mei Finegold	Same heart	X	14/15	E H
1992	Dafna Dekel	Ze rak sport	06/23	Hebrew	2015	Nadav Guedj	Golden boy	09/27	03/17	English
1993	Sarah'le Sharon	Shiru	24/25	H E	2016	Hovi Star	Made of stars	14/26	07/18	English
1994	-				2017	Imri Ziv	I feel alive	23/26	03/18	English
1995	Liora	Amen	08/23	Hebrew	2018	Netta Barzilai	Toy	01/26	01/19	I H J

Languages:	(H) Hebrew	(I) English	(F) French	(A) Arabic	(J) Japanese
	When in the song there are two or more languages, the initial of the language will appear from left to right and from the most to the minor prevailing.				

Colors:	Winner	High position	Middle position	Low position	Out of final
Semi:	Semifinals started up in 2004, with the 1996 contest exception				
-:	No entry this year				

Source: author's own elaboration from <https:www.eurovision.tv>

4.2.1. Ey sham ("Somewhere"), 1973

Israel, established as a nation by the UN in 1948, encouraged the construction of a "national identity" since the first post-war years, relying mostly on public television for that purpose (Vuletic, 2018: 56), with Eurovision being the optimum showcase to "stablish cultural alliances that cultivate its national imaginary in association with the Europeanized West" (Belkind, 2010: 23). 1973 was a turning point, with *Ey sham* ("Somewhere") as Israel Broadcasting Authority's (IBA) submission for their debut (the first debut of a *non-European* country, which was an unprecedented reason for "national pride" [Lemish, 2007: 123]). The title of the song (seemingly an innocuous love song) alludes to a dreamed-of home, thus demanding a place for their own among the family of nations (Lampropoulos, 2013: 158-159). The lyrics, translated from Hebrew, go as follows:

<p align="center">The middle of the night has come and I am awake
Dreams come to the threshold
It's the silence before the storm
Let's go now
There –there I saw a rainbow
There –there the morning rises in white
Somewhere –there we'll find the garden together
The garden of love[2].</p>

While it is a mainstream song, in this context (and with the obvious references to the "dangers" of the night, the scarcely glimpsed "rainbow", the "storm", as well as the search for reconciliation) we are led to think of a declaration of intent that the second stanza explicitly states by using the term "home":

<p align="center">Tonight my house is wrapped by the winds
Holding it from every side
We fly beyond the clouds
Hand holding hand</p>

A few months earlier, in 1972, the Munich Olympics massacre had taken place, prompting strong security measures to be taken at a decisive point in Cold War (Lampropoulos, 2013: 158). Before the live show, the commentator Terry Wogan recommended the public not to make any sudden gesture such as getting up from their seats, as it might be interpreted as an alarm of a terrorist attack. Some time later, Ilanit had to scotch the rumour that she had been wearing a bulletproof vest under her dress (Klier, 2007). The controversy, in addition to the novelty of style, costume, and lyrics, and the success of the performance led the juries to award her the fourth position out of seventeen.

Two aspects were key to her act: first, the traditional Palestinian stripe print dress designed by Rozi Ben-Yosef with inspiration from Eilat Mountains by the Red Sea (Yaacob, 2009), suitably colourful to take advantage of the Technicolor technology of those days; second, the fact that, for the first time, it was a woman (Nurit Hirsh, who also composed the song [O'Connor,

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2 All translations are the author's, made from the Eurovision repository <http://www.4lyrics.eu/>

2007: 190] [3]) who conducted the orchestra, which was a counterpoint to the traditional ceremony dominated by men and made Israel dream of a possible victory. In Figure 4 (left), Nurit Hirsh appears on the background, opening the act by staring forcefully at the camera instead of the orchestra she is conducting. In the middle picture, a close-up of the singer. The right picture shows the design of the dress more clearly.

Figure 4: Ilanit performing Ey Sham in Luxembourg 1973.

Source: author's own elaboration from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rm64PXy5eck

The IBA's next entries also reached the upper half of the chart. In 1974, it was the all-male alternative pop band Kaveret (renamed Poogy for the occasion) who achieved the 7th place with *Natati La Chaiai* ("I gave her my life"), an ironic reflection made out of untranslatable puns on human stubbornness (which was read, right after the end of Yom Kippur War, as a critique of Prime Minister Golda Meir for her "not having earlier reached a peace settlement with Egypt [Vuletic 2018: 133]; she resigned from her post only five days after the Song Contest).

> Today you'll find that the subject of every argument
> Is what came first –the egg or the apple?
> One says that she's running out of sky
> When there's enough air for a country or two
> Maybe we'll get along after all
> She'll want it, then we'll get over it

In 1976, the all-female band Chocolate Menta Mastik, with their suggestive vocal harmonies and choreography, were 6th. The song, in which the chorus keeps repeating "come, say hello", at one point says: "I've been alone for almost thirty years". As a matter of fact, it was almost thirty years since their country came to existence (Vuletic, 2018: 133).

And the victory happened, at last, in 1978, precisely with Hirsch back to conducting, this time the song *A-Ba-Ni-Bi* performed by Izhar Cohen & The Alpha Beta Band. A worldwide hit in tune with bands like Earth, Wind & Fire or Boney M., its chorus keeps repeating "I love you" and alludes to the "language of love". Although the victory was not broadcast in Jordan

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3   Sweden also put forward a woman conductor that year, which thus featured a double debut. Only the 1978 and 1985 editions would witness such a situation again.

("60 Years of Eurovision", 2015, 00h:39':48"), a break in the history of the Song Contest was indeed taking place: Europe was being summoned outside Europe for the first time (Raykoff, 2007: 11). Moreover, it was an euphoric moment for the country according to Bohlman, who narrates in first person how the competition would bring families together in a "ritual" way, even equating it with traditions such as the *Motzei Sabbath* (Bohlman, 2013: 47).

4.2.2. Heute in Jerusalem ("Today in Jerusalem"), 1979

Jerusalem 1979 featured, following the outcome of Cohen's acclaimed performance (and a committed one, inasmuch as he belongs to the country's Yemeni minority), a technically innovative stage, with a zenithal camera, never used before, showing orchestra, stalls, and stage all in a single frame. Although that year the set designers experimented with colour in the stage elements, they played with movement too (Figure 5). With an adaptation of the IBA logo in the centre of the stage (here is the concept of "brand image" plainly shown), three concentric metal rings were spinning around their own axis (tracing the shape of the pupil of an eye), which contributed an unusual dynamism to an eye-shaped stage that, in addition to the lighting, created diverse spaces to personalise each performance (Eurovision.tv, 2017a).

Figure 5: Greece's performance on the stage of Jerusalem 1979

Source: author's own elaboration from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_v3OrLPaRp4>

The programme was broadcast in English, French, and Hebrew, which slowed the show down to three hours (Panea, 2017: 83) —when the most usual was to do it in English and French in no more than two hours. The city transformed to host the nineteen participants in the International Convention Center; even though some delegations showed their reticence (Turkey withdrew that year [Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1979]), the rest were accommodated in the capital's financial centre,

making their stay a pleasant summer experience which they would put on record (Figure 8) —an experience repeated in 2017, this time during the promotion tour (Eurovision.tv, 2017c).

At a "diplomatic" level, the most remarkable point that year, 1979, was the Austrian entry *Heute in Jerusalem*, by Christina Simon –a German-sung song with a pacifist message, the translation of which goes–:

<div align="center">

Look, from the cold high sky

Fall a hundred moons

As a sign for the new beginning

As a sense against the nonsense

And today in Jerusalem

Finally in Jerusalem

Take breath and reflect

Peace for Jerusalem

</div>

In this way, it was the first song that mentioned the host city, just a few days after the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace was brought about by the visit of Egyptian Prime Minister Anwar el-Sadat, putting an end to an over 30-year-old war. In spite of the "humanitarian" gesture, the kind of which the competition boasts about (Tragaki, 2013: 22-23), the song got next-to-last place. However, the trend has surprisingly continued: a declaration of intent between host and guest[4].

4.2.3. Chai ("Alive"): 80s and 90s

Israel's golden years consolidated after their 1979 new *home* victory with Gali Atari's and Milk & Honey's song *Hallelujah*, taking advantage of the universality of this word (Bohlman and Rehding, 2013: 287-288) —as it was later the case with the word "sport", used in 1992 for the song *Ze rak sport* ("Just Sport"). Let us pay attention to the lyrics for a moment:

<div align="center">

Yes, life is a fast line,

and it's a sure thing

But tonight I have a song,

and everything is still open

I think that here,

in the Promised Land

You understand those who are willing to take the risk

</div>

An allusion to the Promised Land again. Likewise, in 1995 the most widely known Hebrew word, *Amen*, appeared in the song with the same title performed by the band Liora, who finished just one step from the podium.

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4   In The Hague 1980, the Netherlands submitted the song Amsterdam; in 1999, the German band Sürpriz brought to Jerusalem their song Reise nach Jerusalem ("The Way to Jerusalem"); and, following such patriotism, Portugal sent Portugal no coração in 1977, Conquistador in 1989, and Lusitana Paixão in 1991. In 1988, Spain competed with Made in Spain (la chica que yo quiero) ("Made in Spain. The Girl I Love"). Austria brought to Rome 1991 a song dedicated to Venice; Belarus submitted I Love Belarus in 2011 and, in 2014, Poland presented We Are Slavic.

However, going back to 1979, the following year (1980) this course of success suffered a setback when IBA, which was due to organise the gala, declined to do it on account of lack of infrastructure and the fact that they should use the same stage (Vuletic, 2018: 72). In addition, they withdrew from the competition (unusually enough) due to the coincidence of the final's date with the anniversary of the Jewish Holocaust (Eurovision.tv, 2017b). It was then when Morocco took the opportunity to make its debut on the venue that offered to host the contest, The Hague, although they finished second to last (Eurovision.tv, 2017b). The disappointment of the Moroccan television in addition to the announced return of Israel in 1981 demotivated them about a possible comeback, eventually ruled out by the Moroccan public broadcaster SNRT (Jiandani, 2014). That made this country not just the only African state ever participating in Eurovision, but also the only one having taken part only once.

Munich 1983, eleven years after the murder of the eleven members of the Israeli Olympic team by the terrorist group Black September in the same city's Games, featured another popular singer, Ofra Haza, with *Khai* ("Alive"). Shrouded by controversy, she sang a cheerful, lively chorus that repeated "Alive, alive, alive, the nation of Israel is alive" (precisely written by a singer of Moroccan origin, Avi Toledano, who, as a performer, achieved second position in 1982 with *Hora*, which makes reference to the land of Canaan). And, one more time, the audience were asked to stay on their seats for security reasons (Lampropoulos, 2013: 159). To top it all off, Germany's 10 points that year were for *Khai* (the third highest score awarded to Israel by Germany from 1978 —with *A-ba-ni-bi*— to the present, i.e., in more than forty years of songs).

Figure 6: Ofra Haza in Munich 1983 (left) and Liora in Dublin 1995 (right).

Sources: author's own elaboration from <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/387168899208416379/> (left)
and < https://apex.eurovision.tv/image/96a417c93a3327333fc5d4eb445a3cd7> (right)

The IBA would be also applauded for entries such as *Olé Olé* (1985), with Izhar Cohen again making reference to love and fraternity. On the subsequent years the need to imagine the nation kept on being told, as in the 1991 Duo Katz's submission *Kan* ("Here"): "Here I was born, here my children were born, here I built my home with my own two hands"; ...as well as the need to discredit it, as the duo Datner & Kushnir did in 1987 (the first time comedians took part in the competition, with *Shir Habatlanim* —literally, "The Bum's Song"— strongly criticised by Israel's culture minister, who threatened to resign [O'Connor, 2007: 109]).

And the third victory would come in 1998, twenty years after the 1978 win, with Dana International's *Diva* (Raykoff, 2007: 11). By making constant, suggestive references to the goddesses Aphrodite and Victory, the lyrics (in Hebrew, although including the Spanish verse "Viva la diva") extolled a mystical femininity in the shape of a song:

> For angels Diva is an empire
> On stage Diva is hysteria
> She's all a love song

However, it was done in a register so far tabooed: that of the transexual body. Even though her entry has been widely studied (Lampropulos, 2013; Lemish, 2007; Solomon, 2003), I would like to emphasise the global concern and pressures around the body understood as social body and as the standard bearer of the nation's fiction as "embodied time" (Bohlman, 2013: 49) –given that the ways of seeing and the ways of pleasure in the audiovisual media, predominantly androcentric, find the female body as a "residence" (Panea, 2017: 91). I mean "concern" about an *abject* body the gender reassignment of which had taken place in the United Kingdom (Solomon, 2003: 151), to which country (Birmingham was the venue that year, 1998) she now returned for a different *recognition* (not in traditional garment as Ilanit's but in a Jean Paul Gaultier's dress [Solomon, 2003: 149]).

Dana achieved the first position on a hard-fought, all-female podium, so the following year (1999) Eurovision was to be hosted by Israel for the second time; in fact, on the same stage that had been rejected in 1980. This would be an occasion to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the state; consequently, the stadium was to be thoroughly renovated, with the designer Ronen Levin's project (featuring astrological elements inspired by the turn of the millennium) being selected (Sharrock, 1999) (Figure 7), in an international relatively peaceful climate after the Oslo Accords (1993) and the first Pride parade in Tel Aviv in 1998 (Solomon, 2003: 152). Thus it was that the IBA participated this time with *Happy Birthday*, a song performed in English and Hebrew by the boyband Eden (Bohlman y Rehding, 2013: 288), to go on commemorating the anniversary (Tobin, 2007: 26).

4.2.4. *Take me to your heaven, 1999*

Nevertheless, and in spite of the appearance of opening-up evoked by "the way the Middle East is imagined" by Dana (Jordan, 2011: 53), it was a controversial edition on account of her being its "artificer": the pride in the victory conflicted with the shame Orthodox Jews felt towards the one who had achieved it (Maurey, 2009: 85-103; Gluhovic 2013: 194-217). Moreover, tradition rules that the previous year's winner repeat their song (therefore, it would be the local *Diva* this time). At the end of the gala, when she took the trophy in her hands to present it to the winner, she unexpectedly fell over to the floor. This set the alarms off (once more, for fear of a new attack) among the stage staff who were not able to see what happened close up. But it was just a scare: the trophy was so heavy that it had made the *Diva* fall too (which later served as inspiration for a short performance art piece she offered to the audience [The Eurovision Song Contest 1999, 03h 06' 22"]).

Figure 7: Jerusalem 1999. (Left) Precious's performance (United Kingdom). (Middle) Dana International's interval act. (Right) The final act, with Take Me to Your Heaven, with the other participants joining on stage to culminate in the famous Hallelujah (1979) in honour of the victims of the recent Yugoslav wars.

Source: author's own elaboration from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Am4C1iI46F0>

Apart from the management of the friendly show, which benefitted the image of opening-up they strove to project, the event broke one of the Shabbath rules by carrying out one of the general rehearsals on the Friday prior to the final (Jordan, 2011: 54). Moreover, the government (according to Araleh Goldfinger) did not support that edition financially (OGAESPAIN, 2018). What is more, the EBU's most groundbreaking ruling ever was issued: from then on, any language could be used by any country to sing their songs, and the orchestra would be done away with for good (which affected the very structure of the stage [Jordan, 2011: 45], as the orchestra had been the distinguishing feature of the gala from its early stages).

Sweden returned to the first position with the song *Take me to your heaven*, consolidating what we can aptly call "Eurovision style", based on the arrangements[5] characteristic of ABBA's hits (Vuletic, 2018: 35). Björnberg maintains that this style, classifiable as Europop or Eurodance, is meant to carry out a globalising "clean up" of any cultural distinguishing features (Björnberg, 2007: 20), which has so far provoked reactions ranging from orientalism and the expression of local peculiarities (both in lyrics and melodies) to the aestheticisation or fictionalisation carried out by the fashionable Eurotechno (2007: 21-22) after the success of hits outside the contest such as Enigma's *The return to inocence* (1994) or Tarkan's ımarık *(Kiss kiss)* (1997).

Take me to your heaven may be interpreted as a song that, by making reference to the heavenly prospect of a better place, could be hinting (following the above said) at the need to "unblemish" the European contest by means of a "true diva" and a unifying language (returning to that 1973-1977 interval when English thrived) and beginning the golden years of Europop, as Bjorn Ingvolstad affirms (2007: 101-102) –a period that coincides with the dull trajectory followed by Israel and the acclaim for more refreshing, young, carefree, non-political songs (Björnberg, 2013: 211). What is more, while Ariel Sharon's visit to the Arab areas of Jerusalem rekindled the conflict in the context of the Second Intifada (2000-2005), the IBA tackled its public image management by submitting "hopeful" songs on occasion, such as Sarit Hadad's *Light a Candle* in 2002 (Vuletic, 2018: 135).

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5   Triumphal instrumental overtures (synthesisers, pianos and saxes), rhythm shifts between stanzas and choruses rising in crescendo towards the final chorus, and a bridge speeding up the tempo in order for the pitch rise of the final chorus to add intensity as well as an impressive finale.

4.2.5. There must be another way, 2009

After its last victory, the IBA has been stringing failures together (Figure 3), brought about by the image of the country abroad, in spite of the EBU's attempts to depoliticise the contest (Kirkegaard, 2013: 84; Baker 2015: 87). And they have occasionally submitted critical entries, such as the controversial performance of the quartet PingPong (2000), who were responsible for the first homosexual kiss on stage, in addition to waving the flag of Syria (Jordan, 2011: 50; Torres, 2011: 265); or *Push the button*, by the band Teapacks (2007), moving away from mainstream pop in an act that alluded to nuclear weapons (Belkind, 2010: 20-21):

> There is too much violence in the streets
> And we are very lucky
> To be alive, even unharmed

Not even the relative victory of the singer Shiri Maimon, fourth in 2005, could escape the controversy: it was the year when Lebanon was to make its debut, which was thwarted when it was plain that that country's station intended not to broadcast the performance of the Israeli candidate; which earned them their disqualification (Raykoff, 2007: 2). And so was the case when, after the Gaza Strip conflict in 2008-2009, the singer of Yemeni origin Noa and the Palestinian Catholic Mira Awad competed in Moscow with the pacifist song *There Must Be Another Way* (Bohlman y Rehding, 2013: 281), reaching the 16th position.

Motivated by the 9th place achieved by the also Yemeni Boaz Mauda the previous year, the IBA presented this song in Hebrew, English, and Arab, the latter making its return to the competition after the only other occasion back in 1980 (Belkind, 2010: 12; Vuletic, 2018: 134). Whereas the Moroccan entry had used this language for the first time on account of Israel's absence, now it was Israel that "invoked" it so many years afterwards, in a paradoxical gesture (as gathered by the ethnomusicologist Nili Belkind [2010: 12]). In her view, keeping in mind the all too limited time the IBA allocates to Arab language programmes, that choice was a turning point (18), even though it was also interpreted as Israeli state propaganda, given the recent conflict with Gaza (21). From the lyrics (a moving, sororal conversation [Lampropoulos, 2013: 160] between both singers, a few months after the Operation Cast Lead, the bloodiest for the Palestinians so far), let us highlight these few verses:

> And tears drop in vain
> It is a nameless pain
> We're just waiting for the next day to come
> There must be another way

Several countries tried to boycott the performance (Belkind, 2010: 27). It is worth mentioning the question the musicologist Ioannis Polychronakis asked the singers at the press conference as to what message they would like to send to all those who thought that, with that choice, Israel intended to make propaganda to hide the Gaza massacre. Awad sternly claimed that their collaboration was the fruit of many years' labour and that nobody else had interfered with their work, to which Noa

added: "Mira and I represent millions of people, not only from our region but from all over the world, who (…) choose life over death, who choose dialogue instead of violence."[6]

That year's (2009) entry, with such an internationally renowned singer as Noa, was among the few occasions in that decade in which the IBA bet on veteran artists. Eddie Butler (who had already participated with Eden) returned in 2006 with a song to peace that got little applause (Vuletic, 2018: 167); and, in 2011, Dana International did not even manage to reach the final, letting the past glory (an assertion of the LGTBI+ cause) sink into out-of-fashion criticism.

In the last few years, Eurovision has been organising intense international tours, prior to the competition, with the participant countries. The young singer Hovi Star, representing Israel in 2016, was held by the security guards at Moscow airport, with them tearing his passport apart and mocking his look, as he says himself (Fuster, 2016). His statements in press conferences thus added meaning to *Made of Stars*, his English-sung song to equality:

<div align="center">

We are all made of stars

Silver fragments falling we are

</div>

Nevertheless, the homoerotic aesthetic had already caused unease in 2010 with Harel Skaat, who (despite the rumours, later confirmed by himself) used to address his performances to the female audience, reinforcing a heteronormative image (Uchovski, 2014). Or the act *Golden Boy* by Nadav Guedj, who, in the press conference (where the patriotic issue was brought up after a Libanese journalist approached him for a hug), was asked about his relationship with the collective. Actually, neither was the song about love, nor was he homosexual (Esckaz.com 2015, 8'12"). Therefore, only from the stereotype of the muscular, masculine man (the dancers, the mise-en-scène, the praise to the "golden boy" ––—the "king of fun" of the lyrics) is the song (wholly in English for the first time in 52 years) a celebration of gayness, at the same time promoting the "gay capital" by singing: "And before I leave let me show you Tel Aviv" (a promotion that the singer IMRI –a former backing singer for Guedj– also did in 2017).

Figure 8: Press conference in Viena 2015 and visit to Jerusalem of the 2017 participants

Source: author's own elaboration from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqC1Y2FpOVs> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AoyQDywRFk

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6   The only video online from their press conference is on YouTube (02' 13"): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWjctkxMEoU&index=4&list=LLeRCGn6xkY6dmlMWo4kb1ug&t=0s (viewed 22/6/2018).

The IBA's latest history brings us to the moving speech given by its long-standing spokesman[7] in 2017, announcing the discontinuation of the participation of the state in the Song Contest due to the closure of the broadcasting entity (European Broadcasting Union, 2014), a situation later resolved by the new private TV channel KAN (Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation), which has remained committed to it by bearing the expenses of their participation in Lisbon 2018. In line with what I pointed out above regarding references to the host city, this year's one (Lisbon) has been an inspiration not for Israel but also for the French singer Igit, shortlisted for his country's selection. His song: *Lisboa Jerusalem*. The lyrics narrate the experience of a love, with constant metaphors around the "nation's fiction" in its chorus: "I would have stayed here for you to stop me leaving this little country where you are the queen".

One of the most celebrated aspects of the contest is its thorough technical display (Skey et al., 2016: 3385), with video mapping and projections, along with camerawork at large (resources that create different atmospheres for each performance, emphasising the spectacle [Pajala, 2011: 410]). In this manner, the visual concept of Igit's mise-en-scène showed, on the large stage screens, an animation in which the cities on a map were linked by a line that traced the shape of a heart. The cities alluded in the song, from Oslo to Gibraltar, shaped this heart, but Jerusalem, although being mentioned, was left out of the drawing (which raised questions, given the consolidated relationship between both countries within the competition [Yair, 1995: 155])[8].

We can see how, through image, the poetics of Europeanness and identity in the context of "European integration and globalisation" (Ingvoldstad, 2007: 99) —ultimately, hospitality itself— is represented, reinscribed, slowed down.

Figure 9: Igit performing Lisboa Jerusalem on Destination Eurovision, 2018.

Source: author's own elaboration from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtlN-Ff1AivzUjTNLf-_wqQ>

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7   These are usually television celebrities who announce the points given by their country. Ofer Nachshon has been in every broadcast since 2009.

8   Being the world's second country with the largest Jewish population, both the French jury and the French audience have traditionally supported the Israeli entries. In fact, they are the ones who have voted for them the most throughout the history of Eurovision (letting them down just 8 times out of 40). 12 points on 4 occasions, 10 points on 8 occasions, and 8 points on 5 occasions confirm the tendency. Israel's reaction has been more modest, failing to vote for France in as many as 18 out of 40 occasions and giving them 12 points three times, 10 points once, and 8 points only twice.

4.2.6. Epilogue: I Am Not Your Toy, 2018

While I am rounding off this paper, the Israeli entry (at first withdrawn from the competition after the IBA's closure but, as it has been noted above, re-entering in the last minute) not only has been shrouded in controversy one more time but, quite unexpectedly, has won the contest again for the first time in twenty years. I will, therefore, restrict myself to sketch out the state of the question for future research, on account of the great topicality and impact of Netta's victory with *Toy*, a song in English (though with a few words in Hebrew and Japanese) composed by Doron Medalie, who also wrote *Golden Boy* and *Made of Stars*.

In the height of the refugee crisis, the Islamist terrorism led by ISIS in the neighbouring Syria, and the deterioration of the international image of Israel due to its strained relationship with Palestina, the singer achieved the first position (which she was favoured to win) with a feminist song, advertised as inspired by the #MeToo movement, which keeps saying "I am not your toy, you are a stupid boy", through a kitsch, satirical aesthetic. This opens up a discussion on the so called *homonationalism* or *pinkwashing* (Puar, 2010), i.e., the cover-up of especially bloody events (such as the harsh suppression of the protests against the opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem, two days after the Song Contest) by means of propaganda of the feminist or gay causes, as we have seen in previous instances.

Elaborating on this, while Eurovision is often talked about as being no more than a song contest (which, in fact, aims to be depoliticised), I should perhaps emphasise that, after her success in Eurovision (Figure 10, left), Netta visited Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with whom she re-enacted the characteristic choreography of *Toy* (Figure 10, right).

Figure 10: Netta, winner of Eurovision 2018

Sources: author's own elaboration from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84LBjXaeKk4> (left)
and <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bi2To7CBWnG/?taken-by=b.netanyahu> (right).

5. Conclusions

Having gone through the most relevant Israeli entries and the "narrative" conveyed by their lyrics, scenographies, and controversies, we can see how there is a constant attempt to criticism. The Eurovision style, by fostering a kind of composition that have held both ABBA (during the two stages when English was on vogue [1973-1977 and 1999-today]) and mainstream pop as paradigms, is being called into question. And it is so on account of three problems:

a) the celebration of the contest as an assertion of the state of Israel before the international arena, through romantic rhetoric (by Ilanit, Ofra Haza, Duo Katz, Eden, or Nadav Guedj) hinting at the country's political situation;

b) the issue of localism, since all their songs up to 2015 were performed in Hebrew (although with titles aimed to be short and accessible: *A-ba-ni-bi, Hallelujah!, Hora, Khai, Olé Olé, Kan, Ze rak sport, Amen, Diva*), a minority language that has managed to succeed in the contest thanks to the diaspora to Europe and a voting system that enables such support; and

c) the commitment to showing an image of open-mindedness, tolerance, and multiculturalism in the social sphere, Israel being the first country whose orchestra has been conducted by a woman and having been represented by singers from diverse ethnic groups, nationalities (Izhar Cohen, Boaz Mauda, Noa, Mira Awad, Eddie Butler), and sexualities (Dana International, PingPong, Hovi Star, Harel Skaat).

Through the above suggested counter-narratives, I hope to have contributed a new approach to that claimed Europeanness, as well as to have shown the paradoxes of both "song's fiction" and "nation's fiction", in order to uproot any essentialist attempts to describe them —given that, being symbolic practices, what is pertinent and relevant is to deconstruct the way they present themselves, they make suggestions, they are revealed, they are interpreted, they open up new spaces for reflection on how stories are told or narrated as regards the problematic concept of "cultural identity" (Hall and du Gay, 2003).

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