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Arabic and Hebrew Wrestling InTranslation

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The Neoclassical Bias in Translation

Guest Editor's Note

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This is the first of two consecutive issues of *JLS* devoted to language and translation, specifically to the relationship between Arabic and Hebrew. In the current issue we address the limits of the neoclassical model of translation, referring to the redefinition of translation in fifteenth-century Europe and infusing it with the spirit of the Renaissance. In a nutshell, the neoclassical model tends to individualize the translator's identity, to privatize the spatial dimensions of translation, and to eliminate verbal dialogue. Furthermore, it dictates a forward-moving unidirectional formula of translation that usurps the original text and occupies its place; it silences any form of dialogue and replaces conversation and reciprocal dialogue with philology, linguistics, and hermeneutics. Under colonial conditions, the neoclassical model aggravates these limitations, since it reproduces in the translation room the very same asymmetry that typifies the exterior conditions and the power relations between the languages. I begin this discussion by examining the emergence of the effects of the neoclassical model on translation in general, and in particular its predicament in relation to translation between Arabic and Hebrew—past, present, and future.

Translation Prior to the Modern Chronology of Translation

In the course of history, translation was the product of a wide range of people, some of whom were allegedly dubious types, such as prisoners, slaves, deserters, spies, seafarers, refugees, censors, and prisoners of war—not to mention priests, monks, missionaries, tourists, merchants, soldiers, ethnographers, journalists, and diplomats. Over the generations, they played important roles in war and peace, and their chronologies were enveloped in mystery, subterfuge, and revenge. The history of translation is suffused with stories of intrigues, stunts, conspiracies, betrayals,

and lack of trust. As their portraits changed, translators were given diverse titles such as whisperers, interpreters, linguists, go-betweens, commentators, moderators, intermediaries, negotiators, rewriters, decipherers, dubbers, and more.

In the book of Genesis, Joseph deceives his brothers with the help of an incognito *melitz*: "They did not realize that Joseph understood them, since there was an interpreter between them" (Genesis 42:23, King James Version). The term *melitz* is used in the Hebrew text for "interpreter"; it also means an advocate, or interceder. Yet, in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, he mentions the interpreters:

> If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. (Corinthians 14:27–28, KJV)

As we move to the First Persian Empire, as reported in the book of Esther, translation workers were termed "the king's authors," and "copiers" of the kingdom's orders into one hundred and twenty-seven different languages. In the Ottoman Empire—which similarly consisted of large populations speaking multiple tongues—translation workers were labeled "dragomans." The term "dragoman" is a distortion of the word *turgeman* (ترجمان), which originated in Acadian and Arabic, entered the European languages in the Middle Ages, and returned in a circular motion to the Middle East in a distorted title. Certainly, words have a tendency to carry their "distorted" etymologies through time. Indeed, the distorted word endured in lexical use in English into the twentieth century, referring to translators in Muslim countries.[1]

I use the term "dragoman," whose content varies over historical space and time, as a hybrid model—real or imagined—a kind of "muddy" category that existed prior to the modern gardening process. The multiplicity and heterogeneity of dragomans' translations can be posited vis-à-vis the homogeneity and unification of the neoclassical translation model and its biases. For example, in the nineteenth century, the dragomans' amalgamated and multiple functions and their work included oral and written traditions, diplomatic and literary texts, team translations, and individual translations.[2] Their work consisted of a number of tasks that today are not necessarily considered part of translation: interpreting combined with translation, speech and writing, dialogue and correspondence. This hybridity of function allows us to imagine a primeval form in which there was no institutional split or fragmentation between the modern translation tasks. It heightens attention

to the fact that modern translation is a product of ruptures, fragmentations, and institutionalizations that impose a selective gaze on the field of translation.

Translation is a deceptive task that certainly does not have a singular, clear meaning. In the modern context it is associated with linguistics: the conversion of meaning from language to language, or within the same language, as is evident in the curricula of translation studies and their academic affiliations. Translation has a variety of manifestations. It can be conducted orally or in writing, in sequential or simultaneous order, word-by-word or freely, directly or mediated. In the broader sense, translation does not refer only to linguistic conversions; it can also be regarded as an image of intercultural movement and conversion between different forms of representation: textual, visual, vocal, metaphorical, and so on. One of the etymological roots of "translation," the Latin word *translatio*, refers to the transferal of the remains of saints—such as bones or other parts of the body—from one place to another.[3] Before modern times, the concept also referred to spatial action such as the moving of material, the transportation of prisoners and slaves, or the spreading of ideas and ideologies across space. In this vein translation was considered a spatial and collective enterprise.

The history of antiquity and the Middle Ages is replete with collective translation projects composed of teams, families, and partnerships, often without a designated translator's name. Famous collective translations were the Septuagint or the King James Bible. In many cases translation teams moved from one place to another, engaging with textual and oral dialogues, using multiple languages and dialects, comparing drafts and exchanging versions of translation. Not all of them worked in private studies; they often toiled in diverse spaces such as libraries, scriptoria, churches, ports, transit stations, prison camps, ships, courts, congress halls, laboratories, or government offices. As they moved in space, their translation work was suffused with dialects, accents, sounds, phonetics, and voices.

Hunayn ibn Ishaq al-ʿIbbadi (حنين بن إسحق العِبَادي), known as the sheikh of the translators, was the most famous and sophisticated translator in ninth-century Baghdad and the director of Bayt al-Hikma (بيت الحكمة , House of Wisdom), where all the translation activities were concentrated. Ibn Ishaq had command of the five major languages of his time—Greek, Aramaic, Syrian, Persian, and Arabic—and produced many translations in the fields of medicine, philosophy, and astronomy.[4] According to legend, he received payment in gold according to the weight of his translations from Greek to Arabic. His son, nephew, and a group of students, some of whom were Greek-speaking slaves, surrounded Ibn Ishaq and helped him.[5]

According to documents from the period, translators often met collectively when Ibn Ishaq improved and approved their Arabic to Greek translations.[6] When Ibn Ishaq began a new project with another group of translators, he would go through their work and correct their mistakes, and he would manage the workshop's output.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Toledo, in al-Andalus, became the meeting point of translators who arrived in the city to learn from the accumulated experience available there; they gathered to translate scientific, religious, and literary texts from Greek and Hebrew into Latin. The translation school in Toledo trained apprentices to translate from Arabic to Latin, French, and English, and contributed greatly to the dissemination of the Arab and Greek cultures. The mobile teams were able to enrich European culture with translations because they had access to great Arabic literature and philosophical, religious, and scientific texts—many of which were translations or adaptations of texts that had been translated into Arabic from Greek. The translation methods in Toledo varied, including teams working in sequence, in parallel, or in a reciprocal relationship, where one translator would convert the Arabic text into one of the Romance languages and the other from the Romance language to Latin. The translator from Arabic was sometimes a Jew (or a converted Jew), and the others were usually Christian clergymen. In the introduction to the Latin version of *De Anima* written by Ibn Sina (ابن سينا), which was translated in Toledo, the work process was clearly specified. It included multiple translators: a Jewish translator known as Ibn Daoud read the book, written in Arabic, aloud (verbatim), simultaneously translating it into the vernacular Spanish dialect, and a second translator named Dominic converted it into Latin. This translation was an important text used by Jewish physicians during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, which was also used by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (known in Arabic as Abu-al-Hasan Al-Lawi, أبو الحسن اللاوي). Similarly, the translation of the Qur'an in the fifteenth century was based on the work of an Arabic translator who transcribed the text verbatim into Castilian, following which other translators translated it into Latin in three versions presented alongside Spanish and Arabic. The polyglot translations of the Bible were also conducted using collective and oral methods: these included the Hebrew version and its translation into Greek, Latin, and Aramaic, and the New Testament with the Greek original and its translation into Latin and vernacular languages, all of which were presented side by side. This is a crucial point, since it indicates that the translation did not replace the original, as is customary today, but stood side by side with it, particularly since some of the translations were

shorter or longer versions of the original. The translators differed in their linguistic strategies, not because of their loyalty (or lack thereof) to the original but because the texts were adapted to communicate with different audiences. Most important, they did not hide the nuts and bolts of their craft; rather, they discussed them openly in a dialogue as part of the translation process. Although they varied in time and place, most translations made during the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance were conducted according to these principles.

Oral and collective forms of reading and translation were accepted conventional practice in western Europe as well, at least until the end of the seventeenth century, when they died out.[7] Writing, reading, and translation were conducted in teams in common spaces such as the scriptorium, which was later replaced by the printing industry. The scriptorium was a writing space usually located near the library of a monastery. Historical documents portray seated young monks carefully and skillfully writing on tables. The teams worked in cooperation with Latin scholars and experts on Greek and Arabic who visited the monastery. They stressed the roles of diction, dictation, and reading aloud (as distinct from silent visual reading) in translations produced in conjunction with several translators. They deciphered the source text together, editing, correcting, clarifying, annotating, interpreting, and indexing it. There were those who read from the source, and there was someone who recorded the new version simultaneously.[8] Prior to the seventeenth century, the appearance of a translator's name on the binding of the book (as was the case with the author's name) was not taken for granted, especially not before the invention of printing and the development of copyright legislation.[9] Since then, the neoclassical model has gained popularity and became the accepted model of translation.

When we read a literary translation in print today, we see only the final version. In most cases the translation stands alone, with no actual dialogue and without additional possible translations. Only rarely do translators tell the story of their translation or, more specifically, the labor process behind it. Modern translations present neither previous drafts nor reports on hesitations or unsuccessful attempts. We have no information about the work space, the time it took to complete the translation, or the material and political conditions under which the work was carried out. The shift of translation, from a dialogue-oriented to an individual endeavor and a selective paradigm in the world of literature and linguistics, was not an isolated phenomenon but rather a sociological enterprise that is a result of modern history's national, philological, and religious projects. Rather than looking at the process historically, I want to single out two genealogical ruptures that are associated with the rise of the neoclassical paradigm in translation.

Two Epistemological Ruptures

The first rupture took place in the middle of the fifteenth century with the turn toward individuals as translators. Translation was gradually transformed from a collective enterprise into an individual action organized around the orthography of the translator. The rationales for this break can be learned from a manifesto published in 1426 by Leonardo Bruni, a translator, historian, and chancellor of Florence:[10]

> I say that the full power of a translation resides in the fact that what is written in one language should be well translated into another. Nobody can do that well unless he has an experience of both languages that is both wide and deep.
>
> . . . he should also know the language he translates into in such a way that he is able to dominate it and to hold it entirely in his power.[11]

Today, the idea that an individual who is fluent in both languages and can solely transfer the meaning of the source to the other language seems to be taken for granted. However, when it was first proposed in 1426, it was considered revolutionary because it was a paradigm shift in the nature of a Copernican revolution. Bruni's manifesto was probably the first declaration of translation as an individual act of free translation (rather than literal translation) based on the principle of unifying: the unification of different languages into one language, lexical unification within the target language, and the unification of multiple versions into one version. Bruni used the term *reductio ad unum* (reduction to the single), which offers a new trinity: one translator, one version, one language. This change would take place throughout Renaissance Europe and would accompany the literary translations into the vernaculars. Since at least the Renaissance, free and individual translation, as opposed to the exact and literal translation, has become the standard.[12] Bruni marked the beginning of the neoclassical era in translation, which adheres to the principle of methodological individualism, producing the image of the individual translator, of being alone, of myself, of a real self, as Norbert Elias put it. As such, it replaces knowledge of the other with self-knowledge through the other.

The neoclassical model of a single translator was well suited to the emerging ideas of individualism during the Enlightenment, to the concentration of the European state apparatuses, and to the formation of national languages, which contributed to political unification by hindering language diversity and different interpretive positions. The individualism of the Enlightenment accelerated the process and made the translator's name public. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the author's and translator's autographs could already be found on the title

pages of books, and during that century it was institutionalized as a criterion that defines a body of work as coherent and unified. The philological revolution that began with translations of the Bible into vernacular languages reached its peak in the nineteenth century with the concept of loyalty to the national language, which led to the flourishing of the free and domesticized translation model, in which the translator represented the national habitus, and the translations were done by swallowing classic texts into the national language and writing them in idiomatic, fluent language.

The second rupture took place between textual translation and oral translation, which found a modern manifestation at the beginning of the twentieth century in the professional split between translation and interpretation. The rationale for this rupture is clearly stated in another manifesto, published in 1952 by Jean Herbert, one of the first simultaneous interpreters. In this fascinating document he warns that the two techniques should not be confused, as they are contradictory methods that could lead to "mutual destruction:"

> The work of the translator and that of the interpreter are fundamentally different and can hardly be combined. Very rare indeed are the people who can do both. . . . These are in reality two contrary techniques which are mutually destructive.[13]

The split between interpretation and translation is based on the separation between oral dialogue in synchronous reciprocal interaction and the belated written text.

These two epistemological ruptures are partly responsible for the current biases in the neoclassical model of literary translation. Here is the first paradox: at the time when the spoken languages turned their back on Latin and received a life of their own, translation underwent a change in the opposite direction, toward the Latin tradition from which the translators sought to extricate themselves by preferring the spoken languages. Translation has moved toward facilitating the vernacular literature, dialogical communication has been replaced by linguistics, the community has been replaced by the individual, and the knowledge of the other with self-knowledge. The practice of translation shrank and has been transformed from a synchronic dialogue to a diachronic lack of dialogue, performed in seclusion and muteness. These conclusions have dreadful implications for translation in general and the translation between Arabic and Hebrew in particular.

In the Israeli situation there is no dispute about the colonial relations between Hebrew and Arabic, or that the translation is in fact a model of negotiation over colonial relations between languages, since Hebrew and Arabic are linked to one

another in ambivalent relations: on the one hand, etymological friendship, and on the other, political enmity. In the political situation in Israel, the relationship between Arabic and Hebrew is derived from a polar theological-political view that rejects binational existence because it is based on a complete separation between a friend and a foe, and a state of emergency that preserves the relations of hostility.

By Way of Overcoming the Neoclassical Limitations and Biases

Plaza de Sokodovar is the first square one encounters immediately after passing through the entrance gate to the city of Toledo. At the entrance stands a statue of Cervantes, and there are scenes from *Don Quixote* on the stone benches. The seventeenth-century novel marks a twilight zone between the "premodern" and the "modern"—in both literature and translation—as it challenges the main neoclassical assumptions. The plaza reminds us of chapter nine of *Don Quixote*, where it is first announced that the novel is a Western translation of a book written by an Arab historian. It invites us to imagine several authors of the text: the original writer, who was the Arab historian, the author of the Castilian version we read, the Moorish translator, and the translator of the Castilian version, who worked on the final form of the pastiche. A few lines earlier, Don Quixote had told his interlocutor that the translation of his contemporaries was like looking at the back of Flemish rugs, which were filled with loose threads that blurred the picture on the other side. Cervantes emphasizes the seams between the versions and creates narrative disorders, from which we learn that we read a novel with several versions, written by several authors and translators in several languages. Cervantes also reminds us that in his time there were still collective, multilayered, and dialogical translations, as was customary in the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance. The text expresses multiplicity and fragmentation rather than unity. It allows us to imagine another translation model, in which there is multilingual movement, orality, and polyphony of languages. The texts in this issue of *JLS* undercut the neoclassical bias—or at least address the model in a critical way that accords with these Cervantesque principles.

We begin with the protocol of a conversation conducted with the famous Lebanese writer **Elias Khoury**, who addresses languages, literatures, and translation. Khoury discusses the relationship between Arab writers—such as Tawfiq al-Hakim, Suyahl Idris, or Tayeb Salih—and European literature; the relationship between Hebrew and Arabic; and the reinvention of the Palestinian language after the

destruction resulting from the 1948 war. He describes the relevance of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry to the metaphor of silence as a root metaphor that prevails in Khoury's novel *Children of the Ghetto*. Khoury argues that the literature of the Palestinian Nakba is a universal literature, not least because it entertains intricate relations between silence and language. Aside from these significant issues, the conversation with Khoury can be read as an attempt to recreate a dialogue between a particular translation and its "source," which is usually missing in the neoclassical model. The dialogue can be seen as an attempt to bring fluency of speech back to the fixed text and create a zone of continuity between them. In contradistinction to the linear sequence between source, translation, and lack of reciprocity, this dialogue brings the translation back to the author's doorstep. Khoury opens the door wide for such a dialogue when he admits that he wanted to have two of his novels "translated into Hebrew immediately": *Bab al-Shams* (*Gate of the Sun*) and *Children of the Ghetto*. In fact, the first translation of *Gate of the Sun* was published simultaneously in French and in Hebrew, and the first translation of *Children of the Ghetto* was published in Hebrew before French and English. The next novel to appear in Hebrew will be *Stella Maris*, where the narrator is no longer Adam telling the story in the first person but rather a narrator speaking in the third person. When asked about the change in voice, Khoury explains that it is the voice of the absent. In *Children of the Ghetto* Adam tries to speak but fails to do so, and when he realizes that he is a "present absentee," he tries to transform himself into the third person. Khoury writes into the credo of Hebrew literature and identifies its Achilles' heel, particularly the repeated metaphor of the Palestinians' amputated tongue. In *Stella Maris* he rewrites a scene from A. B. Yehoshua's *The Lover*, providing a counterfactual narrative by placing it in the 1960s (as opposed to Yehoshua, who places the story in the 1970s) and inviting the Hebrew writer who invented the metaphor to be a character in his novel. The Hebrew writer can no longer hide behind the author's orthography, producing a literary episode in which the writer is dragged involuntarily into the plot and wrestles with the portrait he has created.

Anton Shammas's essay "The Drowned Library" beautifully depicts the symbiosis between Arabic and Hebrew. The drowning library is a linguistic slide freely skating between the two languages. When Shammas sat down to write his novel *Arabesques* in Hebrew, he thought of the language of grace rather than the language of the decrees and the state of emergency: "The . . . virtual Palestinians for whom Hebrew has been, for more than a century, the language of power and de-territoralization, of dispossession, of lethal interrogations." Shammas cradles

Hebrew with Arabic and seeks to distinguish between the sovereign Hebrew language, the language of the orders and military instruction, and the language of grace that the Babylonian Talmud calls "euphemism" (tractate *Pesahim*) because words that need to be silent are said in other languages. While in *Arabesques* Shammas performs a cultural translation, he was also one of the few Palestinians who translated from Arabic to Hebrew, and obviously the most prominent of all. This went against the grain: prior to the 1960s, there were no Palestinian translators who translated from Arabic to Hebrew, and since then, their number has remained small. From a political point of view, under the conditions of colonial relations between languages, it is inconceivable that the practice of translation from Arabic to Hebrew can take place in a singular model and as a monopoly of Jewish translators. It is comparable to European anthropologists who study indigenous societies and report on them in the etic language that represents "scientific" logic by claiming cultural neutrality and ignoring the emic—that is, native—language used by the subject of ethnographic reporting. Shammas assures the reader that he will always be trapped inside his "miniature Babel," which comprises confused and scattered tongues.

These words echo the argument that **Gil Anidjar** makes about Maimonides contemplating translation, where "he stages a truly fantastic scene that, ostensibly pedagogical, might also be described as dialogical, even theatrical." Most important is the border crossing between Hebrew and Arabic, writing and orality, and the language games arising from his "miniature Babel." Anidjar reflects on the question of language and translation, based on an unanticipated juxtaposition between two texts: Maimonides's twelfth-century *Guide of the Perplexed* and Houria Bouteldja's *Whites, Jews, and Us* (*Les Blancs, les Juifs et nous*). He provides a penetrating discussion on Maimonides's perception of language and translation and shows how reading means to read between and across the Hebrew and the Arabic and simultaneously between and across the written and the spoken language. Anidjar problematizes the distinction between the Jew and the Arab, points to its historical roots, and searches for a place in which the "we" makes the Jews and the Arabs a multitude, where the speaker and the one who hears create a new frame. This place is found in the ghetto, the place in which "we" are all located. Thus, Anidjar restores not only the broken link between the Jew and the Arab but also the modern fragmentation between the oral and the textual tradition. At the end of the day, this paper brings home the necessity for dialogue in translation, which was so natural in the past but is ejected from modern translation.

Yuval Evri explores al-Andalus as a history, an ideal type, and an objective possibility. The Andalusian model mirrors the weaving of speech and writing, and shows greater flexibility in the relationship between origin and source. Evri's article focuses on two translation works selected from a wide and varied corpus of late nineteenth-century translations: *Yaldey Arav* (Children of Arabia), a collection of biblical tales from the Arab Palestinian oral tradition by Yosef Meyouhas; and *Mishley Arav* (Proverbs of Arabia), a comprehensive collection of Arabic proverbs by Isaac Benjamin Yahuda. Both of these works are translations of oral tales and proverbs from the Arabic and Judeo-Muslim literary tradition. While they were among the first modern translations from Arabic into Hebrew, and can thus be considered an integral part of the development of Modern (and national) Hebrew literature, the article explores the ways in which they fundamentally challenged the perception of a distinct and confined Modern Hebrew literature. Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translation methods exemplify a weak distinction between spoken and written textual traditions, translation without a stable original, and translation as an act of dialogism.

Nabih Bashir's article re-presents the Andalusian model of Toledo in the context of today's contentious relations between Hebrew and Arabic. Bashir is the most recent translator of *Sefer ha-Kuzari* from Judeo-Arabic to Arabic. Originally, Yehuda Halevi (also known as Abu al-Hasan al-Lawi, أبو الحسن اللاوي) published his كتاب الحجة والدليل في نصر الدين الذليل (*Kitab al-hujjah wal-dalil fi nusr al-din al-dhalil*; The book of refutation and proof in support of the abased religion) in 1140 in Toledo. The book was translated into Hebrew for the first time by Yehuda ibn Tibbon in approximately 1160, under the title *Sefer ha-Kuzari*. The book is divided into five parts and takes the form of a dialogue between a rabbi and a pagan, who is mythologized as the king of the Khazars. The third essay of these dialogues is devoted to the refutation of the teachings of Karaism and to the history of the oral tradition in Judaism. Using excerpts from the Bible, Bashir shows that the reading is dependent on the oral tradition, as there were no vowels or accents in the original text. Nabih Bashir's article tells us, in the first person, the amazing story of the book's translation into Arabic and the resulting bizarre consequences in the context of the Jewish state standing against the Andalusian vision. Bashir's story has enormous implications for the function of translation, since the book was written in Arabic in Hebrew transliteration and was translated/copied/transferred by Bashir to Arabic letters.

Against this Andalusian backdrop, **Yonatan Mendel** describes the characteristics of the Arabic language that was conceived as a product of the Jewish Zionist project and ideology, focusing on the developments that took place during the British Mandate in Palestine. The Arabic of the Jews in the country has become like Latin—that is, a language that is heavily oriented toward the study of grammar and that is used to translate but not to speak. Like Luther, who expropriated the Bible from the Jews, Jewish Zionist European Orientalists confiscated Arabic from the Arabs. Yet, while Luther translated Latin into a vernacular language, in the Jewish community the Arabic language was turned into a language like Latin. Looking at two central institutions in which the discourse surrounding Arabic studies in the Jewish community was shaped—the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University and the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa—Mendel shows the detrimental role played by German philologists in forging the field of Arabic studies in Palestine. The philological model that followed the model prevalent in German universities produced an Arabic that is not so much a language of speech as it is a classical language of texts based on grammar and syntax as an intermediary between the speaker and the recipient—far removed from the region's lingua franca.

In his article **Amer Dahamshe** offers a critical reading of the linguistic landscape of welcome signs in localities of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel. He examines the formal visual aspect of the Arabic, Hebrew, and English languages as they appear on these signs: the order of their placement and their content, including the normative messages, translation, and transliteration, names. These analyses shed light on the links between the linguistic landscape and the sociopolitical and socioeconomic status of the Palestinian minority, as well as on the perceptions of Palestinian citizens regarding their relationship with the Jewish majority. The contents of the welcome signs to Arab towns, as Dahamshe shows, reflect and reproduce the colonial dimension in the relationships between Hebrew and Arabic.

In addition to these articles, we have included in this volume four short stories written by contemporary Palestinian women writers. Three of them live in Israel (**Sheikha Hlewa**, **Tamara Naser**, and **Atheer Safa**), and one, **Sama Hasan**, lives in Gaza. As a way of mitigating some of the biases of the neoclassical model described above, the translations were made in binational teams, including Jewish and Palestinian translators in reverse roles in the different stories: Shoshana London

Sappir, Serene Husni, Maisalon Dallashi, and Kifah Abdul Halim. This model of binational team translations will be the focus of the next issue of *JLS*.

We conclude this special issue with a book review by **Iris Agmon**: Beshara B. Doumani's *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History*, which is an extensive study on family history in the Ottoman Middle East.

I thank the authors and the anonymous reviewers for their contributions. Many thanks to the wonderful team that worked together on this issue: Duygu Atlas, who managed the entire process, Deborah Schwartz, our devoted linguistic editor, and Shoshana London Sappir, for her translations. Many thanks to Tal Kohavi, the head of the Van Leer Institute Press, for her wise suggestions, and to Shai Lavi, the head of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, for his invitation to edit this issue and unhesitating support, intellectually and otherwise.

Notes

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Dialogue with Elias Khoury on Literature and Translation

Interlocutors: Raef Zreik, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Yehouda Shenhav-Shahrabani
Date: December 1, 2018
Location: The Kreisky Center, Vienna
Host: Gertraud Auer Borea d'Olmo, Secretary General, Bruno Kreisky Forum
Recording: Lena Campostrini
Transcription: Duygu Atlas

We met in cold, snowy Vienna for a dialogue with Elias Khoury, the renowned Lebanese writer, professor of literature, editor, and essayist. Our conversation included topics such as world literature, Arabic and Hebrew literatures, and translation. Khoury's works have been translated and published internationally in Catalan, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Norwegian, Spanish, Romanian, Swedish, and Hebrew. Khoury has a prominent place among Israeli readers. Of his fourteen novels, six have been translated into Hebrew—including the Palestinian epics *Gate of the Sun* (2002) and *Children of the Ghetto* (2018)—and his most recent work, *Stella Maris* (part 2 of *Children of the Ghetto*), is currently being translated into Hebrew.

Raz-Krakotzkin: I would like to begin with a general question. You are speaking about the crisis in the Arab world and the role of literature in the process of decolonization and the creation of new languages. I was thinking in that respect about *Children of the Ghetto*, which was recently translated into Hebrew. When I think about the shift from Arabic to Hebrew, I can understand what decolonization means as far as I'm concerned. I'm an Israeli who reads himself

through the translation of your novel into Hebrew. What about the other way around: How does it affect you to write about Israelis in Arabic?

Khoury: Actually, there are two books that I wanted to have translated into Hebrew immediately: Gate of the Sun [Bab al-Shams] and Children of the Ghetto. The first translation of Gate of the Sun was published simultaneously in French and in Hebrew. The first translation of Children of the Ghetto was in Hebrew before French and English. For me it was very important—not because I wanted Israelis to read about the Nakba. That was not the issue. It was an act of love. I think literature is an act of love. This is why, when I'm asked to describe *Gate of the Sun* or *Children of the Ghetto*, I say they are love stories. Love can be tough. Love is not only to accept the other but also to tell the truth. In this sense, I wanted it to be translated into Hebrew. To go beyond making a bridge, to try to incorporate this Jewish experience in the literature of the Palestinian Nakba. I think that the literature of the Nakba is a humanistic literature and it is large enough to incorporate all the pains and can create this wonderful but very tough relationship between silence and language.

Raz-Krakotzkin: Is silence the language of decolonization?

Khoury: We can innovate a language through the silence of the victims. In the sequel novel, *Stella Maris*, Dalia asks Adam about his ongoing silence and his writer's block. He says that any writing about the Nakba creates a kind of cemetery of words. Dalia is amazed because it reminds her of Borges's library, which is replaced here by a cemetery. Adam is careful and says that only the blind can write in depth, like Borges, or like Abu al-ʿAlaʿ al-Maʿarri. At the end of the discussion, Dalia tells him that he is not the blind author but the mute author, since Israeli writers, particularly Amos Oz and A. B. Yehoshua, amputated the Palestinian tongue.

Zreik: So, is this the end of language?

Khoury: When I say crisis, I refer also to the crisis of the language. It makes writing a tough issue, nearly impossible. In ten years' time, some historians—working with official documents—might find out that the Syrian government blames the insurgents instead of blaming the dictator. The only way to go beyond this

history is through literature. I'm not only speaking about the Arab world, but the region, or maybe the world as a whole. We should not leave history in the hands of the historians alone. Here is where literature and writers come in. To write a historical moment is to write literature. This is the role of literature in times of crisis. When we were young in the 1970s, with this revolution of postmodernism and so on, the whole idea was that we had to explode language. Actually, I think this moment in which we live is the moment of correcting language. Not in the sense of political correctness, nor grammatical. No. Language that is an expression of human experience.

Raz-Krakotzkin: How did the language lose it? I mean, how can you distinguish language from the human experience?

Khoury: Everybody used to speak, for example, about the era of the image. Now images are so played out that they could be anything. Nobody believes images anymore. The only place where I feel that new language is created is in literature. Novels. It is the place where you can re-give meaning to things.

Zreik: Do you mean language as a reservoir of values?

Khoury: In literature, I'm not talking to anybody, but to language itself. You are dialoguing with language. You were asking about the audience. When I write, I do not really care about the audience. Of course, when the book is out, I'm happy if people read it and so on. But while writing, it's another story.

Raz-Krakotzkin: When do you write?

Khoury: At home in the morning, early in the morning. Six o'clock in the morning. It doesn't mean that I write every day. Every day I sit for four, five hours. And most of the time, I don't write.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: What about your weekly articles in *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, or your editing work in the *Journal of Palestinian Studies*?

Khoury: That is not in the morning. My mornings are only for my novels. It's four, five hours every day. I read, try to think. But it's all for the novel.

Raz-Krakotzkin: Is research part of what you call writing? Because you do a lot of research.

Khoury: No, no, there is research before writing—which was done before I began the whole thing. Now, while writing, you discover that there are many unexpected things that you have to know in detail. So you add research during the time of writing. But the major research is done before. For example, I did not think about the settlements in the West Bank when I started writing the trilogy of *Children of the Ghetto*. But it popped up. It emerged on its own terms in the middle of the third volume.

Zreik: Because that is the reality?

Khoury: Because if you want to speak about those living in Nablus today, for example, you need to go through the settlements. Nablus now is Nablus plus settlements.

Raz-Krakotzkin: So you do not have the full structure of the book before you write.

Khoury: I know that I have a very big story. The frames. The characters. I know them. I knew, for example, that Adam would speak a lot about the ghetto and then would go to Haifa, and then he would immigrate to New York City, etc. Now, when I was writing the second volume, I realized that the third volume must be about Khalil Ayoub, who was in Nablus, who was part of the Palestinian establishment. Then I realized that to speak about Khalil I had to visit the settlements, in order to understand the West Bank. It is not only corruption, colonization, etc.—this discourse is correct, and we have to say that. But it's not the entire story. To get the whole story, you have to let things develop.

Raz-Krakotzkin: And this becomes part of the Nakba literature?

Khoury: The reinvention of Palestinian language began with literature before 1948. When we look back, looking at the Palestinian literary experience—for example, the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish—we notice that it is very humble.

But in fact it was the time when experience created a new language, not only for the Palestinian reader but also for Arab culture.

> Waddah al-Yaman's greatness, however, lies in his ability to transcend the clamour of words and reveal the eloquence of silence. This is why he died in the cruel way that he did, proclaiming silence as the highest level of speech because it holds within it the eloquence of life, which exceeds in its expressive capacity any rhetorical form that language can devise. (*Children of the Ghetto*, 42)
>
> He was an enthralling speaker, and his ability to switch between Arabic and English was amazing. He approached the podium with hesitant steps, but as soon as he'd taken his place there, with his dark glasses, he was transformed into a combination of Taha Hussein and Edward Said. The blind man's hesitancy disappeared, to be replaced by an absolute command of the language. He began by speaking about the city of Lydda, in which he had lived until he was twenty-five, saying that the tragedy of Lydda had taught him how to read the silence of victims, and he said that Mahmoud Darwish's poetry was fashioned from the gaps of silence that provide the foundations for the rhythms of the meanings. (*Children of the Ghetto*, 118)

Shenhav-Shahrabani: Going back to your argument about silence, what does it mean to give a lecture about silence, as Ma'moun did in *Children of the Ghetto*? What does it mean both materially and metaphorically?

Khoury: Ma'moun is giving another reading of Mahmoud Darwish. The dominant reading of Mahmoud Darwish is that he says everything but actually leaves gaps of silence. If we do not understand these gaps of silence, we do not understand the profound meaning of the poem. I think this is why Mahmoud Darwish is a great poet, because from this gap he can always be born anew. From his silences in the text. Great poetry is reinvented every time you read it.

Zreik: You are not speaking about silence between poems; it is the silence within the poems. It is not about those subjects that you mention in the poem. It is when you expect in the poem to meet something and then you stumble

upon absence in the poem itself, which is an absence that is constitutive of the poem.

Khoury: Let us look at things in a different way. Eighth-century writer Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ is considered to be the first Arab writer to write prose literature. And he would say that the literary text can be perceived in two ways. It is like a nut: you can play with it like a small ball, but if you break it down, then you come to the essence. So literature has these two levels all the time. There's the outer covering, which everybody will love or people will like because it's nice, because it's round, it's whatever. And then when you break it down you arrive at the essence. Then there is something totally unexpected. Take Mahmoud Darwish's last poem, "I Don't Want This Poem to End" [لا أريد لهذه القصيدة أن تنتهي] . You find a kind of a summary of all of Darwish's work. But what is inside it, which is not said, is this relationship between presence and absence, life and death, this is the silence of this wonderful poem, total silence. Actually when I read it for the first time, I said: "My God, what is this? What is Mahmoud trying to do here?" Then you reread it and discover that between the gaps of the structure, there is a whole history of Arabic literature, of standing before the ruins, of making the rules speak. In this sense, there is another level beneath the poem, which you have to discover. We can find this in all poetry, I mean not only Mahmoud. I think that all great poetry is like this. But in Mahmoud Darwish's case it is profound, because his poetry is mingled with the Nakba. Actually, without "Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?" [لماذا تركت الحصان وحيدًا?], there is no Nakba. The Nakba is not there. You feel it beneath the words; it is that which is not said that the poem says in an oblique way.

When I was working on *Gate of the Sun*, I went especially to Paris. Because there was a big chapter on al-Birwa, Darwish's village that was totally destroyed in 1948. I wanted to ask him about it. I began telling him what is not said in his poetry. I was trying to give him another reading, of things that are not in the text itself. This is the hypothesis, which I think can be applied to the ways in which we can read the Nakba.

Raz-Krakotzkin: What is the relation you mention between Mahmoud Darwish and your literature? Those who read Mahmoud Darwish read him somehow differently than you mention now. For example, in *Children of the Ghetto*

you go in search of Adam's silence. You start with Adam as a person. And apparently he knows you and does not like you. [*Khoury laughs.*] How do you find the silence in the ghetto? The story is by definition a story about literature and politics. So are you trying to follow poetry and fill the gaps, or would you say it differently?

Khoury: Exactly. My relationship with Mahmoud's poetry is very profound. First, we were very close friends. And we worked together. Like all literary friendships, I followed the way he found this first voice of resistance, the collective voice, etc. Then the way he developed to become a universal poet who made the Palestinian tragedy a way to understand the human tragedy. It was also the way I developed as a writer. I remember it very well when I published *The Little Mountain* [الجبل الصغير] in 1977. It is a novel about the civil war, and the novel is told in a very problematic way. It is not the dominant political language. And I remember that when Mahmoud read it, and we were discussing it, we were trying to find common denominators about the relationship between politics and literature. That is, literature should not accept the dominant discourse or the dominant imagery. The literary must go and discover the reality that is beneath things. So there is a huge relationship in this sense. And Mahmoud is there all the time. In *Stella Maris* there is a Jewish Iraqi professor, a communist, who takes Adam to a poetry reading of Mahmoud Darwish in Kafr Yasif. And he reads a section from "Write Down! I Am an Arab" [سجِّل! أنا عربي] and Adam does not like it at all. He does not want to say, "I am an Arab." With time, however, he discovers that it is a metaphor that leads to the profound human questions of the human soul in our time. Obviously, when Adam reads Mahmoud Darwish, there will be another Mahmoud Darwish. In the sense that in literature we complete each other. In literature, you do not invent things out of nothing. And Mahmoud never wrote things the way I write them. I went to meet him because a friend called me, saying, "Come to Paris, he's dying." He was losing consciousness, and in that critical moment, lying on his deathbed, he spoke to me in detail about *Gate of the Sun*.

From left to right: Yehouda Shenhav-Shahrabani, Elias Khoury, and Raef Zreik. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin does not appear in the photo, but certainly he was there.

Raz-Krakotzkin: I want to go back to the point you just mentioned about writing as a kind of experience. That you have only a basic framework and you develop it as you write the novel, and I want to bring you back first to the question of literature as an act of love. Writing as an act of love. An act of love to whom? Because paradoxically here, the act of love is of course to Adam himself, even though he is ambivalent toward you from the beginning. It is not only him. It is not only the love of the victim, it is the love of the victim and through the love of the victim, you are getting to recognize, to learn, to acknowledge different figures. What does it mean to you, this act of love?

Khoury: I cannot do anything profoundly without love. Love is the primary engine that makes us live. I think a moment without love is a waste. Now, in *Children of the Ghetto* I loved Adam, of course, I loved Ma'moun, but I was in love with Manal. I am still in love with this woman. I mean to say that I am

searching for her. Amazingly, when I was writing *Yalo* [يالو] something like that happened to me. Yalo is a rapist, a bad guy. In the beginning, I was thinking of this character as bad, but I ended up loving him. And we became friends. Otherwise, I could not continue writing.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: And for that purpose, you studied Aramaic.

Khoury: Yes, I studied Aramaic. Without knowing his mother tongue, I would not have been able to understand him. Otherwise, I could not continue writing. Now, in *Children of the Ghetto*, I love my characters. Actually, I love them all. But of course there are different levels of love and ways of love. Love opens your language and fills your lungs with oxygen. For me, I cannot write if I do not love. In the case of Adam, actually, of course Adam does not like me at all. But there was no reason for me not to fall in love with Manal. Now if I love Manal, I have to love him.

Raz-Krakotzkin: Why doesn't Adam love you? That is also a question. Because you disturb him. And love is disturbance. Because he has a problem with love.

Khoury: He dislikes me. That does not mean he does not love me. He dislikes me because he loves me. And because he hated the fact that I was the one who wrote the story of the Nakba instead of him. If I love Manal, I am going to have to love Adam. If I love Adam, I have to love Dalia. If I love Dalia, I have to love her grandfather. Dalia's trying to make a film about her grandfather's experience in the Warsaw Ghetto. So love is something that opens the possibilities of telling. This does not mean that I do not have a position. You can love, and you can still keep your dedication to the idea of justice.

Zreik: Justice sometimes requires anger.

Khoury: Love is also anger. In love there is anger.

Zreik: No, in love there is anger, but in anger there is not necessarily love. We can be angry with people. That is not personal; that is mediated love. I love human beings, humanity, in the sense that whatever is human is not strange to me. But that in itself can actually stand in the way of politics. Because politics at one point is a suspension of love. It's the momentary suspension of love,

momentary clash. It is not an annihilation; it is not total enmity. But it is a clash within a human horizon, not a clash of annihilation. So I think there is a difference in this sense.

Raz-Krakotzkin: But "I do not hate you" does not really give you literature. I think you're talking about different points of literature. Because in politics you cannot love everybody. You also have the language for politics that does not talk about love. What is an act of love? The act of translating. This is exactly what Yehouda used to say when he was translating your novels. You fall in love; you follow the story and trust it even when you do not know what is going to happen. I think the word is correct.

Zreik: I can imagine why love is relevant, because love allows you a certain intimacy with the feelings and complexity and the fragility of others whom you do not agree with probably on anything, without the closeness that literature requires. You dig under their skin or put yourself in their position, feel their feelings, go into their heads, feel their pulse.

Khoury: Love of the characters. Not everybody mentioned is a character in the novel, even if they have different layers of personality. For example, in *Stella Maris* I mention Martin Buber, when he speaks about the creation of the settlement on the destroyed houses of Deir Yassin. He wrote a letter to Ben-Gurion. Buber is not a character in my novel. He is only mentioned. In essence, he did not enter the novel. But those who enter and stay—they enter the space of love.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: I want to come back for a moment to translation. Today translation is perceived as standing alone, as if it has to replace the original. But that is not a dialogue with the author. I think one of the ideas of translation as a dialogue is not to replace the original but to let it stand next to the original in a dialogue. But modern translation is about erasing the source, trying to become the source.

Khoury: I think this is the genius of translation: to give the text that comes from another cultural background its place in a different culture, thus changing the receiving culture while trying to appropriate it. Edward Said worked on Conrad and quoted all these innovations in English. So the moment you enter

a language, you enter with your other language. Languages are open, and in any language there are layers of another language. When I speak Arabic, when I think in Arabic, using the Lebanese or Palestinian dialect, I discover that I am also speaking Aramaic. At least 25 percent of our words are Aramaic.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: And in the case of Adam, Raef, you seem to be . . .

Zreik: No, I'm enjoying this actually. [*All laugh.*] I think it is going in a certain direction from the point of view of the Hebrew language. In the conversation, there is always some translation, carrying over, or transcendence. And this is the mood.

Raz-Krakotzkin: In what sense?

Zreik: Do not be mistaken. I am fully on board in this conversation, enjoying it and listening to it. No. It is just the positioning. I experience myself too much in Arabic in this conversation. That the conversation with Elias is a conversation within the language.

Raz-Krakotzkin: It brings us back to the Arab reader. You are writing in Arabic and do not have an Arab reader in mind. But the question is what is lost in the translation.

Zreik: But some things are not lost in the translation.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: But this is exactly the point of knowing, of not imitating the source. The translation stands on its own. This is exactly what I meant earlier by the translation standing next to the original and not replacing it. Because when you replace it, you try to iron it. Ironing does not work here. And I think this is a very important point, because when Frost said that poetry is what is lost in translation, somebody responded that poetry is what is left of translation. That is, the other way around, and both are right. Both are right because this is exactly the point—that they do not fully mimic each other.

Zreik: I do not know. Probably poetry is lost in translation. I cannot see poetry without the playfulness of language. I mean, by definition it is lost in language.

Speaking of what is lost and what remains. Because what remains is the logos and the idea. But poetry is not logos and idea. It is exactly this excess; something that always escapes the colony of the idea, of the concept, when you try to translate that playfulness of language. The playfulness of language is always at the heart of poetry. That is why Said also said that philology is associated with humanism. Philology opens the text to a multiplicity of meanings, and this endless opening is at the heart of humanism. Poetry—and in this sense what you write is poetry, it is a novel but a poetical novel—is always an unfinished project. It's not that you open it, read it, and get that sense or meaning of it and you are done. That sense or meaning is always delayed. The meaning reveals itself in installments, gradually. Like a Russian doll, it is endless. You open and you open and then you open again. . . So is the poetical text, you peel it and peel it again in endless search for meaning, and the more you peel it the thicker the meaning becomes.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: It might be the other way around. When Adam leaves his mother's home in Haifa, and he takes what's left of his father's will, she tells him that they do not own anything but words. In *Children of the Ghetto* you describe a dead language, which people are chewing in their mouths, but it remains silent. But words, as it turns out, are sometimes heard and can create things in the world. I can think about the politics of *Gate of the Sun*, and the settlement by that name that was established in the so-called E1 area in January 2013 by Palestinians. Which is an amazing thing, how literature captures the political moment and becomes a source of creativity. In that context, I'm thinking about your preoccupation with language and words. It seems like there is ambivalence toward our words here.

Khoury: Words are ambivalent because they shift meanings according to the situation, and according to the speakers. Literature is different from other discourses because it relies sometimes on the shades of words. And indeed, in certain situations you chew the words to the nth degree, because they are shades of words. Things become meaningless. In another time, words give life. The creator chooses between words and shades, between silence and voice, etc. In *Stella Maris*, Adam visits Auschwitz and the Warsaw Ghetto.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: You described it "as if he were walking on words."

Khoury: Correct, here I am not trying to repeat the story of the Holocaust. It is written. I am trying to understand its impact today, when you walk around the Warsaw Ghetto. That is what I felt when I went there. I felt the emptiness. And even Auschwitz, which turned out to be death tourism. But underneath this tourism, you go profound. You discover—not as an Arab, or as a Palestinian, or as a Jew, but as a human being—the meaning of the sentence "I am the last man." I'm searching for this last man. And this last man you can find everywhere. He is inside everyone.

Raz-Krakotzkin: And what do you mean by that? Adam is also the last one.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: Or the first.

Raz-Krakotzkin: Or the first, which is the same. Of course, Adam is the first. But in the novel itself, he's also the last. And Adam, our grandfather, who was in both the Old Testament and the Qur'an, he was both.

Khoury: *Adama*, which is land and man. And in Arabic Adam comes from *adeem* (أَدِيم), which is the land. In the Qur'an it says, "He was called Adam. He was taken from the earth of the land." So if you are the last man, actually you are the first man. Practically, Adam was the first man of the ghetto, but also he is supposedly, in the concept of the whole novel, the last man. Through shedding light upon his experience in the ghetto—the Palestinian ghetto—he is trying to destroy all ghettos. His profound human experience can find its place as the place that can invite others to visit. When Adam is studying at the university, his professor challenges the state of Hebrew literature and questions its ability to write lamentations and eulogies. Can Modern Hebrew literature write eulogies and lamentations? When we speak about eulogies, we speak about death. When we speak about writing, we are speaking about birth. How do these two coexist? My effort throughout the novel was to listen to Adam, even when he was silent.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: I wanted to ask you something that has been bugging me since I read it. I've just started to translate *Stella Maris*. And the beginning is very compelling because what you do there is a profound language game. In *Children of the Ghetto* the narrator, Adam, is telling the story in the first

person, and here the story is told in the third person. In Arabic, the third person is like a hidden conscience. It is called *dameer al-gha'ib* (ضمير الغائب), "the absent conscience."

> The question that irks the writer of this story is: how do the absentees write? Can the absentee tell his story in the first person, writing as someone who remembers, or should he turn to a third person, who will write the story in his stead?
> The play of the third-person pronouns in Arabic grammar, called the absentee pronouns, is unusual and has no parallel in other languages. The word that replaces a personal pronoun is called *dameer*, a linguistic expression that in Arabic also means conscience and moral compunction. So how can novelists write in the third person (when the conscience—*dameer*—is absent)?
> And what does it mean for the conscience to become absent, when the story is to be told in the third person? (English translation: p. 41 of this issue; *Stella Maris*, 14, Arabic version)

Khoury: I agree with the absent conscience. It is the voice of the absent. In the first volume, Adam was trying to speak and failed. Actually, he was telling us his memory through the words of his mother. And in the second volume, he tries to shift to a third voice because he realizes that he is a "present absent." So he is trying to write about himself in the third person. He is trying to write about himself as the hero of the novel and as if he were absent. It is an attempt to show how he realized his absence. It is not a satire. He is very sincere.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: Let us try, Elias, to connect between three issues. First, you are playful in *Children of the Ghetto* and raise issues related to Arabic grammar—past and present, which is connected to what you label the "continuous Nakba." Second, there is in *Stella Maris* a shift in voice from first to third person, which is, as you said, a question of grammar and morality of the present absent. Third, you have an issue with the Jewish Diaspora [*galut*]. You say that the Jewish Diaspora cannot absorb the Palestinians, and you suggest the other way around. You absorb the Jews into the Palestinian story. How would you link these seemingly unrelated issues?

Khoury: Actually, when I was writing the novel, I had in mind Amnon's article on the rejection of the Diaspora and the Nakba. Amnon's hypothesis is that both Darwish and Said are the representatives of the concept of exile now. In this sense, here we also find not only Mahmoud Darwish but my literary friends, who are part of this process of appropriating the exile as an existential condition. Because this novel is the diary of literature, meaning it's a novel about literature. Now, Adam is very lonely. He left his mother in the house. He finds himself alone. First, he was thinking about becoming a Jew. Practically, he was a stranger, even when he meets the Arabs who work in the garage. In the first meeting, they don't understand why this Arab is coming to take their jobs. He understands that the only way to survive is to become a Jew. This is why when he goes to the ghetto, to Warsaw, to Auschwitz, there is a big scandal. Because he goes there as a Jew. His professor believes he was originally from Warsaw, and all hell breaks loose when they go to meet Marek Edelman. The professor tells Edelman that Adam is from the ghetto, and Edelman responds with surprise, saying: I do not think I heard this name. I don't think there was a Jew in Poland whose name was Danoun. At that moment the professor understands that Adam is an Arab. The professor is very angry with Adam because he pretended to be a Jew. But Adam did not pretend he came from the Warsaw Ghetto. He was indeed from the ghetto of al-Lydd. Adam, for his part, felt that Marek Edelman could be his father. He was a hero and led the uprising in the ghetto like his imagined father. By the way, I went to Warsaw and searched for Edelman's grave.

Raz-Krakotzkin: We need Edelman to think about Palestine, in order to narrate Palestine. You do not want to deny the Holocaust, but to bring it back in order to have a place for the memory of the ghetto. You therefore have to go to Lodz, where he lived, or to Warsaw, where he was buried.

Khoury: This is one point. The other point is that I want to speak about the Holocaust in Arabic. I went to Warsaw because I was invited when my book came out in Polish. And there I decided to visit the ghetto, then I went to Auschwitz. I went to Krakow. And then I discovered Edelman. And then I bought his book in English. Edelman is a hero. He stayed in the ghetto all the way until the end and did not commit suicide. When Adam asks him why he did not commit suicide like Mordechai Anielewicz, Edelman says that suicide is a great metaphor, but we do not die to make great metaphors.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: In *Children of the Ghetto* you emphasize time and again the phrase "like sheep to the slaughter," for example, in the case of Abba Kovner.

Khoury: In Edelman's speech he said it is more heroic to go to slaughter like sheep and to dig your own tomb than to take a gun and fight. It is much more courageous than to take a gun and fight. You do not feel death. "Here I go to death." And the essential thing is to defend the dignity of your death. This is the beauty of how literary work takes you to the shadows and shades of language and so on. These will lead you to places you never imagined before. But I'm not a philosopher, I'm just a writer. But it takes you to places where you realize what I call the essence of life. This is also in *Stella Maris*.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: I'm in the midst of translating *Stella Maris* now, and I did not get to that place yet. As you know, I don't read the novel all the way through, but translate as I read the novel. I develop my relationships with the characters as I go along. I'm in suspense both in terms of curiosity and in terms of the feelings I develop toward the characters.

Khoury: What you're doing, Yehouda, is something very interesting. I don't know if I would do it like that. But as an experience, I don't know any other translator who works like that. You're in a process of translating as if you were creating, reading or writing. What you're doing here is as if you were an author. You're the real author. And you accept the nuances of feelings, and when they change, they will really change in your translation. Unlike the omnipresent writer, you don't know everything in advance. But this is also my position as a writer. I write the novel as I go along. I become the author only when I finish.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: If I may, here is an example. In the beginning of *Stella Maris*, just an example, it says that Adam got the house in Wadi al-Salib from Gabriel as a gift for his sixteenth birthday. It didn't make sense to me. It is very unlikely that he would give him a house as a gift. I wanted to revise it in the translation. It made me uncomfortable. Only later did I realize it was a parody. That he was given a place to sleep, and that Gabriel paid bribes to silence the night watchman who looked after the houses of the Palestinians in the wadi. He only let him live there for a while. I have to go back now and revise the beginning.

Khoury: Because for Adam, the thing was that he gave him the house. For someone like Adam, first of all he was sleeping in Ginat Binyamin, and then he was still in the garage, to find himself in a huge apartment with four bedrooms, with the keys. It's a gift. *Halas*, he has a house! He felt that he got a house. This is why in the end, when Mamdouh comes and tells him to leave the house, he refuses. All these nuances, small stories and small nuances will create all these vibrations that lead us slowly to discover their personalities. Because really, in the beginning, I didn't know what was going to happen. I was in suspense too.

Zreik: And what if he didn't listen to you?

Khoury: That can happen. Adam was in love. I really didn't want him to make love to the Jewish girl, because I was suspicious that his motives were different. Then I realized that for him it was an act of love. When Mamdouh came and asked him "What are you doing with this girl?" he said, "I want to marry her." He was only sixteen and said, "Yes, I'm serious. I love her." The personality develops. It really astonished me the way he behaved. I did not want him to go through all those ordeals.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: When I started to read *Stella Maris*, I had a déjà-vu. I had the feeling I'd read this story before. I wasn't sure. Maybe you told me this was going to happen. Then I realized that you rewrote the scene from *The Lover*, by A. B. Yehoshua. I was astonished by the way you wrote back into Hebrew literature. You interfere with Hebrew literature. You are not only a receiver of that literature, but you write into that literature. I also noticed that you transfer the story from the mid-1970s to the early 1960s. And even the game of names. Adam was the owner of the garage back there. And Gabriel with the flat cap became Nahum Zacharia, etc.

Khoury: This novel is about the way novels are rewritten. I rewrote Kanafani. Why not rewrite Yehoshua? The approach is to incorporate and reinterpret, and putting the other in your story is one way to create a deep dialogue. Adam was not mute like Khalil and Aziz in *My Michael* and was not a naïve kid like Naim in *The Lover*. He was a real lover, a human being trying to survive, and collecting his life from the ruins of the Nakba.

Raz-Krakotzkin: That brings us to the issue of decolonization in literature. We can talk about it from two different points, but I want to ask you about your point of view. For us, Hebrew readers, the Hebrew version of the book brings us the process of decolonization, in the sense that we have to look at ourselves through your eyes. It does so maybe in Arabic. But unfortunately, in Hebrew, it transforms everything. We have to look at ourselves, even if we know things. For me, personally, even though I knew about the events, it's a process of decolonization. Because it's one thing to say there was a massacre here, and another thing when the victim tells you about it. I assume that you cannot make love with the soldiers there. You attempt to understand them, not to understand their deed. And you're doing something else. You're talking about your relationship with Hebrew literature that is also a process of decolonization. You take this literature and decolonize it. But in what sense does it affect you? It was not written for translation, right? Its main readers are Arab readers. Most importantly, when you take an Israeli writer, what are you doing to their Hebrew literature?

Khoury: First, it is about all literature, not only Hebrew literature. I think the act of writing in a way is an act of rewriting. Literature is the most profound product of human life. Religion was born in poetry, religion was born in literature. That is, all the human values were born in the literary mimesis.

Raz-Krakotzkin: Stories existed before religion.

Khoury: Yes, of course. Religion is a story. Religion was created by the story, not the story by religion. That is why I think dialoguing with literature is dialoguing with ourselves, with our conscious and our unconscious, with our history and our prehistory, and so on. Of course, I don't necessarily write for Arab readers, but I write in Arabic. But I am writing in Arabic not to Arabs but to myself, and through me to everybody who will read it. And when you're in a language, you have to have a profound dialogue with that language. With the history of the language, with the meanings of the words in that language, you have to play with the language in order to read the language clearly. This is the major dialogue. Now, on the other hand, one of the first items of the modern Arabic novel was a dialogue with the European West. From Tawfiq al-Hakim's novel *A Sparrow from the East* [عصفور من الشرق] or Suhayl Idris's *The*

Latin Quarter [الحي اللاتيني] or Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* [موسم الهجرة إلى الشمال], it's a dialogue with Kuchuk Hanem, the famous Egyptian dancer, the way it was presented by Flaubert. As I read this dialogue, which made the European woman a metaphor, I thought this is not a dialogue. In order to enter a dialogue, you have to dialogue with literature. With European literature. Not with the image of the woman—that is to imitate Flaubert. Edward Said wrote a very good chapter on that. So, I discovered that Flaubert's letter about Kuchuk Hanem was translated into Arabic in 1920 and published in *Al Makshouf* magazine. And I think the Arab writers were under the influence of Flaubert.

Raz-Krakotzkin: Can you clarify? You are talking about Flaubert and you are talking about imitating Flaubert. What would be a dialogue that includes the writing, the literature, and the books of those writers imitating him in that way?

Khoury: Lebanese critic Maher Jarrar wrote a long text about my novel *As Though She Were Sleeping* [كأنها نائمة]. And he read the novel as a dialogue with Madame Bovary, although the character had nothing to do with Madame Bovary. So you have to dialogue with literature. And in my relationship with Hebrew, the Old Testament, Song of Solomon, Saul's or David's hymns, or the lamentations of Jeremiah, these are great literary works. I don't care if Solomon was Jewish or Turkish. It's meaningless. It's meaningless if Hamlet is in Denmark or England. The problem with modern Israeli literature is you cannot dialogue with it on that level.

Zreik: On which level?

Khoury: That is, to forget the national context, as you can do with Solomon, or with Hamlet or with Flaubert. Its literature is still trying to play games with French existentialism. So when you dialogue, you're pushing this literature to uncover, which is to decolonize. And I don't know what the actual effect on these writers will be, very small if any. But you bet on the idea that literature affects literature with time. It affects language with time. And it will change the language and then it will change literature. But I'm not stupid enough to think I'm making a revolution for tomorrow.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: We are finished, but the dialogue is incomplete. This conversation should be continued. But for the time being, we're done. We'll transcribe this and we'll send it to you to see. Because there are areas of silences here. [*Laughs.*] We are not going to be loyal to the camera only . . .

Khoury: Like translation.

Shenhav-Shahrabani: Like translation. [*All laugh.*]

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Elias Khoury

In a Third Voice

Translation from the Arabic: Yehouda Shenhav-Shahrabani

prose

Stella Maris, the "Star of the Sea," is God's balcony overlooking a pigeon swimming in the water, which we call Haifa. On this balcony, from where Prophet Elijah's hill sweeps us toward his miracle, Adam Danoun, the protagonist and the narrator of this tale, discovered his multiple faces, reconciled with each of his names, and spun his story. Here he tasted his first kiss, and here he became acquainted with the pleasures and pain of love. Here he swore fidelity to the girl he loved, and here he acquired the alphabet of betrayal—to wipe out the wounds in his heart, only to replace them with new ones.

As he was trying to paint his story with the ink of words, he was swept away by the memory of this God's balcony and saw Haifa sliding from the Carmel heights into the sea, spreading its wings and falling into the sea's welcoming embrace. The city dips into the water and floats, providing refuge to a young boy who had no refuge, except for his feeling that his life was a shadow of human life, which was nothing but a shadow of a story for which there was no author.

Today a sweeping nostalgia takes him to Stella Maris, where he used to sit alone, feeling absent and invisible. Here, on the flat terrace on Mount Carmel, where history tampered with the histories of the place, a second Adam was born. On this flat terrace he filled the emptiness of his loneliness and sense of exile with the sea, washed his eyes with the sight of the sun sinking into the horizon, and drowned in the silence of the sea air that sprinkled his face with the taste of salt. In his longing for the time that had passed, he turned to an absent third person to narrate the story of his absence.

Adam, the son of Hassan and Manal Danoun, was born in 1948 in the ghetto of al-Lydd (called Lod by the Israelis). He decided, however, that his story began when he sat on God's balcony in Stella Maris, watching the water and inhaling his freedom from the smell of the sea. He would come to this balcony and sit for endless hours on the stone bench, which became his refuge from the memory of his mother, from

the garage where he worked, and from the spacious apartment that was abandoned by its owners in Wadi al-Salib, which was a gift given to him by Gabriel—the owner of the garage—on his sixteenth birthday.

When his girlfriend Rivka, Gabriel's daughter, asked him to take her to his home to make love for the first time, Adam told her that he feared the ghosts inhabiting the abandoned houses. He said that when he comes home he tiptoes so as not to awaken the ghosts of the absentee owners who were expelled from their home and swallowed by the sea. He said that he hears the echoes of their voices nestled in the stones of the house, and sees their faces shaded with the darkness of absence, roaming the house as if they are bidding it farewell or else reclaiming it.

Adam Danoun lacked the appropriate vocabulary to tell Rivka that he feared the owners of the house—whom he knew one by one through their pictures that hung on the walls. He was unable to tell her that he was especially fearful of that young woman embracing her small child. He saw the pain in the corner of the eyes of this woman, whose name he did not know, spread in their whiteness and in the light gleaming from her pupils.

Adam did not have the courage to tell Rivka that he could not betray this woman in her own house. After spending a week at the house, which Khawaja Gabriel told him had become his, the young man took all the pictures of the family off the walls and hid them in one of the rooms. In their places, he saw white patches spotted on the walls. He preferred to live with the white patches so as not to meet the accusatory stares of the previous owners, which filled his soul with a strange sense of dread and guilt. Nonetheless, the image of this woman did not leave him for a moment, even in her absence. He returned and hung her picture back on the main wall and apologized. He named the anonymous woman Shah-la and her little baby, Naji. This photo always accompanied him in the house that was full of the absentees' ghosts.

If Adam had known the real meaning of love, he would surely have said that Shah-la was his first love. He was only a 16-year-old and could not yet write a love story fit to be a chapter in the book *The Ring of the Dove*, by Ibn Hazm, the Andalusian writer who narrated unimaginable forms of love. Had he been able to do so, he would have told how his love for the image turned into lust in a tale that ended in despair—the highest degree of love.

The woman in the picture, who clutched her little baby, bore a striking resemblance to his mother, Manal. Time did not leave its traces on her youth, which glistened with sadness, as she held her baby who remains forever young, as the absentees never grow up, nor do they die. Was Shah-la—whose picture was hanging

on the wall of the house in Wadi al-Salib—his first love? Or was the photo just a picture hanging on the blank whiteness of memory?

In Stella Maris, Adam Danoun decided to banish the memories nesting in his mind, to restart his life by giving birth to a new self. He decided to live alone and hide the past in a box buried in the ground. It would be in the earth of Haifa that he would inter the stories of al-Lydd—along with its pain and sufferings, and the stories of the lovers who had lived there—burying them in the box of forgetfulness and walking away.

The question that irks the writer of this story is: how do the absentees write? Can the absentee tell his story in the first person, writing as someone who remembers, or should he turn to a third person, who will write the story in his stead?

The play of the third-person pronouns in Arabic grammar, called the absentee pronouns, is unusual and has no parallel in other languages. The word that replaces a personal pronoun is called *dameer*, a linguistic expression that in Arabic also means conscience and moral compunction. So how can novelists write in the third person (when the conscience—*dameer*—is absent)? And what does it mean for the conscience to become absent, when the story is to be told in the third person?

The moment Adam left the house of his mother, Manal, he had chosen absence. He felt that he had only one option—to divide Adam into two: one who would be the present Adam and one who would be the absent Adam. The first half lives today in New York City; he is therefore absent from the place and present in the text. The second Adam lives in Haifa, so he is present in a place that has been made absent.

Adam, who is present-absent or absent-present, must admit the linguistic superiority of the Israelis in at least one expression. The Israeli legislator who invented the expression of the "present-absent" was a true genius, for he surpassed the ingeniousness of the writers of the theater of the absurd by turning the name of an entire people into absurdity.

Arab linguists call the third person "the hiding person." The writer of this story finds himself compelled to hide in order to write in a third voice. He will write about Adam in the third person as if he is discovering him. He will purposefully forget the abandoned baby who was found half dead on his mother's breast under the olive tree on the long road between al-Lydd and Na'alin, and will look at Adam's life through fresh eyes.

He will indulge in absence to the very end: he will absent himself in order to write about places made absent. However, his fascination with Shah-la's eyes, which

are seared into his memory, will reveal the impossibility of his quest. The woman hiding behind her almond eyes awakened a silent longing in his heart for the mother he was not able to forget.

On that odd December night, as the clouds shrouded the light of the stars, Adam and Rivka made love under Shah-la's jealous gaze. He understood that life is nothing but deception that we must counter with similar deceit, or else we would be crushed under the memory of nostalgia and fear and would be turned into ghosts, living with those ghosts of the people wandering around the crumbling homes of Wadi al-Salib.

Notes

* From the introductory chapter of Elias Khoury's new novel *Stella Maris* (Beirut: Dar Al-Adab, 2019).

إلياس خوري, **نجمة البحر: أولاد الغيتو 2** (بيروت: دار الآداب، 2019).

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Anton Shammas

The Drowned Library (Reflections on Found, Lost, and Translated Books and Languages)

Salt

Hebrew, in my personal dictionary, has always been associated with salt—that white stuff which people, especially where I come from, tend to rub into each other's wounds, whenever they have the chance to do so.

I was a village boy of twelve, just a few weeks after we had left the village, in northern Palestine, and came to settle down in this joint Jewish-Arab slum in Haifa, in the early 1960s. One afternoon I was sent by my mother to buy some sunflower seeds, because she was expecting friends. Sunflower seeds: That's what she would've served her guests in the village, whom you may imagine as a pair of gossipy parakeets. So there I was, just a little boy whose knowledge in survival Hebrew was limited to very practical structures—that's what I thought—like conjugating liknot (to buy) in future tense, third-person feminine. And I was real proud of that knowledge. Imagine, then, me taking that errand upon my proud little self, squeezing into a tiny shop of Middle Eastern munchies, then imagine me asking the grudging vendor—who happened to be a Romanian Jew, against all my odds—in the most eloquent Hebrew I could muster, for 300 grams of sunflower seeds. And imagine that grudging vendor looking at me from the height of his munchies throne, sullenly asking me, in the most eloquent Hebrew he could muster: im melakh o blee melakh?

And I stand there struck dumb.

What on earth could he mean with these unexpected words? And he repeats his question more impatiently now, when, as equally unexpected, the neighbors' daughter—who was a villager too but belonged to the first pioneers who had left their villages in the late 1950s—squeezes her highbrow self in and volunteers, unprompted, as these villagers usually would, to explain to me that the man is simply asking whether I want my sunflower seeds salted or not. That simple. And

she would later boast to anyone willing to listen that she had helped this peasant out of his first encounter with the Hebrew language, and how—rubbing more salt into my wound—could I be totally ignorant of the simple fact that the Hebrew melakh (that's how she pronounced the word, not after the Oriental fashion of melah) is but the Arabic milh. And to make things worse, nobody, repeat: Nobody seemed to take her story with even a single grain of salt.

That same evening I made my first urban resolution: Thou shall learn Hebrew. But I've gone too far since that evening. The mother who'd sent me to buy the sunflower seeds that day didn't know—and neither did I—that she was actually handing me over to a stepmother of sorts, a stereotypical stepmother, right out of the Grimm brothers' tales—a stepmother who deterritorializes, dispossesses, disperses, and, indeed, kills in Hebrew. But language, as such, does not kill. Language is pure; people who use it to kill, at more levels than one, are those who contaminate it. And I didn't know then that those seeds, albeit toasted, would sprout on my tongue. And I didn't know then that once my tongue was exposed to the taste of those salted seeds, it would be craving for more.

Mayy to Water

On the night of June 22, 1995, my son Nadeem, who was about to turn three the following September, woke up in the middle of the night and shouted: "Water!" His sleepy scream reached me through the Gerry child monitor on my desk meant to panopticize his every whisper and count his every breath, under the guise of parental concern. I was dumbfounded by the electronic scream—not because it was higher than usual in pitch, nor because of its perfect Midwestern accent ("Waaater!") but because it should have been in Arabic in the first place; it should have been "mayy," not "water."

Nadeem, who was born in this country in 1992, was initially raised in the respective mother tongues of his immigrant parents—Hebrew and Arabic—in the hope that he would, eventually, survive the two mutually exclusive and linguistically puffing dragons and become a trilingual American kid. When he turned two, we sent him to the University of Michigan's Children Center, in Ann Arbor, where he learned, among other things, his first, non-TV English words. At the Children Center, Nadeem instinctively discovered that (a) the two arcane languages he had known were utterly useless when communicating with his peers; and (b) given a choice between his parents' English accent and the teacher's, he'd be better off with the latter's. The first discovery, one would imagine, was probably a gradual realization; but after three or four months of day care he wouldn't even acknowledge

us when we addressed him in Arabic or Hebrew, and the two languages were literally deleted from his hard disk. Tragic as that was, we drew some solace from the fact that he had picked up the teacher's accent and that he still retained some Arabic and Hebrew words, which he would occasionally insert in his elementary English sentences. Haleeb, the Arabic word for "milk," for instance, was one of those words (haleeb, you may assume, was a very essential component in his diet at the time); and mayy, the Arabic word for "water," was another signifier of liquid states of mind.

Until that fateful night in June, that is, when his mayy wasn't simply translated into "water" but, rather, turned into water, the way another and —let's face it—more famous Palestinian Jew turned water into wine at the beginning of his career. And be that as it may, the dream of having a first-generation, trilingual, triply-hyphenated Palestinian-Israeli-American received a major blow, and our linguistic panopticon was rendered inefficient, to say the least.

But that's not exactly how I lost my Arabic.

The Embedded Bookcase

When I was Nadeem's age now, toward the end of the 1950s, I was living in a small village in northern Palestine, which is the subject of my novel *Arabesques*. An eccentric priest, whose story is told in the novel, came to live in the village, and brought with him a rare collection of old books and journals, which my big brother coveted, against an unequivocal command of the Holy Church. Bit by bit, many volumes from that collection made their way to our bookcase, which was embedded in the southern, stone-built, thick wall of our house, right above the couch. It's hard to explain this architectural element to an American mind, whose poetics of space is generally based on a wall-idea that is hardly thicker than burned toast. You have to actually imagine two parallel walls, built almost three feet apart, and the space between them filled up with rubble. And then imagine an inbuilt, huge wooden box, embedded in the inside wall, with its back touching the outside wall from within, and its door the color of olives. Many books from the priest's library had found their mysterious way into that masterpiece of bibliokleptomania, joining books that my mother had brought with her from Lebanon, "not yet touched by the mild boredom of order," as Walter Benjamin would have said.

Inside the bookcase you could find volumes of the Lebanese literary magazine *Al-Jinan*, from the 1870s, the magazine whose extremely young editor, in biweekly installments, wrote what was later to be considered as the first Arabic novels. There were also a feminist women's magazine called *Minerva*; a pioneering Egyptian magazine called *Al-Hilal*; some early Arabic novels and collections of poetry; some

books for teaching French grammaire; and a series of textbooks for teaching the Arabic language called *Al-Mushawwaq*, which included abridged excerpts (that's what the Arabic word "bitasarruf" implied) from the works of famous Arab and European authors. I used to spend hours in front of that bookcase, lying on the wooden couch underneath it, devouring the wonderful illustrations in an old edition of Larousse, and then gingerly making my way through the volumes of *Al-Mushawwaq*, where I first came across names I couldn't pronounce: Homer, Cervantes, Victor Hugo (which I still can't pronounce properly). But I was more fascinated by the texts of modernist Arab authors, writing in the 1930s and 1940s, some of which I can still recite from memory. And then there was an Arabic translation of Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, published in Egypt in the 1940s. This was the first novel that I ever read, and my most favorite novel of all times. And whenever I want to sneak back to that secret space of childhood, through the olive-colored door of the embedded bookcase, all I have to do is open the Arabic translation of *My Antonia* and read the opening paragraph:

> I first heard of Antonia on what seemed to me an interminable journey across the great midland plain of North America. I was ten years old then; I had lost both my father and mother within a year, and my Virginia relatives were sending me out to my grandparents, who lived in Nebraska. I traveled in the care of a mountain boy, Jake Marpole, one of the "hands" on my father's old farm under the blue ridge, who was now going west to work for my grandfather. Jake's experience of the world was not much wider than mine. He had never been in a railway train until the morning when we set out together to try our fortunes in a new world.

It's been some forty years now, and I can hardly think of any other text that can still move me the way Willa Cather's did, in its Arabic translation. And I can hardly think of any other text in whose title my untranslatable proper name is embedded, the way that bookcase was embedded in the wall. In a mysterious way, it's the only text that gives my name, and gives me, any meaning. And it's probably the only text that doesn't translate me but, rather, turns me into a ten-year-old orphan called Jim Burden, who lives with his grandparents in Nebraska, a place I have never been to, but still feel it's a part of my childhood landscapes in northern Palestine. Novels can do that sometimes, they can turn water into wine in front of your eyes.

In one of the books in that bookcase, I first read the fable about the farmer who decides one day to supplement his income by diluting the milk that his cows produce with water and how, later, his cattle were, Job-style, drowned by sudden mountain

floods. So what was given by water was taken by water, a maxim, in the Benjaminian sense, that was totally wasted on me, as time would prove.

The Drowned Library

In the Arab memory, books can go—so to speak—not only by fire, but also by water. You may recall the apocryphal story about the conquest of Baghdad in 1258, by Hulagu, and how, after the destruction of the city, the waters of the Tigris remained pitch dark for three days, because of the manuscripts that had been dumped in the river. The calligraphy that contained, among other things, translations into Arabic and Syriac of the Greek philosophers, physicians, and mathematicians was translated back into diluted ink.

In Arab popular traditions, there's a belief that if a manuscript were to be submerged in water and its ink were to dissolve, drinking the water would transform the knowledge contained in that manuscript into the body of the drinker and become part of the body's system. In rural areas in the Middle East there are people who still believe that drinking the water of a magically written amulet would protect the body against the evil eye. In some Jewish communities in North Africa, in the past, little kids were taught the alphabet by licking the honey-written characters off a board. In other, Arab communities, kids were taught the alphabet by drinking the water of a piece of paper on which the alphabet has been inscribed. In certain Muslim communities in Africa, the Qur'an is committed to memory through drinking its water. The signs are translated from their solid into their liquid form, into an aqua-alphabet of sorts that would open the secret passages of the heart to the seeping alphabetical potion.

I left Jerusalem for Ann Arbor, Michigan, in the summer of 1987. I had lived there for almost twenty years, moving between two languages and some seven different addresses, and by the time I reached the seventh address (the number is real, not formulaic) I was grounded by the sheer weight of the books I had been dragging behind me from place to place. In front of the embedded bookcase, I had also read an apocryphal anecdote about a famous Arab author who, when leaving from one city to another, would use forty camels to carry his manuscripts. I was not an Arab author, and apparently was never meant to be, so I hardly needed any camels.

I had come to Jerusalem as a student to join the Hebrew University and soon enough discovered that the National Library, as the Hebrew University library is called (in Hebrew, not English), was the real treat and retreat, so that's where I spent most of my university days. Those also were the days when I started to establish a modest

library of my own. Benjamin speaks of the "inner need to own a library," without exactly explaining what he means by "to own." For, in addition to the additional acquisition of books needed for the courses I was taking, I was systematically looting the family library in Haifa, behind the back of my bibliokleptomaniac brother. We had left the village and moved to Haifa in the early 1960s, leaving some of the old books locked up in that embedded bookcase, for reasons that I failed then to understand and am still puzzling at. Another brother had moved back to our house in the village, which we hadn't sold, by the time I moved to Jerusalem, and became, by default, the owner of the collection inside the embedded bookcase. He was then newly married, and as such did not pay attention to the gradual disappearance of his inheritance. I would go to visit him once in a while and leave with a bag full of books I claimed I needed for the writing of some paper or another, and would certainly return them on my next visit. So, little by little, what was left of the old Arabic books from the priest's collection, and most of those books that my mother had brought with her from distant Beirut when she married my father in 1940, ended up on my shelves in Jerusalem.

And there were other, more honest sources of acquisition.

A friend of mine, whom I shall call Nissim, told me one day that his shelves could no longer contain the abundance of his collection, to use a Kabbalistic metaphor, and he would very much like for me to come over and choose all the English books I wanted. Nissim, an Iraqi Jew, had come to Israel in the early 1950s from Baghdad, where he had worked, among other jobs, at a local English bookshop. I simply could not resist the offer and, believing he meant it for free, I spent two days groping around the mazes of his shelves, and ended up with some real treasures and some real burdens that he simply wanted to get rid of. So along with a first edition of an Auden, I had to take some five hundred old issues of the British literary journal *Encounter* from the 1950s and early 1960s. And you can imagine the kind of space needed for such a white, highbrow British elephant.

Some memorable pieces from that magazine: Auden's review of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, where he writes, if I remember correctly, that he never reads novels that contain more than 260 pages, but would make an exception in Tolkien's case; Aldous Huxley's 1955 hilarious essay "Usually Destroyed" in whose first section he describes a tour with an Arab tourist guide in the Old City of Jerusalem, whose

> most significant contribution to colloquial English (and, at the same time, to the art and science of history) was the insertion into almost every sentence of the word "usually" . . . "This area," he would say as he showed us one of the Victorian

> monstrosities, "this area . . . is very rich in antiquity. St. Helena built here a very vast church, but the area was usually destroyed by the Samaritans in the year 529 after Our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . In the 17th century after our Lord Jesus Christ, the Turks usually removed the lead from the roof to make ammunition . . . [and] all these broken-down houses you see over there were usually destroyed during the war with the Jews in 1948."

But most memorably this lofty quote from a 1961 essay by the pompous Cyril Connolly:

> I have always been fascinated by the study of climate and in particular by its relationship to art. On the whole, art is a sun-substitute—perpetual sunshine casts out art. . . . There's hardly any great painting south of Rome or Madrid. . . . I noticed in the Tropics that European poetry only became significant just before it was going to rain and that incidentally it was no longer possible, owing to humidity or white ants, to enjoy fine bindings or first editions. Air-conditioning may increase the yield from warm places, even as central heating has pushed the creative limit northward . . . the literature, painting, music, architecture, sculpture produced between latitudes 40 and 60 in the last two thousand years under seasonal conditions can justify existence to me while I also live between latitudes 40 and 60, and am subject to a similar awareness of the seasons.

And there I was, languishing along the uncreative latitude of thirty-something degrees, with my only hope being an air-conditioning unit. But how could I afford it when it turned out that Nissim, my Iraqi friend, meant to *sell* me all the books and magazines that I'd coveted and was expecting a fortune for them. So there was yet another one of these self-referential loops: The only way for me to join Connolly's creative kingdom, between latitudes 40 and 60, was either to join him in dreary London or to purchase an air-conditioning unit. But I had invested all my savings in buying, among other things, the issues of the magazine in which he had published his musings.

I was broke, then, and "usually destroyed."

Visitations

Ein Karem, which means in Arabic "Karem's Spring," is a small village on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. Its Arab inhabitants were driven out of their homes during the war of 1948 between the Arabs and Jews, a war called by the Israelis the War of Independence and by the Palestinians, the year of al-Nakba, the Palestinian Catastrophe. It's an arrogantly yet breathtakingly beautiful village, whose stone-

built houses perch on steep mountainsides, among groves of olive trees that give the landscape strong Christian and Palestinian overtones. Ein Karem is believed to have been the birthplace of John the Baptist, in whose parents' house the expectant Virgin Mary, as we are told in Luke 1, is believed to have stayed for some three months. A church called the Church of the Visitation was built on that alleged site. And there's of course another church that carries the name of the most famous native son of Ein Karem—John the Baptist himself, who used to translate people by water. As you can imagine, it's a place whose main streets are always clogged with Christian tourists, who are lured in by similar ads to this typical one, taken from the website of a famous restaurant in Ein Karem that prides itself on being an Italian gondola in an Arab brook:

> Ein Karem is a neighborhood lush in greenery, with narrow passages, old Arab houses, churches & [a] brook flowing from a mosque. And amidst all this beauty, right beside the brook against a background of bell chimes, lies Pundak Ein-Karem [that's the name of the restaurant] which has succeeded in preserving the country atmosphere in its two gardens. Come take a break from the hustle & bustle of the city & enjoy the serenity & beauty. A place where every guest can eat Italian dishes & scrumptious cakes.

But Ein Karem is also a picturesque landscape that attracts not only Israeli cannibalistic artists and other Realtors but also good-intentioned people who have a taste for Arab architecture, with the double, thick walls that would contain bookcases and in-built cupboards. Very dear friends of ours, who belong to the latter group, bought an Arab house there in the early 1980s, as a summer retreat away from humid Tel Aviv. In the utterly unfinished basement of that house, which could be approached from the street through a low window, I'd stored away all my books before coming to Ann Arbor, in the summer of 1987.

I can tell you now, from experience, that unfinished basements are not the best place for keeping cardboard boxes bulging with books. This I realized when I first went on a visitation to that dimly lit basement, two years later, to salvage some books that I'd missed and to find out more about the dark fate of the rest. I managed to rescue some Hebrew and English books over the years and to ship them to Ann Arbor. But the most precious part of the collection, my Arabic books, some of which, true, were looted, and some others that had survived almost one hundred years of wandering from Lebanon to Palestine, remained, unwittingly, in Ein Karem. In one of my visitations there, in the mid-1990s, I decided, in a fit of ambition, to rescue

all Arabic books from the humid basement and air them out on some bookshelves in a room adjacent to the basement. So I took out all the Arabic books that I could find, scattered between the sixty-something boxes, and shelved them in that adjacent room, thinking that they, at least, had escaped a fate of condensation.

Late in 1995, my friends had to attend to some plumbing problems in that old Arab house. The plumber they had summoned decided, according to some arcane logic of plumbers, that he should look for the source of the problem inside the thick wall behind the shelves of my Arabic books. He hit the wall, and the primordial water gushed out and drowned all my Arabic books, turning them into a huge black pulp. It took my friends some two months before they could find the words to inform me about my personal Nakba.

My first thought was, when I heard the news: I lost my Arabic.

Four years later I finally got the courage to visit the Hebrew and English survivors, in order to decide over their fate. My friends were considering selling the house, and the books had to go. I bought twelve thirty-pound cardboard boxes from the nearby post office and went to see my books, planning to spend with them no more than a couple of hours. I ended up spending four long, humid and hot days, going over the boxes and trying to decide who makes it to Amérka and who would be left to languish behind (the final fate was still to be decided). There were also papers and clips and documents and personal letters, in three languages, to be sifted through, scattered among the boxes. I thought that if I hadn't needed those for more than twelve years, I should simply throw them away, unopened. But the minute the first letter was inadvertently read, I could no longer discard that younger part of me, nor decide that it was irrelevant to the old man I had become. After all, our newly acquired identities are nothing but a pile of old papers. In the meantime, the books were waiting on the sly, as convicts whose retrial was again deferred. But eventually, after four days of jury deliberations, the twelve boxes were filled up to the brim, and I needed another box for some ten remaining books that seemed so awfully crucial to my well-being in Michigan. I went to the post office and for some foolish reason bought another box of the same size as the rest, creating a new dilemma. It wouldn't make sense now to ship a half-empty box, I thought. And sure enough, before I knew it I was sifting again through all the boxes, to choose the books that would join the lucky ten. Books that had silently accepted their unknown fate as stationary, dispensable objects were all of a sudden given a free ticket to the Land of the Free, so they started shouting with joy and tap dancing all over the basement with their tiny, invisible feet.

At the end of the fourth day, totally drained and exhausted, I stood in the middle of the dim basement, surrounded by my sealed boxes, facing the low window and looking scatter-mindedly at the legs of the passersby in the eye-level street. The street otherwise had some tourist shops and, just facing me, a famous art gallery. A group of raucous teenagers suddenly stopped at the window, pondering the unusual sight, which must have looked like a Caravaggio scene from within the blazing summer light of the street. One kid bent over and, pressing his cupped hand over his eyes to make me out, asked in Hebrew: "What do you people sell here?"

"Dust," I answered in English.

Border Crossing and Cannibalism

If asked, I'd describe myself as a translator and linguistic refugee, a fugitive from three languages: Arabic, Hebrew, and English. And as such, I've been trying, since I came to this country some fifteen years ago, to maintain my relationships with these respective languages through translation. Much as I dislike the sheer labor involved in it, translation nonetheless seems to provide me with an imaginary soothing solace of sorts, the solace of border crossing, the solace of the cultural go-between, the cultural smuggler. But an imaginary crossing, nonetheless.

For I'm not sure at all, on second thought, that the signified behind the compound "border crossing" actually exists. For we first assume the existence of a border, say, between cultures and languages, a very clear Mason-Dixon line of sorts, that marks the end of a certain world of histories, traditions, ideas, conventions, and the beginning of another. And then we assume that a certain "crossing" of that border, back and forth, can take place at will and, moreover, can be traced, transcribed, and talked about communicatively. In other words—can be translated, in the original meaning of the word: to transfer, to move from one place to the other, to transport and carry over. Because that is, after all, what we seem to be doing when we perform what Walter Benjamin calls "the task of the translator"—we carry the "meaning" of a certain text over into another language, in order to give that meaning what Benjamin calls an "after-life." Which means, in other words, that a text is virtually dead without that act of carrying over, that act of border crossing between languages. Incidentally, "translation" in medieval ecclesiastical usage, as Talal Asad reminds us, meant the "removal of a saint's remains, or his relics, from an original site to another," and the narratives relating such events were called translationes, "translations."

But I'm not sure the site of "border crossing" actually exists. I for one believe that borders, as such, are no longer there, let alone their alleged "crossing," metaphorically or otherwise. Borders are no longer there because they cannot be seen and deciphered from within that twilight zone that we refer to as bilingualism, or trilingualism for that matter, where the edges of any given language are filed down, blurred, cannibalized, metabolized, and then assimilated into that intersection where the two languages overlap. Bilingual translators, probably, are those who are aware of this phenomenon the most; bilingual writers are less aware of it, I think, not because they are not, seismographically, up to par, but simply because for them it's almost a second nature, a built-in mechanism that's taken for granted.

So can these writers perform as cultural translators, then?

I don't think writers engage in cultural translation as an intentional act of choice, as they write. Rather, their readers are those who choose to see in their writing that trait of cultural translation, that trait of cultural cannibalism. Cannibalism in this context, as Edwin Gentzler comments on the poetics of the Brazilian poets and translators Haroldo and Augusto de Campos and their notion of translation as cannibalism, is to be understood not in the western sense—that is, of capturing, dismembering, mutilating, and devouring—but in a sense that shows respect—as a symbolic act of taking back out of love, of absorbing the virtues of a body through a transfusion of blood. Translation is seen as an empowering act, a nourishing act, an act of affirmative play.

I have been a cannibal for almost thirty years now; not that active, but still a cannibal. I work with, through, and across three different languages, with a varying sense of ease; one of the three—English—would be described as a "major" language; the other two—Hebrew and Arabic—"minor" and insignificant. And I have been trying, since I came to this country to translate myself, whatever that means, into English. From what language, or languages, I'm not sure anymore; but it's obvious that this act of translation comes through with a great deal of noise, static and otherwise.

Caller ID

In the summer of 2000, I was on my way from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to visit my old mother in Haifa, and, having missed my connection for reasons that I won't bore you with, but certainly have nothing to do with my excellent performance as a traveler, I found myself stranded at the Amsterdam airport for some eleven hours, a dubious

experience by all accounts, but really nothing compared to the misfortunes of, say, a Flying Dutchman.

Anyway, after I found out at the transfer desk that my prospects were gloomy, I immediately wanted to make two phone calls, in two opposite directions: one, in Hebrew, to my worried wife in Ann Arbor, Michigan, informing her about the deferred departure; and the other, in Arabic, to my worried mother in Haifa, telling her that I'd be landing in Tel-Aviv at one A.M. the next day, almost thirteen hours late. And after unraveling the Dutch international calling card intricacies, I made the two phone calls and set out to look for the airport hotel, about which an American friend had told me.

Later, confined by four boring and windowless Dutch walls, I was extremely disturbed by the realization that in order to make the two phone calls, and without even giving it a second thought, I went looking for an out-of-way phone booth, not for privacy reasons, as I may have deluded myself into believing, but simply because I didn't want my two, shamefully secretive languages to be audible, to be heard, to attract the threatening attention of others, as if I were still roaming the unfriendly streets of Jerusalem, where I had lived for almost twenty years prior to my American adventure. On one hand, the attention of the virtual Palestinians for whom Hebrew has been, for more than a century, the language of power and deterritoralization, of dispossession, of lethal interrogations, of bloody occupation; and on the other, the attention of the virtual Israelis for whom Palestinian Arabic has been the language of the locked-up ghost inside the closet, the suppressed language of Caliban, the muffled language of the landscapes, the stifled language of those who can't lay claim except to a dialect, since only states with an army, an air force, and a navy can have languages, while stateless peoples have to make do with a dialect; and, above all, for the average Israeli, the language of "terrorism."

It was a ghost that followed me for thirteen years without being noticed—the fear that language, as such, is, at the same time, a threat that has to be evaded and a fragile secret that has to be protected. I remembered that when I used to live in Jerusalem, reading an Arabic newspaper in a west Jerusalem café would invite hostile looks on a good day but, more often than not, merit a frisking and a violent encounter with the Israeli police. That's when the trivial, the mundane, the absent-minded act of reading a newspaper in public would be interpreted as a potential threat. And I remembered that one of the most gratifying features of living in Ann Arbor, Michigan, had been the sheer pleasure of sitting in a ghost-free café and reading an Arabic newspaper

without generating hostile looks of strangers (it's no longer the case, of course, but that was long before 9/11). And I realized that once I'd left the imagined safety of that place and wandered into the mazes of Amsterdam airport, the subliminal fears and threats of life in the old country came home to roost.

Literature, to borrow a phrase from Walter Abish, is probably an attempt to make that threat visible.

Postscript

Nadeem still wakes up at night to have a drink of water. In most cases he no longer asks for my assistance but somehow just gets to the bathroom, fills up a Dixie cup with cold water, formerly known as mayy, and quenches his nightly thirst. Then he staggers back to his bed, to finish off his dreams, in English. Sometimes I think that had my friends in Ein Karem informed me about the catastrophe when it happened, I should have asked them to squeeze some Arabic books and send me their water in a sealed bottle. After all, Christian tourists in Ein Karem fill up their bottles with the holy water of its 'ein, or spring, believing it's the same water that gave the idea of baptism to John, without asking too many questions about the lost Arabic murmur of the spring. So why shouldn't my holy, drowned Arabic books be treated in the same manner? I'd add some drops from that bottle into Nadeem's cup, every now and then, and hope for the best.

But then I would also realize that I had, indeed, lost my Arabic; that I had as well lost my Hebrew; that English would remain, forever, "one shore beyond desire" (in Hart Crane's words); that I would always be trapped inside my confused and scattered tongues, my miniature Babel.

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Dalāla, Dialogue (Maimonides, Bouteldja, and Us)

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> Precisely because language is interwoven with practice, a usage that makes sense in a given form of life may cease to do so when that life changes—translation is therefore a continuous and necessary feature of everyday life.
>
> Talal Asad[1]

When Maimonides contemplates translation, he stages a truly fantastic scene that, ostensibly pedagogical, might also be described as dialogical, even theatrical. The scene deepens and thickens entanglements, encounters, and interpellations, the terms of which signal toward discrete yet vanishing points—one might say, signs—upon lines of unlikely geometries and implausible grammars. Between Hebrew and Arabic, "philosophy and law" (as Leo Strauss underscored), across writing and aurality, Maimonides puts meaning at play, and he does so by playing language games, doing things with signs. Of course, the book itself is, to begin with, a sign of sorts, a tangled point or pointer on fabled lines, bearing a title so notorious that it can no longer be read, much less be heard or thought.[2] What does it mean to hear? What is within and between Hebrew and Arabic? What is at play within and between the Jew and the Arab?

A voice speaks. It addresses and calls upon its reader in the grammatical singular. It is a written voice that teaches, that appeals to learning and prescribes knowledge. "Know," it says. The voice practices what it preaches, not untypically, by signaling toward an absence, an absence of understanding. The voice calls toward someone

who is absent (in the text, in any text, the addressee is as absent as the author). It also evokes someone, another someone, or perhaps it is the same one, who does not understand (*man lam yafham*). "Know that if one does not understand . . ." The relation to language—for it is language that is here related, spoken, and spoken of, heard and heard of too, together with the speaking animal—begins from a place of nonunderstanding. "Know that if one does not understand the language of a human being whom one hears speaking . . ." In all-too rapid a sequence, then, knowledge is prescribed and withdrawn, nonunderstanding is brought, if temporally or conditionally, onto the scene of language, into the language of the text (the language spoken by the authorial voice, written by the scribal pen) and within language as such, within the language of human beings. Language, the language here spoken and written, demands knowledge and understanding while staging, and speaking of, nonunderstanding. One—someone—hears language and, in this aural environment, in this movement inscribed between hearing and speaking, speaking or hearing, one is divided, parted from understanding.

Still, one knows. By which Maimonides means, as he goes on to say, that one knows and one does not know. Know that one knows without knowing, Maimonides is saying. Indubitably so. When someone hears the language of a human being, "one indubitably knows that the person speaks, but without knowing what they intend to say."[3] On the stage of language, in the scene of language, which though singular may have turned out to be a scene of languages, known and unknown, of languages not understood, there is nevertheless knowledge, indubitable knowledge, the knowledge that there is language, that someone is speaking. And one hears it too. One knows that one hears language and knows too that one does not know, one does not understand, what is being said, what is being intended. Is translation needed? We are in the midst of translation, enclosed within it, and at the same time, perhaps, only on its threshold. We are, as the expression goes, lost in translation.

Like a stage, the scene can turn darker. Graver. "Something of even graver import may occur." And it does. Still, it is a repetition of sorts. One—someone—is hearing someone speak. Once again, someone is hearing. Once again, someone is speaking. Two languages emerge, the language of the speaker, and the language of the hearer (we cannot call the latter a *listener*, for reasons that should already be clear and will become clearer).

There is no mistake to speak of, no misunderstanding per se. One is hearing something. Sometimes, that is, one is hearing *meaning*. More precisely, the words spoken indicate a certain meaning. Someone speaks and thereby signals or indicates a certain meaning. One hears someone speak and hears something, some words and

some meaning, indicated. What happens is an accident. Something that happens sometimes. "Sometimes one may hear in someone else's speech words that in the language of the speaker indicate a certain meaning [*tadullu ʿalā maʿnā*], and by accident that word indicates [*tadullu*] in the language of the hearer the contrary of what the speaker intended." The hearer hears the language of the hearer. Which seems natural enough. He hears his own language in the words spoken. Understandably enough, the hearer thus understands. He understands the meaning of the words he hears in his own language. Or maybe it is only one word. Still, it is a word that he knows in his own language. And he understandably understands its meaning. It just happens, however (it was an accident), that the meaning intended by the word in the language of the hearer is the opposite of the meaning intended by the word spoken in that other language, the language of the speaker (whom the hearer was hearing speaking). What is grave, even graver, about this scene, as opposed to the previous scene of nonunderstanding (someone speaks, and one knows someone is speaking, one knows that for sure, but one also knows that one does not know what is being said, one does not understand), is that this time, someone understands. Someone understands something, the meaning of a word, its signification in one's own language as one hears it. "Thus the hearer will think that the signification [*dalāla*] that the word has for the speaker is the same as its signification [*dalāla*] for him." This scene of understanding is and is not a scene of translation. It is a scene of languages, between and across languages and significations. Languages shared and not shared, known and unknown. Signs and significations crossed. Selves divided. Signs proliferated.

An example. Which is, of course, a translation (one that we ourselves are reading in translation, and, which is and is not the same thing, in transliteration).[4] "If an Arab hears a Hebrew man [*maṯal lau yasmaʿ ʿArabī rijlā ʿIbrāniyyā*] saying *ʾaba* [ابي ,אבה], the Arab will think that he speaks of an individual who was reluctant with regard to some matter and refused it." Remember that we are reading this. We are reading Maimonides, who may be an Arab man or a Hebrew man (depending on what these markers are meant to indicate), but who is here definitely writing in Arabic (more recently and anachronistically called "Judeo-Arabic"), and *most likely* in Hebrew letters.[5] But what are letters to the ear? And we who are hearing, we who are reading, are we Jews or are we Arabs? Are we knowing or understanding Hebrew or Arabic? Strictly speaking, these options are not exclusive, of course, though they are not for all that resolved or even resolvable. Besides, we are not *hearing* anything, we are, rather, reading a word, written (or not) in Hebrew letters. That word (here rendered, as I wrote, *ʾaba*, אבה, or ابي) may be Hebrew or it may be Arabic, and its disseminated force (and signification) will remain with us, inscribed, as it were, upon us.

(Let me add parenthetically that that word, if it is one, is in any case not to be confused with a paternal signifier—though I should confess that given the range of pronunciations, or transliterations, that must be assumed as operative in this aural and textual environment, on this other scene of language, I have often regretted having ignored, in my previous reading, the [non]knowledge of the *nom du père* [the name of the father, of Lacanian fame]. I could never reconcile myself with the notion that the name of the father could remain unheard here, that it could simply be ignored. Or better yet, refused, turned thereby into its very psychoanalytic and legal essence as a law, as a no, the *non du père* [the no of the father], and equally indubitably evoke or provoke, however unconsciously, the knowledge of those dupes or non-dupes, of whom Lacan knowingly insisted that they erred [*les non-dupes errent*], precisely when they thought that they knew better, understood better. But we are not reading the father. No. Nor are we reading *Moses and Monotheism.* Much less Lacan's return to Freud or his commentary.)

We are reading—from Moses to Moses, there is none like Moses—Maimonides. And as we read Maimonides, once again, we read between and across Hebrew and Arabic, between the Jew and the Arab. We—for it is a we that Maimonides addresses, demands and stages, a collective subject that, divided between and across language, heard, spoken, and written, is evoked and interpellated, called upon to learn and respond, to know and ignore, desire and refuse—in a language of one's own—and not. We read, then, the word *'aba*. Which signals or indicates a meaning of its own. Only it is a different meaning, whether one hears it or speaks it. Whether one hears it in the language of the hearer or in the language of the speaker, in Hebrew or in Arabic, in Hebrew *and* in Arabic (but in which likely letters?). And, according to the sign and the signification, indicating the meaning or meanings one could only assume the word has, based on the language one knows, and in which one hears or speaks—and even reads—as one hears language being spoken (or written) by one: a human being, who speaks and presumably writes as well, in the language he speaks and writes, with the meaning intended with and by the word so spoken. Or heard. And definitely written.

Who speaks? Who hears? In which, between and across which, languages? Is there one language? Is language one? Is the grammatical singular (and its concomitant additions) with which Maimonides starts us off on the scene he stages (one man, one voice, one language) even plausible? Are Hebrew and Arabic two languages? Are they not each more than one? More than themselves? Now more than ever? At which point does one speak, hear, write, one or the other? Within which pristine environment, upon which deserted stage? What does it mean to know that language is spoken? To know that one knows and does not know, that one understands and does not understand?

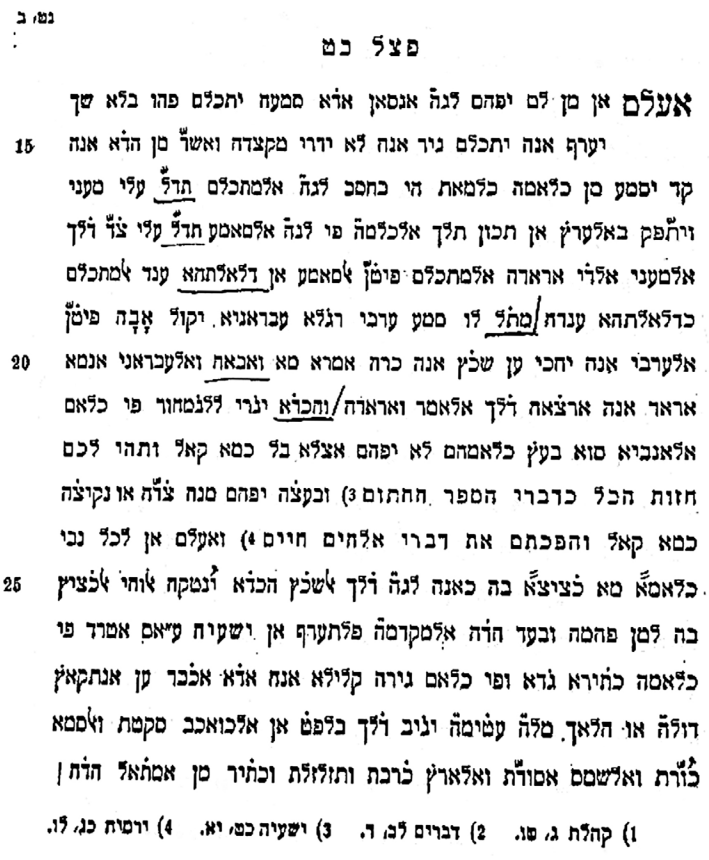
Where does that negotiation take place? On what other scene? In which language? To whom and for whom? And besides, which is the Arab here? And which the Jew?[6]

"However, the Hebrew only wished to convey that the individual was pleased with the matter and wished it." So the Arab was "wrong" because hearing what he thought was close and proximate, because what he apprehended was his own language (the language of the hearer), he heard a refusal. Whereas the Hebrew, speaking the language he spoke, sought to approximate, signifying pleasure, wish, desire. The misunderstanding is clearly grave because communication happens, is thought to happen, signification (*dalāla*) is shared, there, where it is not. And what one hears is a rejection and refusal, the refusal of the common. What was intended or signaled was, on the contrary, an extension of the common, an affirmation of partaking, a desire and a wish.

And suddenly, *coup de théatre*. Less a change of scene than a conversion and an expansion of the stage, a major reshuffling of the characters. For again, which is the Arab here? Which the Jew? "This is similar to what happens to the multitude [*al-jumhur*] with regard to the speech of the prophets, excepting certain portions that they do not understand at all. . . . With regard to other portions, they understand what is the contrary of, or contradictory to, the true meaning." The stage, to repeat, has changed and expanded, or perhaps, reverted, converted. Maimonides reiterates that which happens between the Jew and the Arab, between Hebrew and Arabic. The language of the speaker, which the hearer thought was his own language, was indeed Hebrew (the language of the prophets), yet the hearer who presumed to hear his own language—the Arab—was a figure for the multitude. There were many Arabs, which is to say, many Jews, who understood (or rather, did not understand, understood the opposite) the language of the speaker that is the Hebrew language, the Hebrew language of the prophets. And there, on the world stage, signification failed. More precisely, the signification intended in the language of the speaker (the language of the Hebrew prophets) reached its destination in the language of the (Arab) hearer, which turned out to not be one but many. A multitude (or is it a republic?) of Arab Jews.

Is Hebrew among the Arabs, then? In another turn of the screw, Maimonides performs the final *katastrophe* (Aristotle's favorite). He overturns his own staging, which seemed to present or represent individual figures, individual languages. Between the Arab and the Jew, across Hebrew and Arabic, we already discovered a multitude of Arab Jews, all those desolate readers of a Bible that speaks, they think (they heard), the language of men, the language they themselves speak and hear.[7] Now Hebrew is upstaged, figured into a different multitude, disseminated across every prophetic individual.

A voice speaks, calling, once again, upon its reader to know. "Know that every prophet has a kind of speech peculiar to him, which is, as it were, the language [*lugha*] of that individual, which the prophetic revelation peculiar to him causes him to speak to those who understand him." And of course, also to those who do not understand him. Them. Us. A voice speaks to us. But is it one voice? Does it speak to me, in any case? To us? But who, us? And in what language? Our own? "I have only one language," Maimonides might as well have been saying along with every prophet (and every hearer to boot), "it is not mine."[8]



נט, ב

פצל כט

אעלם אן מן לם יפהם לגה אנסאן אוא סמעה יתכלם פהו בלא שך
יערף אנה יתכלם גיר אנה לא ידרי מקצדה ואשׁ מן הדא אנה
קד יסמע מן כלאמה כלמאת הי כחסב לגה אלמתכלם תדלׁ עלי מעני
ויתׁפק באלעקל אן תכון תלך אלכלמה פי לגה אלסאמע תדלׁ עלי צדׁ דלך
אלמעני אלדי אראדה אלמתכלם פיטׁן לסאמע אן דלאלתהא עגד למתכלם
כדלאלתהא עגדת/מתׁל לו סמע ערבי רגלא עבראניא יקול אָבָה פיטׁן
אלערבי אנה יחכי עז שכץ אנה כרה אמרא מא ואבאת ואלעבראני אנמא
אראר אנה ארצאה דלך אלאמר ואראדה/והכדא יגרי לגמהור פי כלאם
אלאנביא סוא בעץ כלאמהם לא יפהם אצלא בל כמא קאל ותהי לכם
חזות הכל כדברי הספר החתום 3) ובעצה יפהם מנה צדׁה או נקיצה
כמא קאל והפכתם את דברי אלהים חיים 4) ואעלם אן לכל נבי
כלאמא מא כציצא בה כאנה לגה דלך לשכץ הכדא ינסקה לוחי לכצץ
בה למן פהמה ובעד חדה אלמקדמה פלתערף אן ישעיה עיאם אמרד פי
כלאמה כתורא גדא ופי כלאם גירה קלילא אנת אדא אכבר מן אנתקאץ
דולה או הלאך מלה עטימה ועיב דלך בלפט אן אלכואכב סקטת ואסמא
כדׁרת ואלשמס אסודׁת ואלארץ כרבת ותזלזלת וכתיר מן אמתאל הדת

1) קהלת ג, טו. 2) דברים לב, ד. 3) ישעיה כט, יא. 4) ירמיה כג, לו.

Figure 1. Moses Ibn Maimon, Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn (J. Joel, ed., 1929) II, 29.

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> There is something else that rebels and prophets and poets—and some novelists and dramatists—share: an invocation of the past not in order to appeal to an impossible return but in order to provoke and challenge the present.
>
> Talal Asad[9]

When Houria Bouteldja writes, she stages and performs a truly fantastic series of scenes, doing so in a consistently dialogic, pedagogical, and indeed theatrical manner.[10] Bouteldja addresses us, she calls on us, daring us to know. In which language does she speak? In which language do we hear? What is it that we are able to hear? Bouteldja speaks and translates. She engages and carries over voices and for herself assumes—as one assumes a heavy responsibility—a speaking, interpellating voice that, explaining a few things (*algunas cosas*, in Neruda's language), oscillates between the grammatical (and political) singular and plural. But we, and we are many, have learned well to distrust the rhetoric of the "we," as we continue confidently to speak of a singular "I," an individual subject, that should long have been shaken in its very foundations. How easy it seems to be to speak "in my name," as if an I, any individual I, could grant itself its own subjectivity, its own identity. As if any individual could ever give an account of him- or herself. Accordingly, we hesitate to speak in the collective. We resist being hailed under the figure of a collective "you," one in which we rarely wish to recognize ourselves, unless it stokes our pride.[11]

A voice speaks, then. It tells us it knows us and calls unto us to know (ourselves). It speaks to us of nonunderstanding and from it. From its title onward, it stages a dynamic triad, one that Robert Meister impeccably described under the distinct terms of victim, perpetrator, and the oft-forgotten beneficiary.[12] There are more characters, of course, but like Meister, Bouteldja makes clear that the template is, in fact, limited. There are no free-floating individuals here; there are rather folded collectives constituted by histories and trajectories, social and political conditions and statuses. There are, furthermore, no bystanders, only the difficult promise of "upstanders."[13]

A voice speaks. It gives and it demands, provokes and overturns.[14] It distinctly speaks the language of speakers and the language of hearers. A multitude here speaks. Who will listen and in which language? A multitude speaks addressing itself to a number of collectives. For us here, it speaks unavoidably and urgently, powerfully, between and across the Jews and the Arabs, in the language of desire and in the language of refusal, of hatred even. "I hate Jews, they remind me so much of Arabs."[15]

An unheard and unprecedented voice reaches concretely toward its listeners.[16] It speaks to us, engages with us, pushes us, yes, and yet invites and welcomes us. It inscribes the familiar ("It's true, you are very familiar to me"[17]) but it refuses the ease of the common. It rejects the shared lineage of a single prophet ("Not so much because we are both 'People of the Book,' or because we supposedly have a common ancestor, the prophet Abraham"). Are we not in need of prophets? Of one, or even of a multitude of prophets? And yet, the voice also affirms that we are cousins, "real" cousins. "What makes us real 'cousins,'" the voice says, is the third, the beneficiary.[18] White people. Of which the voice says it is one ("I am white," she makes explicit. "I'm protected by white power," as Jean Genet had it[19]). Accordingly, the voice sees itself in us. It speaks to us. You are us, she says. "When I look at you, I see us."[20] It tells us that we—for we are a we, and no doubt many—share a condition, a "condition within the West's geopolitical borders," an uneasy relationship to whiteness, "a desire to meld into whiteness."[21] Most importantly, we share an image and a likeness. "Like us, you are entrenched. . . . Like us."[22]

Our likeness has something to do with history, and it also has to do with geography. Bouteldja insists that the stage has everything to do with a wider geopolitics, and she inscribes that throughout, making clear that the matter is never as domestic, as provincial or as national, as we think. Indeed, she proclaims the end of the nation and offers a broader perspective to reflect with and between Jews and Arabs (I will leave it at that, for understandable reasons, but remember that we are many, and many more, divided and conquered, racialized, gendered, nationalized, religionized, socio-economico-classified, idiomatized). There is France and there is Israel/Palestine. There is also the Maghrib, of course, and more broadly the Arab world. It was not always this way in these places. The world changed, in the grand scheme of things, quite recently. Just now, perhaps. In any case, the voice speaks and tells us that "from now on, you are stakeholders in the 'Judeo-Christian civilization.' Admit it. It's sad that this rehabilitation has been conditioned by genocide, by your partial self-expulsion from Europe and the Arab world for Israel, and by your renunciation to fully reclaim a France which is, nevertheless, yours."[23] We are repeatedly pushed toward or welcomed onto a broader stage, an unexpected territory and a distinct cartography, and we are recalled too to our history, a rapid and recent, and also older, history. Bouteldja reminds us of our expulsions and of our exclusions. Of our recent inclusion too, and of its price. The voice wishes and desires, and it refuses and rejects as well. "This is how, in the span of fifty years, you went from being pariahs, to being, on the one hand, *dhimmis of the Republic* to satisfy the internal needs of the

nation state, and on the other, *Senegalese riflemen* to satisfy the needs of Western imperialism." Our history and what was done to us. "They managed to make you trade your religion, your history, and your memories for a colonial ideology. You abandoned your Jewish, multi-secular identities; you despise Yiddish and Arabic and have entirely given yourselves over to the Zionist identity. In only fifty years."[24] Know that we Jews and Arabs used to be a multitude, speaking the many tongues of the prophets. Now we are the shell of a religion in the body of a nation, or nations, that depends on the protection of weapon-wielding world rulers. Or, as Hannah Arendt had it, whereas "the magnificence of this people once lay in its belief in God—that is, in the way its trust and love of God far outweighed its fear of God . . . now this people believes only in itself!"[25]

Bouteldja welcomes and rejects. She pushes us away in the language of desire toward the confines of the global neighborhood in which we live. She wants us to hear by refusing to accommodate us, speaking otherwise than our language of hearers, the only language we (want to) know and hear, and first of all the language of the Holocaust ("this history is not really mine and I will hold it at a distance so long as the history and the life of the wretched of the earth will also remain nothing but 'a detail'"). She also asserts her wish and desire that one day "we will all together and more loudly proclaim that no, the Shoah, like all mass crimes, will never be a 'detail.'" Bouteldja knows, she says she knows, that "the greatest offense that was done to us is the denial of history."[26] She recalls us, therefore, to the future and to history, to the same history of infamy, which is also another, one that she insists we may still share. Or deny.

> You who are Sephardic, you can't act as though the Crémieux Decree hadn't existed. You can't ignore the fact that France made you French to tear you away from us, from your land, from your Arab-Berber identity [*arabo-berbérité*]. If I dare say so, of your Islamic identity [*islamité*]. Just as we have been dispossessed of you. If I dare say so, of our Jewish identity [*judéité*]. Incidentally, I can't think about North Africa without missing you. You left a void that we will never be able to fill, and for that I am inconsolable. Your alterity becomes more pronounced and your memory fades.[27]

Bouteldja speaks to us in a language of longing and of refusal, a language that has yet to be heard, that is in fact, quite precisely unheard and unheard of. Like Maimonides, and the scenes and interlocutors he staged, she speaks to us in translation, not, that is, not exclusively, in the language of the hearer. Never only in a language of one's own ("I have only one language. It is not my own"). The French

language, for one thing, does not offer "identities" here (as the English translation has it), at least not unequivocally. It proposes something that remains contested, between and beyond Judaism and Jewishness (*judaïsme*, *judaïté*, *judéité*), a matter of religion or of ethnicity (as the consecrated terms have it), or in other contexts—the Zionist context, most obviously—a matter of nationality.[28] These are often understood as being matters of (relative) choice, better yet, matters over which one might claim a liberating triumph in transcending. One recalls, in this context, the famous figure of the "non-Jewish Jew," as it was rendered by Isaac Deutscher and celebrated many times since.[29] Bouteldja quotes George Perec, a doubting Jew, a non-Jewish Jew for whom Jewishness seems more of a mystery than anything else. Jewishness, for Perec, is

> a mark, but a mark that doesn't tie me to anything in particular, to anything concrete: it is not a sign of belonging, it is not tied to a belief, a religion, a practice, a culture, a folklore, a history, a destiny, a language. Rather, it would be an absence, a question, a questioning, a hesitation, a worry; a worried certainty behind which the contours of another certainty are drawn, one that is abstract, heavy, unbearable: that of having been designated as Jewish.[30]

Surely, the non-Jewish Jew (not Jewish by any concrete tie, but Jewish still, by ascription) is one of those Bouteldja described as "managed," one of those made to trade religion, history, and memories for an ideology that can only be described as colonial, and which operates well beyond colonized lands. This strange liberation from all the trappings of particularity—non-Jewish Jews and non-Muslim Muslims—was after all what Karl Marx (who knew nothing of Zionism) notoriously recognized as a perverse and perverting "emancipation."[31] One could therefore say that Bouteldja opens a space for us—between the "new Jew" of Zionism and other "non-Jewish Jews"—for different Jewish Jews, perhaps for Arab Jews.

And so again: Which are the Jews here? Which the Arabs? The multitudes collide and topple over. In the confusion, a collective emerges, which I would want to claim—in the name of the very history Bouteldja offers and rejects—is historical through and through. To be sure, I have tried to account for the impossibility of this history, precisely under the heading of "the Jew, the Arab." Bouteldja knows this history, this prophetic "genealogy," and she affirms it too, even if she is dubious of its political potential ("This genealogy doesn't speak to me in a political way"[32]). Here I can only affirm and reaffirm my agreement with her that "we stand before a fool's game, in which we are the celebrities playing the main roles. Jews and Arabs,

those terrible and turbulent children whom good Christian souls exhaust themselves in reconciling."[33] And so her voice carries. It speaks. And what else could it be but a prophetic voice, speaking in a language that demands of the hearer to know without knowing that this is not a language of one's own? Listen, it says. It is, it speaks, language in translation, language demanding translation. And, like every single prophet, it promises a future—a future to be refused and feared, which is also a future to be wished for and desired.

> To be honest, between us, everything is still possible. . . . We have a common destiny in the same way that we potentially have a common political future. . . . All the conditions are in place. We are living in a transitional moment in our history. . . . How much longer do you expect to escape the worst by relying on the ability of the sycophants of the flag to distinguish between a Muslim 'Semite' and a 'Semitic Jew'?"[34]

History, then, but what about geography? Bouteldja, I have said, upends and expands the geopolitical scene upon which language (and everything else) engages and implicates Jews and Arabs. She insists, however, in identifying "the primary site of this endgame" as "anti-Zionism," "the site of the historical confrontation between us."[35] Did she not also acknowledge that "the main actor is white: the West"? Those "good Christian souls"? As we try to hear her voice, we may or may not recognize that "anti-Zionism is that territory in which the two primary victims of the Israeli project come to light: the Palestinians and the Jews. It is also where its primary beneficiary appears: the West."[36] I want to propose a different *translatio*, a different territory, which one pundit, writing under the cover of an Ashkenazi name, popularized as "the lost territories of the Republic." These used to be called by the name "ghetto." And this, I think, is not the map, but it is still the territory. And as Bouteldja brilliantly puts it, I hear there the voice of a multitude, of Jews, Arabs, and Arab Jews (for a start, but we are many). The voice is a prophetic voice and it speaks. But *know that every prophet has a kind of speech peculiar to her, which is, as it were, the language of that individual, which the prophetic revelation peculiar to her causes her to speak to those who understand her*.

A voice speaks, then. The language here spoken and written, demands knowledge and understanding while staging and speaking of nonunderstanding. Still, it points and signals toward another scene. It calls for it and upon us to listen. It says:

We are still in the ghetto. Why don't we get out of it together?

Notes

1 Talal Asad, *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 25.

2 In what follows I quote from Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed, Book II*, chapter 29, as translated by Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 336–337. Consulting two distinct editions (in Hebrew and in Arabic scripts), I have tried to read this text before, to little avail, in my *'Our Place in al-Andalus': Kabbalah, Philosophy, Literature in Arab Jewish Letters* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 10–56. There I showed and explained that the word Maimonides uses for "signification" in the passage at hand is also the word in the title of his book (and in mine here). This Arabic word is *dalāla* (indication, sign or signal, sense and signification), and it has long been translated, not entirely inaccurately, of course, as "guide." I have made the proposal that this word, and more precisely, this title, might be profitably read and translated as "signification according to those in the state of perplexity," a state I dwell in, and upon as well. I begin again here with the very same intent, signaling and signifying toward the same meaning—only a little different.

3 Translation modified.

4 See Brinkley Messick, "Notes on Transliteration," in *Translating Cultures: Perspectives on Translation and Anthropology*, ed. Paula G. Rubel and Abraham Rosman (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 177–196.

5 Ella Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic," *Interventions* 19, no. 2 (2017): 153–200, https://tinyurl.com/Judeo-Arabic.

6 I paraphrase from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which long ago sent me back to the stage of *The Moor of Venice*. See Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

7 "The scriptures speak the language of man," a rabbinical phrase that was instrumental in the development of the principle of accommodation, on which see Amos Funkenstein, "Medieval Exegesis and Historical Consciousness," *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 88–130; and see Carlo Ginzburg, "Distance and Perspective: Two Metaphors," *Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance*, trans. Martin Ryle and Kate Soper (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 139–156.

8 "Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne," writes Jacques Derrida in *Le monolinguisme de l'autre ou la prothèse d'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 13; and see Kaoutar Harchi, *Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne: Des écrivains à l'épreuve* (Paris: Pauvert, 2016).

9 Asad, *Secular Translations*, 48.

10 Houria Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love*, trans. Rachel Valinsky (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2018). I will at times notify the reader of slight alterations to the translation of this important book, which "has been roundly condemned by

French politicians, pundits, and even academics for her uncompromising language." Paul A. Silverstein, *Postcolonial France: Race, Islam, and the Future of the Republic* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 156.

11 As James Baldwin describes this pride, it might have to be understood as "that morbid fullness of pride mixed with horror with which one regards the extent and power of one's wickedness." Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son," quoted by Joëlle Marelli in her review of Bouteldja, which inspired my own reading: Marelli, "Revolutionary Love in Dark Times," accessed December 16, 2018, www.boundary2.org/2018/11/revolutionaryloveindarktimes/.

12 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 70; Robert Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Like Bouteldja, Meister makes clear that, in the current dispensation, beneficiaries are not only exonerated, they are perceived as the guarantors of a reconciliation from which victims are barred (as they are always already at risk of turning perpetrators). Beneficiaries ("those who received material and social advantage from the old regime and whose continuing well-being in the new order could not have withstood the victory of unreconciled victims" [26]) are actively turned into present opponents of a past evil, at once rescuers and witnesses to a violence they would have resisted had they known then what they know now. Meister upholds the beneficiary as an inescapable figure. Bouteldja summons the beneficiaries and speaks to them, demanding a response.

13 See www.thebullyproject.com/be_an_upstander. I am grateful to Rassa June Kia-Young for introducing me to "upstanders."

14 As Joëlle Marelli writes, Bouteldja's "is both a demanding and a generous book." Marelli, "Revolutionary Love in Dark Times."

15 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 53.

16 I insisted elsewhere on the unprecedented nature of Bouteldja's dialogical engagement. See my "Making a Scene," https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/08/01/making-a-scene/.

17 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 53.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 27, 45; translation modified.

20 Ibid., 53.

21 Ibid., 53, 54; translation modified.

22 Ibid., 54. Advocating an "empathic unsettlement" he locates in "the attentive secondary witness," Dominick LaCapra explains that it "should register in one's very mode of address." D. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 47. Empathic unsettlement, as Bouteldja could certainly be described as practicing, does not entail identity or identification. It involves rather a kind of experience "through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place" (78). Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg pertinently elaborate on this in their

introduction to their edited volume, *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 22–25.

23 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 57. For another reckoning with the "Judeo-Christian," see Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolsky, eds., *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition: A European Perspective* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016).

24 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 55–56, 57.

25 Hannah Arendt, writing to Gershom Scholem, July 20, 1963, in *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, ed. Marie Luise Knott, trans. Anthony David (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 207.

26 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 59, 64, 66.

27 Ibid., 60.

28 Cynthia M. Baker, *Jew* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017); Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018).

29 Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, ed. Tamara Deutscher (London: Verso, 2017); Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (London: Verso, 2014).

30 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 54–55.

31 See Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question," and see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *Exile et souveraineté: Judaïsme, sionisme et pensée binationale*, trans. Catherine Neuve-Église (Paris: La Fabrique, 2007). Bouteldja knows well that the call for "non-Muslim Muslims" is quite loud and popular, even if the appellation itself has not caught on in the same manner. In her incisive illustration and analysis of the predicament, Mayanthi Fernando refers to the "secular Muslim woman" as embodying the "emancipatory" promise. See M. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), esp. "Of Mimicry and Woman," 185–219.

32 Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 53.

33 Ibid., 69; translation modified.

34 Ibid., 67–68.

35 Ibid., 69.

36 Ibid., 69, 70.

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Partitions and Translations: Arab Jewish Translational Models in Fin de Siècle Palestine

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Against the backdrop of the intensifying national conflict between Jews and Arabs, a multilingual translation project emerged in Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century. While the increasing hostility between Jews and Arabs also opened a linguistic breach between Hebrew and Arabic, a group of local Arab Jewish intellectuals insisted on holding on to both languages, positioning themselves on the borderland between them and using translation as a political and cultural tool. Over more than five decades, from the 1880s to the 1930s, they published hundreds of essays, political commentaries, translations, collections of fables and folktales, short stories, and poems, mostly in the local Hebrew and Arabic newspapers. Moving easily back and forth between Arabic and Hebrew, they marked the first modern phenomenon of Arabic-Hebrew literary bilingualism, inspired by the great Arab Jewish poets and philosophers of medieval al-Andalus.

It was no coincidence that their work emerged in the complex political and social surroundings of the late Ottoman era and early Mandatory Palestine. This was a period dominated by intentional processes of national, ethnic, and religious separation that created cultural, social, and political partitions. In this context partitions apply not only to the division of the land but also to the separation of traditions, histories, academic disciplines, and languages: between Hebrew and Arabic, Judaism and Islam, Jewishness and Arabness.[1]

The translation work of these intellectuals was rooted in the tension between the emerging nationalistic ideologies that preached monolingualism and the multilingual and multireligious social and political reality. Thus, these intellectuals operated within a range of differing and even contradictory political and ideological affinities: their commitment to the emerging national monolingual Jewish project, their identification with the Ottoman reformation and the ethos of the shared homeland, and their affiliation to an Arab Jewish and Judeo-Muslim cultural heritage.

Who, then, made up this network of Arab Jewish intellectuals? The prominent members were: Yosef Meyouhas (1868–1942), Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877–1951), David Yellin (1863–1941), Isaac Benjamin Yahuda (1863–1941), and Abraham Elmalih (1885–1967).[2] Born in Palestine in the second half of the nineteenth century, they were part of the growing circles of native scholars who were engaged in a variety of intellectual activities: ethnographic research, translation, literary interpretation, journalism, lexicography, philology, and education.[3] Some of these activities formed part of the emerging Hebrew revival movement, but they were no less inspired by the Ottoman and Arabic linguistic and cultural reformations.[4] At the center of their cultural activities was Arabic-Hebrew translation in its various forms: intertextual translations, oral interpretation, collection and translation of oral traditions, and cultural translation.[5]

The article focuses on two of their translation works selected from a wide and varied corpus of translations: (1) *Yaldey Arav* (Children of Arabia), by Yosef Meyouhas (1927–1929), a collection of biblical tales from the Arab Palestinian oral tradition; and (2) *Mishley Arav* (Proverbs of Arabia), by Isaac Benjamin Yahuda (1932–1934), a comprehensive collection of Arabic proverbs.

Both works are translations of oral tales and proverbs from the Arabic and Muslim literary traditions. While they were among the first modern translations from Arabic into Hebrew, and can thus be considered an integral part of the development of Modern (and national) Hebrew literature, the article explores the ways in which they fundamentally challenged the perception of a distinct and confined Modern Hebrew literature—and more specifically, the boundaries between Hebrew and Arabic language and literature. It explores the authors' translation strategies in light of their personal biographies and of the multilingual and multireligious setting in which they developed: Meyouhas, within the local Arab Palestinian oral tradition; and Yahuda, within the Judeo-Muslim and Judeo-Arabic literary traditions.[6] In this context, their common translation project was not merely a literary exercise: it embodied an alternative political possibility of shared Hebrew-Arabic culture, as against the mainstream Zionist separatist approach.[7]

Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology is very useful for our discussion. Of particular interest are three key concepts from his work—chronotope, heteroglossia, and dialogism—which deal with the complexities of the interrelationship between the textual and the social, between language(s) and narratives, and between unity and heterogeneity.[8] These concepts developed against the background of two opposing forces: unitary monolingual national canonization versus the polyphony of languages, voices, identities, and genres.[9] In that way, they echo the cultural and social trends at the center of our discussion.

Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope as a traveling signifier that contains an essential connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships which travel in time-space is particularly valuable.[10] Exploring Meyouhas's and Yahuda's works, we identify two types of translation models that played an essential role in the formation of their translation strategies: the Ottoman model, with its multilingual character and its unique translational culture; and the Andalusian model, with its unique interplay of languages and writing systems and its Judeo-Muslim and Hebrew-Arabic intertwined symbiosis. These translational models comprise strong chronotopic elements, where poetic and linguistic forms that emerged in a specific spatial context are charged and reactive to movements of time. Translation is the central activity of cross-cultural dialogue and connectivity, the intersection of multiple linguistic and literary traditions under a single geographical imaginary such as Córdoba, Toledo, Istanbul, Baghdad, and Palestine.

We need, however, to add another chronotopic translational model to our equation: the monolingual nationalistic translational model that was dominant at the time of the publication of these translations. It was the formative era of the Modern Hebrew literary canon, which was closely associated with the establishment of Zionism and Hebrew nationalism. Translation into Hebrew at that time had a crucial role in the foundation of the Hebrew national monolingual culture. In this context, translation served as a vehicle in the development of a unified and cohesive Hebrew culture. Use of the domestication translation method resulted in the Hebraization of place-names and protagonists while censoring non-Jewish elements and manipulating the contents of the translated texts. This nationalistic translation model pushed toward the purification and unification of the Hebrew language and literature.[11] The roots of this approach stretch back to the birth of the nation-state in the nineteenth century, when the ideology of "one language and one literature for one nation" was closely linked with the emergence of modern literature and translation.[12] Writing and translating in a national language implied, more than ever, taking part in the construction of a unified and distinct national literature and

culture.[13] At the heart of this model lies the assumption that translation is an act that takes place in a monolingual reality and addresses distinct, separate linguistic and cultural traditions.[14] Multilingualism (and language mingling) poses a challenge to this monolingual translation model.[15]

Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translations developed at the intersection of these conflicting trends and translation models. In this context four main translation methods arise. These involve: (1) translation without a fixed original source; (2) the intersection between spoken and written textual traditions; (3) the heteroglossic translation model; and (4) translation as an act of dialogism. These methods are interconnected, and while echoing the Andalusian and Ottoman translational models, they also had cultural and political implications vis-à-vis the dominant nationalistic trend of their time.

But before delving into the reading of each method, let us present the Ottoman and Andalusian traditions in greater detail.

Ottoman and Andalusian Chronotopes

Ottoman Tradition

The Ottoman Empire was one of the most linguistically diverse political entities of modern times: it ruled over dozens of religious, ethnic, and linguistic communities forming a multiethnic, multireligious, and multilingual society. This cultural mixture produced an environment in which multilingualism was widespread, as fluid boundaries between national territories and linguistic communities created mixed linguistic zones.[16]

Multilingualism and translation were thus an essential part of the Ottoman social and political landscape, which saw the emergence of a unique translation role that was concentrated around the contact zones with European diplomats, travelers, merchants, and researchers. This role—the "dragoman"—(see the introduction to this volume) was played by a mixed population of interpreters, middlemen, translators, and local guides.[17] However, these multilingual individuals often found themselves taking on much more than just the task of interpreting.[18] They also served as go-betweens, servants, diplomats, spies, messengers, managers, and overseers and were frequently required to mediate, scheme, and improvise in both official and unofficial capacities.[19] From the medieval period onward, dragomans fulfilled a "range of political, commercial, and diplomatic functions as essential intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled," while during the modern era they were mostly associated with interpretation and translation to and from local languages such as

Arabic, Turkish, and Persian.[20] The dragomans' translation model was multifaceted and included both oral and textual translation. While it has been common to view their work as a feature of the intercultural and interlingual transactions between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the dragomans also represented an internal Ottoman characteristic as a multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious society (including, among others, Greek, Armenian, Arab, and Bosnian minorities).[21]

At the end of the nineteenth century, then, Ottoman Palestine was a profoundly polyglot society with a variety of local languages, in which cultural multiplicity was not perceived as a threat or a destabilizing factor.[22] For the Arab and Jewish native inhabitants, this was the norm: multilingualism was a basic fact of life, and mediators, interpreters, and translators played an important role in everyday communication.[23]

Andalusian Tradition

During that period another cultural model emerged on the cultural horizon of the Arab Jewish intellectuals. It was the legacy of "al-Andalus" or "Sefarad" of the tenth to twelfth centuries, the famous "Golden Age" of Jewish intellectual life, the time of great thinkers and poets such as Abu ʿImran Musa ibn ʿUbayd Allah ibn Maymun al-Qurtubi (Maimonides), Abu Harun Musa bin Yaʿqub ibn ʿEzra (Moses Ibn-Ezra), and Judah ben Shmuel HaLevi (Yehuda Halevi, also known as Abu al-Hasan al-Lawi), who were intimately linked to Arabic poetry and Islamic philosophy while also advancing the study of Jewish law and Hebrew philology and poetry.

At the heart of this cultural legacy was a unique translation model, based on Arabic-Hebrew bilingualism and translation-interpretation (in Arabic, *tafsir* and *sarh* - שרח) that spread from the Middle Ages to the modern era. This Arab Jewish translation tradition can be dated back to the tenth century with Saadia ibn Yosef al-Fayyumi's (Saadia Gaon) translation (known as the *tafsir*) of the Bible into Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew script). Saadia Gaon's *tafsir* had an enormous impact on the development of the Arab Jewish literary and translation traditions during the medieval and modern periods, on the borderland between the worlds of Arabic and Hebrew, and of Judaism and Islam.[24] This tradition continued to develop in Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the translations of the Ibn Tibbon family and Yahya bin Sulaiman bin Shaul Abu Zakaria al-Harizi (Yehuda Alharizi).[25]

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Judeo-Arabic translation model experienced a revival in several Arab Jewish communities spread to far-flung corners of the globe, including Baghdad, Aden, Damascus, Cairo, Tunisia, Algeria, and Calcutta.[26] The establishment of printing houses in these centers fostered a new wave of translations into Judeo-Arabic from a variety of languages and literary traditions (including Hebrew, Aramaic, European languages, and standard Arabic).[27] This included the publication of new and old translations of biblical texts, translations of prayer books, collections and translations of oral stories, and collections of legends, fables, and folk tales from the Arabic oral tradition.[28]

Translation Methods

Translation against the Grain: The Polyglot Arab Jewish Translation Model

Yaldey Arav, by Yosef Meyouhas, and *Mishley Arav*, by Isaac Yahuda, are the end products of translation projects that began at the end of the nineteenth century, toward the end of the Ottoman period, and continued for decades, spanning the transition from the Ottoman Empire to British rule.[29] These translation works were published in the latter stages of the translators' lives, at a time when their political visions were already marginalized by the dominant political discourse.[30]

In addition to the necessity of reading these translation works within the broad historical and linguistic contexts presented in the previous sections (the Andalusian and Ottoman chronotopes), it is also important to examine them in light of the particular historical context in which they were published, late-1920s and early-1930s Palestine, a period of violent national struggle between Jews and Palestinian Arabs and of increasing linguistic, social, and cultural polarization.[31]

Against the backdrop of these political and social events, which deepened the nationalistic divisions and the linguistic partition process, Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translation methods embody an alternative political and cultural route. The polyglot fusion in their translation work—mixing Arabic and Hebrew, Jewish and Muslim traditions—challenges the nationalistic principles regarding the purity of language and homogeneity of the national tradition. The loose distinction between oral and written traditions and the unfixed intersection between original source and translation dismantle any (national) claim over exclusive ownership of texts, traditions, or languages. Instead, their methods represent a dialogical approach that emphasizes the intertextuality of literary traditions and the intersections of languages and cultures.

Translation without a Stable Original Source

Meyouhas's and Yahuda's works share an exceptional translation model: translation without a stable original source that does not belong to a specific geographical sphere or to a single linguistic tradition but rather spans multiple linguistic, geographic, and religious traditions. In that way, their model is substantially different from the dominant monolingual nationalistic model. The anxieties regarding the division between the "original" and the "translation" are irrelevant in their case. This is not to say that there are no internal differentiations among the multiple versions they used, but any concern over the issue of a single, stable, authentic source is absent from their work. This can be attributed to their connection to the Andalusian model, with its long-standing Judeo-Muslim tradition that remained free of notions of "fixity" of text and the need to respect the text's boundaries.

Meyouhas's *Yaldey Arav* comprises forty-seven biblical tales from the Arab Palestinian oral tradition translated into Hebrew. The tales are divided into two parts: Torah stories, and stories about the prophets. This format resembles the Muslim literary tradition of the oral and textual biblical and prophet stories. It also resembles the Jewish literary tradition of translations of the Bible into Judeo-Arabic described above (*tafsir* and *sarh*). The stories are written in a mix of biblical Hebrew, Modern Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. The translated stories do not reference a specific author or "original" source. Since there is no original with which to compare the translation, it is impossible to draw a strict line separating the translation from the source. This represents an unusual example of literary writing originating from a bilingual or multilingual context where "writing and translating overlap in a creative act that is not based on any original."[32]

Moreover, in Meyouhas's work, translation became not merely a transaction between two (distinct) languages, or an act of linguistic "substitution" of one version by another, but rather an intersection between several entangled languages, textual traditions, and cultures. In this intertextuality translation operates in multiple ways, sometimes between texts and sometimes between the oral and the textual dimensions. The end product can be read as a non-annotated Hebrew version of a text whose implicit source appears to be Arabic. This single text stands for both the original and the translation, with Hebrew serving as original and translational language.

Yahuda's *Mishley Arav* (Proverbs of Arabia) includes in its two volumes some 2,500 proverbs taken from the literary, linguistic, and popular Arabic tradition, across the various Arabic dialects.[33] The proverbs are presented in Arabic (in Hebrew script) alongside a Hebrew translation. In some cases, Yahuda also included parallel

proverbs in other languages (Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, Aramaic, and Persian) along with a Hebrew translation.

In Yahuda's work, translation is situated within the text, not between texts, as he presents the original and its translation side by side as part of a textual whole. In this way, Yahuda's translation challenges the traditional definition of translation as the substitution of one language for another and of one literary text for another. Instead, the process of translation is multidimensional, occurring in different spaces and between different languages and texts, sometimes simultaneously. *Mishley Arav*'s structure also exposes the production process of the translations and blurs the temporal order between what comes first and what follows.

In his book *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti explores the translation convention that emphasizes the transparency of the translator as the key factor for "good" translation work.[34] This approach values the ability of the translator to be invisible, leaving no traces in the translated text and giving the impression that the finished product is not in fact a translation but the original. It advocates a fluent translation, one "which aims to conceal the translation production with the numerous conditions under which it was conceived."[35] Yahuda's translation work in many ways represents the opposite approach. He explicitly positions himself as the translator/interpreter within the text, and openly reveals the translation production with its dilemmas and choices. He presents not only both the original and translated texts but also various other translation and interpretation options, opening before the reader a variety of translational choices and routes.

Yahuda's and Meyouhas's translation strategies undermine the monolingual translation convention that affords sovereign authority to the original textual source and requires that the translation be faithful to it, seeing in the act of translation the demarcation of the sovereign boundaries of the original text and its replacement in a new linguistic territory.[36] There is always a gap that the translation process cannot hide, a gap that places the translation in the middle, between the borders of multiple languages, traditions, and cultures.

The Seam Line between the Spoken and the Textual

The intersections between written and oral traditions have a fundamental role in Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translation work. Both translations are based on numerous oral traditions (fables, legends, proverbs) with minimal references to textual sources. While the origins of the translated tales and proverbs are vaguely presented, the biographical links to those literary traditions are strongly emphasized. Meyouhas's

and Yahuda's personal backgrounds in the borderland between Jewish and Muslim traditions played a seminal role in the formation of their translation work.

Meyouhas lengthily presents his relations to the Palestinian oral tradition. In his writings he describes the influence that his childhood in the Palestinian village of Silwan had on the formation of his intellectual and political vision.[37] He stresses that during his formative years in Silwan, the Arab Muslim Palestinian oral tradition became "an integral part of his kinship culture."[38] Reading this statement one can assume that some of the stories and fables translated in *Yaldey Arav* are based on the tales he heard as a child in Silwan. This blurs distinctions between orality and textuality and between author and translator. It also highlights the complexity of his translation work. It is not possible to determine clearly which parts of the tales are his own creation based on his childhood memories and which are translated from an official oral or textual corpus.

Yahuda's biographical background also played a crucial role in his own translation work. Yahuda opens his introduction to the first volume with a declaration regarding the process of collecting the proverbs: "I started to collect these proverbs for personal use, as I valued proverbs from a young age. Each time I heard a beautiful proverb, I used to write it down and later, while reading books, I highlighted the ones I liked. In that way I collected many proverbs."[39] While the personal links to the translated collection are evident, the open statement also reveals some foundational elements in Yahuda's translation methods. First, he declares that the proverb collection is not based on a stable corpus or source; second, that it was formed along with his personal intellectual development with its unique social and cultural mixture; third, that his collection process comprises a mixture of textual and literary traditions—spoken/oral beside textual/written. He also presents his collecting method, which was based on various forms of textual transmission: listening, documenting, writing, and reading. He blends them together without strict distinctions or hierarchization. In doing so he defies the dominant literary convention of his time that pushed toward strict distinctions between the spoken word and the script, the oral and written traditions.[40]

Moreover, the discussions throughout the translation span larger historical, political, and social contexts. These discussions often combine stories, fables, and legends from a wide variety of literary traditions. Yahuda demonstrates a remarkable knowledge of Islamic literature in all its forms, from oral literature through legal and religious literature to philosophy and mysticism. In addition he references Arab chronicles and oral histories. The depth of his personal acquaintance with Muslim scholars of his time is also evident in the text.[41] This unique structure acts as an

intersection of textualities, highlighting the connectivity and movement between oral and written traditions.

Yahuda often discusses the pronunciation of the text either directly or implicitly. He highlights the importance of the spoken dimension of the word/character/sentence and how it influences the structure of the written text as well as its meaning. In doing so, he reveals the gap between the written text and the spoken word in what Barthes calls "the trap of scription [writing]."[42]

For instance in one of his discussions Yahuda describes the complex relations between the written script, the oral articulation, and the meaning in the Arabic language. He refers to a fable from the Arab oral tradition that demonstrates the power of the language when minor differences in the script can dramatically change the meaning of the word in a way that is sometimes of critical importance. In the middle of the fable, he moves to a metalinguistic discussion on the tension between form and meaning in the Arabic script:

> It is known that in Arabic there are many letters that have the same shape while only dots distinguish between them, for example *bāʿ* and *tāʿ* share the same shape and the only difference between them is the dots, for *bāʿ* has one dot below and for *tāʿ* two dots on top.[43]

After this metalinguistic note, he returns to the tragic story of the clown who was emasculated due to a mix-up of dots and letters that dramatically changed the king's order.

The distinction between sentence and utterance is one of the foundational aspects of Bakhtin's work. While the "sentence" is one of the central unities of language for linguistic study, Bakhtin switches the focus to the utterance as the basic unity of language in actual communication. An utterance may be made up of a single sentence, but equally, it may be made up of a single word or exclamation or of a large number of sentences together. For Bakhtin, any study of discourse, literature, and language should focus on the interrelations between the written and the spoken dimensions of the text.[44] In that way the "text as such never appears as a dead thing; beginning with any text—and sometimes passing through a lengthy series of mediating links—we always arrive, in the final analysis, at the human voice, which is to say we come up against the human being."[45] Following Bakhtin's argument, Julia Kristeva views the text as the interplay of texts, not as a singular entity, emphasizing that a text creates meaning with the relations between the text and the corpus of already existing texts, which opens new possibilities of viewing a text from many different purviews.[46]

In the context of the biblical tales, the connectivity between orality and textuality contains subversive political interpretations. In his translation work Meyouhas blends different oral and textual traditions of the biblical story, mixing Islamic hadith and oral traditions with Jewish midrashic and Talmudic traditions, without a clear boundary between them. Furthermore, he uses a mixture of biblical Hebrew with Arabic pronunciation of names of places and protagonists, which highlights the multiplicity of optional readings and writings of the biblical narrative. By doing so, Meyouhas offers a different interpretation of the biblical text in the political context of his time: instead of reconnecting to only one fixed original written text, he positions the biblical stories within their vast array of interpretations and translations in the written and oral traditions, Jewish as well as Muslim, over the ages. This path, in turn, required that the Arab Palestinians and their history and stories be included—in the text and in the land.

Reading Meyouhas's translation of biblical stories from the Muslim oral tradition, it is hard to avoid a comparison with the European models of biblical translation. These were rooted in the privileging of literacy over orality and in the connection between the rise of the vernacular languages and nation-states in Europe. They differ substantially from the model that was developed in the Judeo-Muslim cultural and religious sphere. In that tradition, oral texts have traditionally been of greater significance, and multilingualism served to undermine any monolithic language-nation connection.

Polyglot: Linguistic Fusion

We are used to thinking of cultures and languages as autonomous singularities and that texts for translation are usually written in one language and are rooted in the corresponding culture. But what if, as is the case of these translation works, multiple languages reside in a single text or a single word and embody multiple literary and cultural traditions?

While the relations between Hebrew and Arabic have a strong input in Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translations, the label "bilingualism" or "multilingulism" is not sufficient to define the use of language in them.[47] Instead of placing two natural languages (polyglossia) side by side, it destabilizes the boundaries between them in a way that undermines any attempt to create a separated language or cultural system. It also reveals the intralinguistic heterogeneity highlighting the gaps between different usages, writings, and pronunciations of the same language.

Bakhtin uses the term "heteroglossia" to describe the way in which multiple languages reside within a single cultural and linguistic community. Vyacheslav Ivanov defines Bakhtin's use of heteroglossia as "the simultaneous use of different kinds of

speech or other signs, the tension between them, and their conflicting relationship within one text," while differentiating it from monoglossia (the dominance of one language) and polyglossia (the coexistence of two languages).[48] For Bakhtin, heteroglossia is the arena in which the interrelations and connectivity between different forms and uses of language occur; each character, word, or sentence is subject to multiple and sometimes conflicting pronunciations, meanings, intonations, and allusions.[49]

The layout of the pages in Yahuda's book reflects its heteroglossic nature. The translations are not located at the center of the page but in a format composed of multiple texts, languages, and interpretations (resembling a Talmudic page), and although the Arabic version stands alongside the Hebrew version, there is nothing binary in this layout. Instead, the structure breaks the division between original source and translation. In addition, the fact that the Arabic proverbs are written in Hebrew letters only intensifies the connectivity between Hebrew and Arabic and positions the (Arabic) source and the (Hebrew) translation on a spectrum of overlapping relations.[50]

One example from *Mishley Arav* is telling. In the translation of one of the proverbs, the similarity between the Arabic and Hebrew versions is particularly apparent:[51]

נוסח ערבי (Arabic version): אלאשכאפי חאפי ואלחאיך עריאן.

נוסח עברי (Hebrew version): האושכפי יחף והאורג ערום.

Besides the usage of Hebrew characters for both languages, which highlights the visual similarity between them, Yahuda's selection of wording has an additional important affect. Yahuda chose the Hebrew-Aramaic word *ushkafi* (אושכפי) in his translation of the Arabic word *iskāfî* (إسْكافي)—meaning "shoemaker." He could have used the more common Hebrew word *sandlar* (סנדלר) but chose the word that reflects most intensely the connectivity and similarity between the two languages.

This example only demonstrates the significant role that the linguistic dimension had in Yahuda's translation work. He often delves into linguistic-philological discussions that compare the meanings of words in Arabic and Hebrew, which often also involve a comparison with other languages, usually from the same geographical sphere—such as Turkish, Persian, and Aramaic—but on rare occasions also European languages such as English, German, and French. It also points to the multiple variations of Arabic languages (including variations of Judeo-Arabic) spread by geography and historical contexts. In this way he challenges the divisions between Arabic and Hebrew as two distinct national or regional languages. Some of the proverbs are identified

by Yahuda as belonging to a specific geographical area (Eretz Yisrael/Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, or North Africa), and in other discussions he emphasizes the changing meanings of certain words or proverbs in different geographical, social, and cultural contexts. Thus, he presents a broad Arab and Arab Jewish linguistic and cultural sphere that spreads across a wide imagined geography.

In his translation Meyouhas uses the Arabic names of the biblical protagonists (Musa, Haroon, Suleiman, Daud, Ibrahim, etc.), and he sometimes uses the Arabic names of the places in the biblical landscape as well. This translational strategy has dramatic literary, political, and linguistic implications. It is not a conventional foreignizing strategy (bringing the text closer to the source language) for two main reasons: First, it echoes the Judeo-Arabic translations of the Bible (especially Saadia Gaon's *tafsir*), which used the same translational strategy of mixing Arabic and Hebrew names. Second, it highlights the intimacy and proximity between Arabic and Hebrew and between the Muslim tradition and the Jewish tradition in relation to the land of the Bible (Palestine) and the biblical story. For example, in one of the stories, Meyouhas gives the Arabic place name beside the Hebrew place name:

> One day, an evil spirit fell on Musa, in his old age and infirmity, and he left the camp of the Children of Israel and wandered in a foul temper along the shores of *Bahar Lot*, which is *Yam Hamelah* [the Dead Sea], among the rocks. There, he saw a shepherd coming in his direction, and as he drew closer, he saw it was the shepherd to whom his father-in-law *Shahib*, or Jethro, had entrusted his flocks when Musa left Midian to return to Egypt and to lead the people of Israel out of the suffering inflicted by Pharoah.[52]

By placing the Arabic name *Bahar Lot* (בחר לוט) beside the Hebrew name *Yam Hamelah* (ים המלח), Meyouhas is highlighting the multilingual settings of the historical and contemporary Palestinian landscape and geography. Moreover, at a time of national conflict, when the politics of place-naming had a crucial role in discourse and practice, the mixing of Hebrew and Arabic names of places in his translation destabilized the national effort of separating between languages and territories—in the Zionist case, via toponymic (place-naming) activities and remapping projects that replaced Arabic names with Hebrew names.[53] This was part of a wider process of de-Arabization of the land and its population.[54]

Intertextuality and Translation: The Dialogic Dimension

The intersection between various languages, traditions, and stories in Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translations represents a notion of connectivity between Jewish and

Muslim traditions. None of the literary traditions or "languages" forms a separate system but relates to and interacts with other languages or traditions in a recursive manner. This translational model constantly challenges the nationalistic perception of distinct monolingual literary and linguistic traditions. Thus, these translations act not as a form of mediation between two different and separate languages or traditions but as representatives of a shared cultural space. They form what Kristeva would coin as "intertextuality," which she defines "as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings."[55] Kristeva's usages of dialogue echo Bakhtin's terminology. For Bakhtin language and textual communication are constantly engaged with and are informed by other texts and voices in dialogized manner. In these dialogized settings each text echoes multiple other texts and the different usages and meanings associated with each word, phrase, or utterance.

The intertextuality and the dialogized relations in Meyouhas's work interconnect between Jewish and Muslim oral and written traditions of the biblical story. At a time when national and cultural boundaries were separating Jews and Arab Palestinians, and when a struggle was raging over the question of the ownership of the (biblical) text and of the land, Meyouhas's intertextuality proposed a different cultural and political vision, one that sought to undermine the question of singularity and originality. Instead of focusing on the authority of a single unified tradition, Meyouhas emphasizes the dialogical notion of connectivity and fluidity between multiple traditions of the biblical story. And in contrast to the nationalistic Zionist political trend, which used the biblical text as a tool to claim exclusive Jewish ownership of the land, the translation work suggested a different narrative: instead of a single authorized source of the biblical text, it presents multiplicity and heterogeneity of texts, tales, and translations that intersect in a dialogized manner with no independent territories or clear borders between them. If there is no one unified text or tradition, no one can claim exclusive ownership of it or of the land.

Yahuda's translation entangles multiple literary and religious traditions. *Mishley Arav* includes various types of translational and linguistic practices such as philological analyses, metalinguistic explanations, and comparative investigations of oral and textual traditions, while also emphasizing the connections between them. Testimony to this approach can be found in the programmatic introduction that Yahuda wrote to the first volume of his work. In this introduction, he describes the intertextual and unfixed nature of the translated proverbs and fables:

> There are many international fables that are universally owned; while the content is the same, these fables appear in different versions, which are told in all languages by all nations, and it is impossible to know who their creators were and what land they came from. However, for the proverbs of the Arabs before Islam, their history, tellers, and tribes are known. And also, many of the proverbs that were told after the rise of Islam have known origins in terms of who told them and where they lived; even those that are related in a dialect language, their history and place of origin are known, as the proverbs themselves refer to these, telling a story that happened in a certain place where the proverb came to be told.[56]

In another section of his introduction, Yahuda emphasizes the constant transition of proverbs between languages and oral traditions:

> Some Arabic proverbs resemble Hebrew proverbs. In some cases, Hebrew proverbs crossed into Arabic while retaining their content and style; in others, the contents of an Arabic proverb are similar to a Hebrew proverb, not because it was copied into Arabic but because they were also inspired by the same spirit, and they created proverbs that are similar to ours but have a different style and form.[57]

Yahuda's work brings literary traditions from Islamic sources together with tales from rabbinic literature, and fables and legends from classical Arabic literature (*A Thousand and One Nights* or *Kalila wa Dimna*) with localized folk tales and personal memories. It contains a strong notion of intertextuality that is "constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."[58] This dialogized intertextuality creates an imagined interreligious and interlingual landscape that spreads from Morocco in the west to Persia in the east in the format of Ottoman or Andalusian imagined geographical boundaries.

Conclusion

This article suggests a new reading into two translation works from the polyglot Arab Jewish translation model that operated in the Arabic-Hebrew cultural and linguistic borderlands where partitioned languages and traditions interact and come together. It explores the ways in which they act as symbolic literary contact zones that redefine the relations between languages, cultures, and identities. At a time when emerging national and cultural boundaries separated Jews and Arabs, Hebrew and Arabic, settlers and natives, and a struggle was raging over the ownership of the (biblical) land and the (biblical) text, these translations focused on tales and traditions free of ownership and without any stable original source, thus indicating the connectivity

between them. While the dominant translation model in Hebrew literary circles pushed toward forming a unified and distinct monolingual literary framework, they emphasize the multiplicity and heterogeneity dimensions of the Hebrew and Arabic languages and literary traditions.

Yet when these works were published (between 1927 and 1934), the separation between Arabic and Hebrew, and between Jewish and Muslim literary traditions, was at its peak. Most of the (Hebrew) readers and publishers were monolingual (in relation to Arabic), lacking the ability (and/or the will) to identify and address the heteroglossic and polyphonic dimensions these works contained. In this context it is not surprising that these translations were viewed merely as part of the development of the national Hebrew literary field and marginalized under the rubric of folkloric literature.[59]

Moreover, at a time when Arabic-Hebrew bilingualism and language mingling were easily associated with betrayal of the national collective, the use of *Arav* (Arab) in the title of both translated works was already perceived in the nationalistic and monolingual logic as an act of separation between the Arabic tradition (with its distinct "national" histories and values) and the Jewish or Hebrew literary tradition. However, Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translational methods refused to remain confined by distinct borders of language, literature, and religion, shifting the attention to Andalusian and Ottoman models of coexistence and interaction of multiple linguistic traditions in a single geographical-cultural framework bringing together Islamic, Jewish, Turkish, Hebrew, Persian, Arabic, and Aramaic traditions in a dialogized and intertwined way.

Thus, the fluidity that is inherent in these translations becomes a source of resistance to the dominant monolingual and nationalistic literary and translation canon and represents an alternative translation model. For Yahuda and Meyouhas, translation was not a tool for mediation between two separated languages, identities, or traditions; rather, it operated within the same multilingual and multireligious cultural landscape located on the borderlands, connecting Hebrew and Arabic (Judeo-Arabic), Arabs and Jews (Arab Jews) or Judaism and Islam (Judeo-Muslim).

Notes

1 For a discussion on the concept of partition in this context, see Ella Shohat, "Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews," *Social Text* 21, no. 2 (2003): 49–74; Gil Z. Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination*, vol. 24 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

2 For more on this group, see Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, "The Possibility of Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 1 (2014): 43–61; Yitzhak Bezalel, *Noladetem Tsiyonim: Ha-Sefaradim be-Eretz Yisrael ba-Tsiyonut u-va-tehiyah ha-Ivrit ba-tkufah ha-Osmanit* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2008); Yuval Evri and Almog Behar, "Between East and West: Controversies over the Modernization of Hebrew Culture in the Works of Shaul Abdallah Yosef and Ariel Bension," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 16, no. 2 (2017): 295–311; Hillel Cohen, "Hayav u-moto shel ha-Yehudi ha-Aravi be-Eretz Yisrael u-me-hutza la," *Iyunim bi-Tkumat Yisrael* 9 (2015): 171–200.

3 On the native intellectual circles in Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century, see Salim Tamari, *Mountain against Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

4 See Lital Levy, "The Nahda and the Haskala: A Comparative Reading of 'Revival' and 'Reform,'" *Middle Eastern Literatures: Incorporating Edebiyat* 16, no. 3 (2013): 300–316. For more, see Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brotherhood: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Jonathan Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

5 Although the scholarly literature has taken a growing interest in the work and activities of these Arab Jewish figures, their rich and complex translation project has not been systematically and thoroughly examined. The new scholarly literature includes: Abigail Jacobson and Moshe Naor, *Oriental Neighbors* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2016); Campos, *Ottoman Brotherhood*; Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors*; Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*; Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture, 1893-1958* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013); Lital Levy, *Jewish Writers in the Arab East: Literature, History, and the Politics of Enlightenment, 1863–1914* (PhD diss, UC Berkeley, 2007).

6 Yosef Meyouhas (1868–1942) was an educator, translator, researcher, and public figure, a prominent member of both local Arab Palestinian intellectual circles and the Hebrew revival circle. He took part in the formation of key institutions in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century, including the first Hebrew language committee (together with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda).

Besides his extensive political and educational activities, Meyouhas was involved in a wide range of literary and translation activities, focusing mainly on the collection and translation of Palestinian Jewish and Muslim oral literary traditions. For more on Meyouhas, see Yuval Evri, "Translating the Arab-Jewish Tradition: From al-Andalus to Palestine/Land of Israel," in *Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien 1/2016* (Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien, 2016). Isaac Benjamin Yahuda (1863–1941) was born in the Old City of Jerusalem and raised in a multilingual and multiethnic environment. While Arabic was the dominant spoken language, Hebrew, Aramaic, Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Yiddish were also part of his childhood landscape. From an early age he began to learn Arabic from private teachers and studied it more systematically after joining the newly established Alliance school in Jerusalem. He was part of the school's first group of Arabic students, together with David Yellin and Yosef Meyouhas, who, like Yahuda, became leading and influential teachers, translators, and scholars of Arabic language and culture.

7 The ideal type, as Max Weber put it, is not the model that exists and is not necessarily the desired model, but a model that is based on structured tension and that does not describe the act as it exists in reality, but rather suggests principles of "objective possibilities." Here I use Max Weber's notion of "objective possibilities" as a basis for the notion of "missed opportunities." See Max Weber, "Objective Possibility and Adequate Causation in Historical Explanation," *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1949): 164–188. For more on their political and cultural project, see Galia Yardeni, *Ha-itonut ha-Ivrit be-Eretz Yisrael ba-shanim 1863-1904* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1969). Yaffah Berlovitz later developed this analysis; see Berlovitz, "Reshita shel ha-sifrut be-Eretz Yisrael ve-zikoteiha le-shirat Sefarad: Hatzaa le-model tarbut Yehudi-Aravi," *Bikoret ve-Parshanut* 32 (Winter 1997): 95–110; and also in my work: Evri, "Translating the Arab-Jewish Tradition"; Bezalel, *Noladetem Tsiyonim*.

8 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

9 On the development of Bakhtin's work in the context of his time, see Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 2003).

10 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 84.

11 For more on the Hebrew monolingual translation model, see Nitsa Ben-Ari, "The Double Conversion of Ben-Hur: A Case of Manipulative Translation," *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies* 14, no. 2 (2002): 263–301; Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem," in *Literature and Translation: New Perspectives in Literary Studies*, ed. James S. Holmes, José Lambert, and Raymond van den Broeck (Leuven: Acco,1978), 117–127.

12 Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2002).

13 Roberto Valdeón, "Nation, Empire, Translation," *Handbook of Translation Studies* 4 (2013): 111.

14 Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2012); Bassnett, *Translation Studies*.

15 Reine Meylaerts, "Multilingualism as a Challenge for Translation Studies," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartrina (London: Routledge, 2013), 537–551.

16 Eric R. Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues: Language and Communication in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Past & Present* 217, no. 1 (2012): 47–77.

17 For further reading on the role of the dragomans, see E. Natalie Rothman, "Dragomans," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*, ed. Franz Pöchhacker (London: Routledge, 2015), 119–124.

18 E. Natalie Rothman, "Afterword: Intermediaries, Mediation, and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 2-3 (2015): 245–259.

19 Rachel Mairs and Maya Muratov, *Archaeologists, Tourists, Interpreters: Exploring Egypt and the Near East in the Late 19th–Early 20th Centuries* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 13.

20 Rothman, "Dragomans," 119.

21 E. Natalie Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossings in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 4 (2009): 771–800; Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues."

22 Tamari, *Mountain against Sea*; Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*; Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

23 Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues."

24 Benjamin Hary, "Judeo-Arabic as a Mixed Language," in *Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic*, ed. Liesbeth Zack and Arie Schippers (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 125–143. It is important to stress here that our discussion of the Judeo-Arabic literary and translational model differs with the common assumption that this language represents a separate Jewish language. In doing so it follows Ella Shohat's argument regarding the idea of Judeo-Arabic being invented as a Jewish language separate from Arabic and distanced from the history of Arabic and the Judeo-Muslim tradition. Shohat argues that while the term and category of the "Arab Jew" elicited mainly hostility and opposition in scholarly and political circles, the category "Judeo-Arabic" has by contrast been widely accepted as a legitimate object of scholarly inquiry. Shohat's work seeks to reveal and problematize the boundaries of the category and of the field itself, exploring its organizing principles, revealing the broader political and ideological context in which it emerged, and pointing out the aspects that were overlooked, erased, negated, or marginalized. See Ella Shohat, "The Question of Judeo-Arabic," *Arab Studies Journal* 23, no. 1 (2015): 14–76; Ella Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic: Nation, Partition and the Linguistic Imaginary," *Interventions* 19, no. 2 (2017): 153–200.

25 S. J. Pearce, "'The Types of Wisdom Are Two in Number': Judah ibn Tibbon's Quotation from the Ihya'ulum al-Din," *Medieval Encounters* 19, no. 1–2 (2013): 137–166.

26 Yosef Tobi and Tsivia Tobi, *Judeo-Arabic Literature in Tunisia, 1850–1950* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2014); Benjamin H. Hary, *Translating Religion: Linguistic Analysis of Judeo-Arabic Sacred Texts from Egypt*, vol. 38 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

27 One of the most interesting examples of this phenomenon took place in the Baghdadi diaspora in Southeast Asia. *Haham* Shlomo Twena (1855–1913), a Baghdadi-born rabbi, opened a publishing press in Calcutta in 1888 that published dozens of translations into Judeo-Arabic, including Psalms, Ecclesiastes, the book of Esther, and the book of Ruth, as well as the Mishnaic *Ethics of the Fathers*, the Passover Haggadah, and various popular Jewish legends. See Yitzhak Avishur, "Sifrut ve-itonut ve-Aravit-Yehudit shel Yehudei Bavel be-dfusei Hodu," *Peamim* 52 (1992): 101.

28 Yitzhak Avishur, "Ha-sifrut ha-amamit shel shlosha rabanim Bavliyim be-mahatzit ha-mea ha-tisha asar," *Peamim* 59 (1994): 105.

29 Yahuda began to translate texts from Arabic in the 1880s for various Hebrew periodicals (mainly the *Hazvi* newspaper and *Luach Eretz Yisrael*). Besides translation of some classic and contemporary Arabic texts, he also published the first translations from his collection of Arabic proverbs. In addition, he opened a translation office near the main Ottoman government building in Jerusalem, offering his services as translator and interpreter from and to Ottoman Turkish and Arabic.

30 For more on the political position of the Arab Jews during this period, see Jacobson and Naor, *Oriental Neighbors*; Cohen, "Hayav u-moto shel ha-Yehudi ha-Aravi."

31 Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1929* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015).

32 Meylaerts, "Multilingualism as a Challenge for Translation Studies," 539.

33 Of all of Isaac Yahuda's rich and diverse cultural activities, *Mishley Arav* would appear to be his most important cultural and intellectual achievement. This translation project began in the 1880s, with his first translations being published in the Hebrew periodicals in Jerusalem. It culminated in the publication of two full volumes, in 1932 and 1934: *Mishley Arav* (Tel Aviv: Land of Israel History and Ethnography Institution, 1932, 1934).

34 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2017).

35 Liron Mor, "Translation," *Mafte'akh* 2e (2011): 123.

36 Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation* (London: Routledge, 2007).

37 When Meyouhas was five years old, his family moved outside the Old City walls to the nearby village of Silwan, becoming the first Jewish family to live in the village. His father died unexpectedly a short time afterward, and his mother stayed in Silwan with her four small children. Meyouhas often described how their Muslim neighbors supported his mother during that crucial time and welcomed the family into the community.

38 Yosef Meyouhas, *Me-hayei ha-ezrahim be-Eretz Yisrael* (Cairo: 1919), v.

39 Yahuda, *Mishley Arav* (1932), 8. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

40 The intersection between oral and textual traditions in Yahuda's work is also connected to his unique intellectual position at the crossroads between different religious, linguistic, and academic traditions. His multilingual fluency (in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, French, German, and English) granted him an advantageous position at the crossroads of trade and scientific and religious knowledge, and an ability to translate between different philosophical, religious, and literary traditions.

41 In 1906 he moved to Egypt and opened a bookstore near al-Azhar University in Cairo, specializing in Arabic, Aramaic, Turkish, Hebrew, and Persian rare books and manuscripts. He became a well-known merchant among European, Arab, and Muslim scholars. His global connections with large centers in Europe, India, Iraq, Yemen, Istanbul, and North Africa enabled him to locate and trade rare and expensive manuscripts.

42 Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009) 3.

43 Yahuda, *Mishley Arav* (1932), 113.

44 Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 38.

45 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 252–253.

46 P. Prayer Elmo Raj, "Text/Texts: Interrogating Julia Kristeva's Concept of Intertextuality," *Ars Artium* 3 (2015): 77.

47 Reine Meylaerts, "Multilingualism and Translation," in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 227.

48 Vyacheslav Ivanov, "Heteroglossia," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, no. 1-2 (1999): 100.

49 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*; Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "The Cinema after Babel: Language, Difference, Power," *Screen* 26, no. 3-4 (1981): 35–58.

50 On the ways in which Judeo-Arabic intersects with a wide spectrum of linguistic and literary traditions, see Ella Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic"; Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

51 It is of great importance in an article dedicated to the proximity between Arabic and Hebrew, and of scholars who lived this proximity, that we exemplify it while using the Arabic and Hebrew script.

52 Yosef Meyouhas, *Yaldey Arav* (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1927), 83.

53 Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2002); Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

54 Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 1 (1999): 5–20.

55 Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 65.

56 Yahuda, *Mishley Arav* (1932), 9–10.

57 Ibid., 10.

58 Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 37.

59 More recent accounts have investigated these works in light of the emergence and institutionalization of the field of folklore and ethnographic research in Palestine. See Amos Noy, *Edim o mumhim: Yehudim maskilim bnei Yerushalayim ve-ha Mizrah be-thilat ha-mea ha-20* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2017).

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Transmutation, Semantic Shift, and Modification: Reading the Judeo-Arabic *Kuzari*, in Hebrew and Arabic

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Introduction: A Story That Begins with Ransom

In May 2012, I arrived at the Sheikh Hussein border crossing between Jordan and Israel. I was carrying about sixty copies of my translation of *The Kuzari*, which I had received from a bookstore in Amman. The book was published by the al-Kamel publishing house, whose headquarters are in Freiburg, Germany, and whose main Middle Eastern branch is in Beirut. I had worked on this edition for some eight years. On its cover was the title in Arabic: الكتاب الخزري: كتاب الرد والدليل في الدين الذليل. The Israeli border official, who noticed it, stiffened and asked me to step aside. Then came another official who began to question me. He leafed through the book and asked me again and again what this book was, who gave me the copies, who sent them, what the book was about, who wrote it, and other questions of that sort.

He was not familiar with the Arabic name of the author—Abu al-Hasan al-Lawi, or with his Hebrew name—Yehuda Ben Shmuel Halevi. Then he asked me what my connection to him was and why I was importing books from an enemy country. During the interrogation other officials gathered and were all trying to understand what was happening. Finally a senior official arrived, and when he started talking everybody fell silent. Unlike the other officials, he had no interest in either the content of the book or its author. He merely informed me that I had

committed two offenses: one, a security offense, was trading with enemy countries, and the other was criminal because I had not applied in advance for a permit from the Treasury's customs department. All of the copies, as well as other books that were in my possession, were confiscated.

The work I had labored over for so many years went down the drain in front of my eyes, and I was in total shock. I tried to explain to the senior official that it was a book by Yehuda Halevi, the great Jewish poet and thinker, but he refused to listen. He asked me to wait in a small room, and about an hour later he came back and said: "In order to be released, you will have to pay a ransom (*kofer*). Then you can go home, and in the next few days you will be summoned to the police for a hearing." I asked him what he meant by "ransom," and he explained: a fine instead of a criminal file. How ironic, I thought to myself. After all, Yehuda Halevi, the physician and poet, also raised money to redeem Jewish prisoners and captives, which involved paying ransom. For a moment, I imagined Yehuda Halevi himself detained and confiscated along with his valuable book, *The Kuzari*.

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During my sociology and political science studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I was exposed for the first time to various concepts—such as nation, nation-state, nationalism, religion, ethnicity, race, and heritage—that are related at different levels to ancient as well as modern Jewish identity. At first these concepts sounded vague and confusing to me, but I was curious and wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the components of Jewish identity, when these terms began to be used, and the connection between the Hebrew language and Jewish identity. When I failed to find satisfying answers, one of my Israeli Jewish friends referred me to *The Kuzari*, the book by Yehuda Halevi, in the hope that therein I would find satisfactory answers to my annoying questions.

I found the 1972 edition by Yehuda Even-Shmuel (Kaufman).[1] I began to read it but could not understand anything: it seemed that the text was not really written in Hebrew but was composed of riddles and wordplay in an ancient and strange language. I did not understand that I held in my hands a Hebrew translation from Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew letters, mixed with Hebrew and Aramaic phrases and words), but I did understand that the author and his target audience, with which I was not familiar, were members of an ancient culture that was alien to me. Later, I found an edition of the book in English, translated by the Jewish researcher Hartwig Hirschfeld and published in London in 1905.[2] Only later did I discover that *The Kuzari* was originally written in Arabic in Hebrew letters, rather than in Hebrew.

Later still, I discovered that the work had never been published in Arabic, whereas it had been translated into numerous European languages as early as the sixteenth century, including languages of relatively limited distribution, such as Dutch. It would turn out, looking back, that this discovery paved the way to my research endeavor because it piqued my curiosity and desire to study Judeo-Arabic texts more thoroughly, in their historical context, and to translate, transliterate, and publish them in the Arabic alphabet.

It took me years to realize that the ongoing Jewish-Arab conflict is the cause of a large part of the distortion of the context of the text under discussion, and for that reason I was overwhelmed by feelings of confusion, astonishment, and insult every time I looked at the text written in Judeo-Arabic that was inaccessible to Arabic speakers.

In this article I would like to clarify some of the hidden contexts of the text, examine some of the basic elements that comprise it, and analyze the causes of the feelings of surprise and insult that have been with me for the last decade. Likewise, I will clarify the tremendous gap between understanding the text in its own right and the reality in which people use the text for their present ideological needs.

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Compositions in Judeo-Arabic are part of the cultural heritage of the Jewish communities that lived throughout the Middle East. Judeo-Arabic was initially a spoken language, though it is not clear when it began to be spoken, and works written in Judeo-Arabic have been found from as early as the ninth century. This language served the social and cultural needs of the Jewish communities, as an intra-Jewish language of communication that included some hidden terms and key concepts. These needs were also served by Aramaic, which was spoken by Jews in the Middle East, and other Jewish languages, such as Yiddish and Ladino.

Many works were written in Judeo-Arabic, and it served as a safe space where Jews could express themselves without fear of harassment or censorship. Use of the language continued until the middle of the twentieth century, and the last works written in it are apparently the translations by Rabbi Yosef Ben David Ghenasiyya, who was born in Constantine, Algeria, in 1879. Ghenasiyya was the chief rabbi of the city, and he translated many halachic corpora—including the Mishnah, Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*, and many other works—into Judeo-Arabic. He died in Dimona in 1962, a month after arriving in Israel.[3]

A translator carries a great responsibility when translating a text outside the context in which it was written and read. To be able to pass it through the prism

of all of the conditions and circumstances in which it was written, and to reflect its context and subtext, the translator must also learn all the values on which it was based. For instance, the attempt to translate a text that was written in Hebrew letters in the Middle Ages in a Muslim context, from Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew, in completely different contexts of time and place, is a subject that does not receive sufficient attention in research, not even in translation studies.[4]

In this article I wish also to shed light on several issues related to the translation of texts from Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew, both in the Middle Ages and today. Therefore I will not refer only to the translation of the text itself, its textual units, terminology, and the discussions that arise from it, but also to the peregrinations of the text and its displacement from the cultural domain in which it grew to another cultural domain and different target audience. In other words, I will try to answer the question: what happens to a text when it is translated and migrates from one place to another and from one time to another?

The translation of materials from Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew involves a dual translation process. The first process has to do with the work written in Judeo-Arabic, which reflects an attempt to formulate, in the Arabic language, the systems of ideas, beliefs, and traditional Jewish heritage (including rabbinic literature, for instance), in the context of the Jews living in Muslim environments. The second process is the creation of the Hebrew translation in the contexts of the Jewish communities in Europe. At first glance, it seems we are looking at a translation and a retranslation, or back translation. First the Jewish concepts, values, and beliefs, originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, are presented in Judeo-Arabic literature based on a Judeo-Arabic dialect of the Arabic language. Then, the work written in Judeo-Arabic is translated back into Hebrew. But when we take a deeper look at what is initially represented or translated into Judeo-Arabic and what was translated back into Hebrew, we find that the subject is extremely complicated. The basic argument is that in both of these transitions—from Hebrew and Aramaic into Arabic and Judeo-Arabic, and later from Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew, and in completely different contexts—the transferred ideas and beliefs receive different meanings, and the contrast between the three contexts add another layer of difference. *The Kuzari* is a special and important test case because the composition of the book and its history, and the later ideological recruitment of the book and its author, shed additional light on this entire process. As for the ideological recruitment, it can definitely be argued that the author and his book have been recruited to the Zionist project in general, and to the religious-Zionist stream in particular, which emphasizes the "divine" ethnic-racial layer, as I will demonstrate below.

The book was originally addressed to the twelfth-century Jewish public, which was confronting three main challenges in the area of interreligious polemics: Karaism, Christianity, and Islam. Owing to the importance of these polemics, I see fit to expound in this article on the principles of that polemic as background material.

Studying *The Kuzari*: My Acquaintance with the Judeo-Arabic Speaker

It took me much time and effort to find a copy of *The Kuzari* in Judeo-Arabic, its original language, to get used to reading Arabic in Hebrew transliteration, and to understand the medieval Arabic in which the book was written.[5] To that end, and while I worked on the Arabic edition, I used numerous lexicons and dictionaries, including classical Arabic dictionaries and dictionaries of the intermediate and spoken Arabic dialects. I also found myself obliged to learn medieval Muslim literature and the cultural and intellectual background and philosophical and theological terminology of these compositions in order to understand in depth both the concepts of the book and the literary context in which it was written.

I spent years immersed in these studies and gradually felt I was understanding more and more: the sense of distance from the text that I felt the first time I read it began to dissipate. The culture and region in which the book was written, its terms and phrases, and the audience it addressed were no longer foreign to me. Furthermore, as I immersed myself more deeply in reading the book in the original, I found it to be more connected to the Arabic cultural domain in which I grew up and less to the Jewish cultural domain in Israel.

This discovery also influenced my subsequent professional career: since then I have tried to find more and more works in Judeo-Arabic. I found that they, like *The Kuzari*, had been translated into numerous European languages that are distant from Arab culture, and I ascertained that these works were not at all familiar to the Arab public and that no one had bothered to publish them in Arabic and in the Arabic alphabet. Although a few had been published in Arabic, they are not intelligible and are not annotated for the contemporary Arabic reader. These Judeo-Arabic texts include monumental works such as Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, and most of them were published by academic publishers and are hard to obtain.

During the twentieth century, with the support of researchers, Jewish philanthropists, and Jewish institutions, many works written in Judeo-Arabic were translated into numerous European languages—but not into Arabic. I could not understand how it was possible that the products of an entire culture that arose in the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East, and the Arab world, alongside Islamic culture, were inaccessible to most of the people of the region itself!

The works written in Judeo-Arabic are dotted with multiple Hebrew expressions and quotes from Jewish literature, in Hebrew and Aramaic. Though translating Judeo-Arabic works into Arabic might seem to be a linguistic challenge, it is mainly an academic one. To understand the texts in depth and be able to translate them, I needed to study their civilizational background and the cultural and religious contexts in which the texts were written. Thus, I found myself needing to learn many subjects, such as Medieval Arabic, Greek, Arab and Muslim philosophy, different sects and factions of Islam, Mishnah, Talmud, halacha, and midrash.

I could not immediately embark on the work of translation: it took me many years to understand the book, and in those years I also learned the complexity and depth of the concepts we use today. For instance, I understood that the concept "Judaism" does not refer to a monolithic Judaism made all of a piece; rather, it is an immense and layered collection of heterogeneous streams and cultural products that migrated from one place to another and from one era to another, and in each such transition it received a new and different shape. In other words, I discovered something incredibly central, which today seems to me and many others to be obvious: Judaism, just like any other religion in the world, is a historic creation, in every layer of which time and place have left their imprint. This was a terribly meaningful discovery for me.

In that sense, Ben-Gurion was right when he asserted in his writings and speeches, such as his correspondence with Nathan Rotenstreich, that Jewish literature in the Diaspora is a creation that was in contact with other peoples and cultures and was influenced by them. He also posited that the era of living in Palestine "before the exile," especially during the First Temple period, was an "authentic" period, as though it had not come into contact with "foreign" cultures and peoples. In other words, Ben-Gurion's Zionism sought to restore the ancient Jewish "authenticity" from half a millennium before Christ to twentieth-century Judaism:

> I feel no emotional affinity with the close or distant past in the Diaspora. My deep and fundamental affinity is with our ancient era—from the biblical patriarchs to the early Hasmoneans. I do not completely dismiss the value of Hebrew literature after the Bible. And the literature of the Mishnah, the Gemara, and the Zohar contains some precious gems, but they are buried in heaps of rubbish that mean nothing to me. And which I am afraid will mean nothing to the generations that grow up in Israel. Medieval Jewish philosophy is like all medieval philosophy—scholastic, and has hardly innovated anything, and is not much different from the Christian and Muslim philosophy of that time. . . . I do not condemn Hebrew literature from the days of Mendele Mocher Sefarim and Ahad Ha'am, but the life that is close to me

> is the life of our people in the time of the First Temple and a little bit of the Second Temple. Only then did we live and act and create as a sovereign nation, rather than as clay molded (or abused) by strangers. The climate of the Bible is the climate of our lives. . . . The life and work [of the Jews at the time of the Bible] are an organic part of our life today.[6]

But these words are based on an axiom according to which the days "of the First Temple" and the days of the Yishuv in the modern era are the two eras in which the Jews were free and therefore created in freedom. Hiding behind that axiom is another axiom, according to which that free creation was authentic, without any external influences and constraints. This myth is not the creation of Ben-Gurion alone—it was propagated among many of the earlier Zionist thinkers and some thinkers today, such as Eliezer Schweid. It seems that that is just what Ben-Gurion meant when he wrote in one of his letters to Hugo Bergman: "I believe with all my heart that in a number of senses we are 'the chosen people.'"[7] This striving for purism has also been increasing for the last few decades, the era of "here and now" messianism, most starkly articulated by the mainstream of Chabad Hasidism and religious Zionism.

Only some eight years after first holding *The Kuzari* in my hands could I begin to prepare the Arabic edition, which would include annotation of confusing and esoteric matters and phrases, so that a contemporary Arab reader could understand the text or at least get the gist of it.

My work included turning the Hebrew transliteration into Arabic transliteration, providing a certified Arabic translation of the quoted verses and an almost literal translation into Arabic of all of the Aramaic quotations, and explaining them (Mishnah, Talmud, midrash, etc.) in footnotes. The footnotes for the explanations of terms were a central arena of my work. The crowded footnotes were meant to compensate the Arabic readers for deficiencies and bring them as close as possible to the birthplace of the original work. After all, the modern Arabic reader is not conversant with the cultural landscape of twelfth-century Andalusia either, and this was the gap I had to fill with a two-staged translation.

Stage I: Articulating the Jewish Faith in the Arabic Language

The Kuzari, which exalts the Hebrew language as the language of Genesis, the divine language that can express any idea, was nonetheless written in Arabic, even though Yehuda Halevi was famous for his exceptional command of and proficiency in Hebrew.

Following the expansion of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries, the use of Arabic spread widely, its rules were codified, and books were composed in it. Central

views of Islam and its ideas are embedded in the Arabic language very naturally, whereas followers of other religions found themselves using it but changing and accommodating it to their various needs (social, ritual, and theological), even giving its words and terms different meanings from those of the Muslims. Sometimes these new meanings revived the words' usage in Arabic in the pre-Muslim era. For example, central terms of Islam, such as *Qur'an*, *sunna*, *athar*, *masjid*, *rasul*, *imam*, and *hajj*, were used to signify the Jewish written Torah, oral law, Mishnah, synagogue, Moses, priest, and pilgrimage.

Rabbi Saadia Gaon and Yehuda Halevi are just two of the many Jewish thinkers and educated people who from the mid-ninth century to the thirteenth century contributed, each in his special way, to a Jewish revolution that encompassed almost all the sciences of their day: grammar, the development of literary and philological instruments for the exegesis of scripture, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, and the exact sciences. As a result of this revolution, especially from the early tenth century onward, Judaism changed from a religion whose two main fields were halacha and liturgy to a religion whose center was theology, biblical exegesis, and consideration of the various changes within the Jewish communities. One of the main instruments used for this revolution was translation. The quintessential case is Saadia Gaon's translation into Arabic of the heart of the Jewish canon—the sacred biblical texts—each one of whose letters was imprinted by God, according to Jewish tradition. According to Saadia Gaon, his works embedded the "correct" interpretation in the translation itself, similar to the traditional model of the earlier Aramaic translations, although possibly to a larger extent. In the translations of the Bible into Arabic, especially in Saadia Gaon's, it was even customary to add words and change the order of the words in the verses.

After translating the Bible into Arabic, Saadia Gaon and others, including Yehuda Halevi, used these translations as the basis for monographs and theological compositions in Judeo-Arabic, thus adding another revolutionary dimension of establishing the tenets of faith, their meaning, and their importance. These works are written, if I may say cynically, "purely on the basis of tradition," because it was very difficult for such authors and commentators to admit that they were criticizing or attacking tradition, and certainly not "renovating" it, even though that is precisely what they did in their writing. Even modern researchers, some of whom are still alive, will hardly admit that such central theologies and commentators were revolutionary or that they caused a revolution in Judaism, whether consciously or not. Such works were translated into Hebrew in the Middle Ages in order to "restore past glory," which is to say, to integrate the Judeo-Arabic source into Jewish tradition and present

it as an inseparable part thereof. Thus, works such as *The Kuzari*, the commentary of Abraham ibn Ezra, and the works of Maimonides and others were sanctified and became part and parcel of the sacred Jewish tradition.

The second stage, the retranslation (which is in essence a back translation) into Hebrew, is most evident in the translation project of the Ibn Tibbon family, begun by Yehuda ibn Tibbon (b. 1120, acted in the second half of the twelfth century in Lunal, southern France, after he fled from his homeland in Islamic Spain in 1150).

Every translation, just like all historical research, is the product of the culture from which it arose and is actually bound by the circumstances of time and place. Therefore, even when unintended, the translation itself is based on semantic changes and shifts. In linguistics and language sciences in general, it is known that words do not maintain fixed specific meanings—they change from place to place and from one time period to another.[8] These Hebrew translations not only poured new content into old vessels, thereby causing semantic changes, but also created new words, because of the limitations of the Hebrew target language of the time, especially when it came to philosophical and theological terms.

The scholarly Jewish writers at the time of the modern renewal of the Hebrew language followed the path described by Nietzsche, which we will explore below, with regard to the secularization of Hebrew and the creation of the new national language:

> Our poets and authors continued to draw their inspiration from the past: from the culture and language of the Bible, from Talmudic society and language, from the life and expressions of the ghetto, from the world and terminology of kabbalah and Hasidism, from the ambience of the Torah learners, the students in the seminaries, and the worshippers in the synagogues.[9]

In other words, the author claims that the appearance of Modern Hebrew in the twentieth century involved a great many such deliberate semantic changes to fit the new circumstances.

My main intention at this point is to indicate the impact of the book's language of origin on the "mental map," or "imagined map," of the reading audience, which is also imagined. When reading *The Kuzari* in its medieval Hebrew translation, such as Yehuda ibn Tibbon's, the reader forms a completely different mental map from the one formed by reading its translation into Modern Hebrew. The medieval translation attempts to disconnect the work from the cultural domain from which it arose, namely the Arab-Muslim cultural domain of the time, and to plant it within the rabbinical cultural domain, as the prototype of the language of Jewish culture. In

the modern translations there is an evident attempt to plant it within a pronounced national-religious domain, in its new terrestrial, territorial, and Zionist sense. I do not mean that the modern translators necessarily do this consciously, by choosing their translation strategies and techniques, but that they are captive within a language, discourse, and set of contexts that are necessarily modern and, in this case, Zionist. Also, the reading audience and the cultural, political, and religious contexts in which they are immersed are completely different from those of the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, reading the *The Kuzari* in its original Arabic creates a completely different mental map, which is totally absent when the text is translated into any other language. You can feel the author's interactions with his Muslim and Christian neighbors, the polemical background with the other religions and Jewish factions of the time, and the style, the cultural richness, and the different ideas originating from different streams, movements, ethnic communities and religions, and the diverse cultural groups in the author's cultural environment. Thus, we learn how different factions and movements created different jargons, and how they chose to use a specific term to denote a specific idea. In fact, when a certain faction or movement chose to use a certain term to denote the same idea but loaded it with different meanings or significances, that faction had clear reasons, and the translators could not transfer these in the translation, because many if not all of them translated the text aganist the background of the culture and society in which they lived, using their terms and language. In other words, the translation itself is the product of the place-time axis, and it is very hard to escape the axis's gravity.

By reading the source, we learn that even when two factions use the same term, they might be signifying different ideas or content. Unfortunately, these differences disappear when the text is translated into Hebrew or any other language, even if the translator tries very hard to be faithful to the source, because translation itself uproots them and completely nullifies the context in which the book was written and published. It flattens the words and the terms, removes their range of meanings and different significations, neutralizes the author's objectives, and invents new objectives that interact with the receiving cultural setting and the context in which the translation was created—which is a completely different context from that in which the original work appeared. In other words, the translator not only transports the work from one place-time to a different place-time, with all the problems that involves, but also expropriates it from its language and disconnects it from its context, its culture, its place, and its target audience.

While translating a work such as *The Kuzari*, the translators actually tried to represent a certain culture using the language of another culture, thereby stripping

the work from its entire conceptual envelope, its values, contexts, and objectives, while still claiming to present a translation of that work that is faithful to its source. Furthermore, every good work that is in dialogue with a certain tradition, was written as part of it or opposes it. Such a translation is anything but faithful to the source. In fact, it is a different, new composition and very distinct from the source. Any attempt to translate such a work is actually an attempt to write a new work over an ancient one—or to put it more bluntly, to violate the original work and force it to advance a particular purpose. Also, in translation the tradition with which the work is in dialogue evaporates. The chances of reaching an accurate result are close to zero, let alone reaching a translation that takes into account all of the factors, contexts, traditions, and values that envelop and stand at the basis of such a work.

It is very sad to think that any attempt to translate such a work involves uprooting it from its original connection and loading it with new significances, new words, and completely new contexts, contents, and expanses. This, as will be explained below, is also something of which Rabbi Yosef Qafih accused Even-Shmuel.[10]

Stage II: Back Translation into Hebrew

One of the consequences of translating works written in Judeo-Arabic during the Middle Ages into Hebrew, including the translation of *The Kuzari*, is that they contain Islamic ideas, as well as ideas drawn from Eastern Christianity, even if indirectly, and these ideas entered the Jewish belief system. The original work is in dialogue with local traditions, including philosophy, theology, literature, and more. After Yehuda ibn Tibbon translated *The Kuzari* into Hebrew (circa 1167, a little over two decades after it was written in Judeo-Arabic), it instantly became a very important book and occupied a central place in Jewish literature. Its status rose higher still in the modern era, particularly within religious-Zionist circles, and more recently also among the new faction called the ultra-Orthodox nationalists.[11] But the price extracted by the translation was, in my opinion, very high.

Some books are written in a universalist spirit: usually, their authors assume they are writing about absolute truths, which are true for every place and every time; the most salient example in that category is science books. These books can usually be translated relatively easily if the target language is sufficiently developed to absorb the ideas and concepts. There are also books that are in thrall to the dimensions of time and place, and it is usually hard to translate them while simultaneously maintaining their original meaning. There may be a wide spectrum of works between these two extremes, but religious books belong to the first category, which opposes any tone of historicization.

Adam Shear notes the process of constituting *The Kuzari* as a foundational book on the Jewish bookshelf and calls attention to the various and even conflicting uses of the book. He emphasizes that various readers have interpreted *The Kuzari* in diverse ways to advance specific cultural and intellectual objectives. These interpretations and uses are also connected to the canonization of *The Kuzari* and the granting of quasi-divine authority to the book and its author, upon whom even modern-day researchers insist on bestowing the honorific, "Rabbi." For example:

> Various readers interpreted the work in manifold ways and made strategic choices about whether and how to disseminate the work to serve particular cultural and intellectual agendas. Over time, the effect of the work of these human agents was to invest *The Kuzari* with the authority often associated with canonical texts; in other words, *The Kuzari* became a "classic." All of this activity did not predetermine the uses made of the work or the interpretation given to the work by future generations and—as with many classics—disparate groups of Jews understood the work differently and used it for different purposes. This situation prevailed through the early modern period and well into the nineteenth century. However, as I argue in the conclusion, a series of new developments in the late nineteenth century led to one interpretation of the work becoming dominant.[12]

Shear highlights the gap between the academic and nonacademic engagement with ancient Jewish texts. In contrast with the trend of historicization in the academic discourse, there is also an opposite trend in the religious and popular discourse:

> The first late modern dichotomy to emerge was between academic and nonacademic treatment of *The Kuzari*. Over the course of the nineteenth century, a new conception of *The Kuzari* came about as a result of the historicizing tendencies and the commitment to philological rigor of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement. Although at the beginning of the century there was no cleavage between scholarship *on* the text and programmatic uses *of* the text, by the end of the century, the two endeavors could be distinguished. Academic reading of *The Kuzari*, *although always informed by present-day concerns*, returned the book to its twelfth-century context by examining Halevi's Arabic text, his sources, and the historical context of al-Andalus from which the book emerged. The scholarly program became less concerned with mobilizing the book's authority or contents toward a particular Jewish cultural or religious agenda and more interested in mobilizing the book as evidence for reconstruction of a lost moment in time.

He continues:

> As my survey of twentieth-century scholarship on the work in the introduction indicates, this historicist agenda continues today. While some might argue that critical historical and philological scholarship has (and has always had) a programmatic agenda of its own, *nonetheless a clear distinction can be drawn between treating a work as an "authority" and treating it as a "source."*[13]

The medieval translators not only transported texts from one language to another but also viewed themselves as committed to being active participants in creating another "version" of the book that would stand beside the original. Sometimes they were active partners in significant cultural changes, and even scientific, philosophical, or theological revolutions. Maimonides, for instance, described the Onkelos translation of the Bible into Aramaic as a theological revolution whose purpose was to remove any shadow of anthropomorphism from descriptions of God in the Bible:

> Onkelos the Proselyte was very perfect in the Hebrew and Syrian languages and directed his effort toward the abolition of the belief in God's corporeality. Hence he interprets in accordance with its meaning every attribute that Scripture predicates of God and that might lead toward the belief in corporeality.[14]

In other words, the translator is sometimes a partner in revolution—so it was in ancient times, and so it was in the Middle Ages. The translator from Arabic into Hebrew is a key figure in the shaping of Jewish science, philosophy, theology, and mysticism in the Middle Ages; he became a central figure on the migration routes of knowledge from Islam to Judaism, and later from Hebrew to Latin. He had the power to shape the way knowledge from the Muslim domain would be absorbed into the Jewish scientific, philosophical, theological, or philosophical-mystical tradition and to have a decisive impact on it.[15] To this day the Tibbonim, the main founders of translation into Hebrew, are perceived in this way. They even invented new and numerous Hebrew words and technical terms in order to contend with the linguistic richness of Arabic. In light of the above, we can certainly understand Nietzsche's argument that such translation is a sort of literary "theft," falsification, and historical expropriation.[16]

What were the consequences of the translation of medieval Judeo-Arabic texts into Hebrew? A good text is, in fact, "an imprint of its native landscape," to use a phrase from the poet Shaul Tchernichovsky.[17] It conducts a dialogue with words, terms, thought patterns, values, norms, beliefs, ideas, streams, schools of thought, movements, traditions, factions, and religions, from the place of its writing, and even with specific works and authors, and paints a diverse and interactive cultural

landscape. Had the translations of medieval Judeo-Arabic texts not done so, the texts would not have been received by their target audience and would have been neglected and forgotten.

Translation into Hebrew, within another and very different cultural domain (Europe), beginning in the twelfth century, "stripped" the original work from its native landscape and "dressed" it with a different imprint, landscape, homeland, and tradition, so that its new target audience could accept it. In the case of the Jewry of Provence, and even more so of Ashkenaz, the imprint of the native landscape of the target audience a moment before the publication of the translation is like a sealed room, the room of a Jewry that secluded itself and was in dialogue only with very ancient biblical and rabbinic literature. For instance, Yehuda Halevi and many others in his age used the terminology of the new genre of Muslim geography, which began to appear in the tenth century (such as the geographical sections of "The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity") and which grew stronger mainly as a reaction to the Crusades. The reader of *The Kuzari* in its original language becomes familiar with the terms, characters, metaphors, descriptions, explanations, and landscapes first-hand, and can place or characterize them in the framework of a particular tradition. After the text migrated to Europe and was written in Hebrew, however, all of that disappeared.

Questions about the Migration of the Text

As previously mentioned, there is no such thing as an ahistorical or meta-historical text, disconnected from the place and time in which it was conceived and written. When a text is created, it is necessarily written by an author or authors in a defined place and time. Even if produced over long periods of time and in different places, it is necessarily the product of a certain context. It is conceived and written as part of a particular culture and language, which have particular needs, and is designated for a specific target audience: it is in dialogue with a local tradition or traditions.

Every text is necessarily enveloped by a large number of values and variables that we must address when we set out to examine, study, and analyze it—even if we seek only to understand it. Likewise, every text necessarily engages in a dialogue with texts, ideas, authors, and concepts from its own and previous generations, to which the author believes he can add something new. Otherwise, he would not have gone to the trouble of writing, especially since writing books in the Middle Ages was considered a very onerous expense.

The wise reader and diligent researcher will discover these layers and traditions and be able to indicate them and the author's sources. Therefore, when translating the text into another language, in different geographical areas, those layers and traditions,

which are the envelope and basis of the text, evaporate and are appropriated into different contexts and domains. I will illustrate this with two central concepts in *The Kuzari*: *ʿam segula* (usually rendered "chosen people") and *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel).

ʿAm Segula

It is likely that the biblical word *segula* is not a Hebrew word; some think, in light of several sources in the Bible and rabbinic literature, and especially in light of its use in Acadian documents (*sugullu*), that the original Acadian meaning of *segula* is "separated property": property that somebody separates or sets aside for themselves, or that somebody else separates or sets aside for them out of a larger reserve of property of the same kind ("herd," "asset," "property," etc.).[18] Likewise, the later Aramaic word *sigulata* assumed the meaning of "asset" or "herd."

In relation to groups of human beings, however, the term *sugullu* serves to designate a group of prisoners taken by the king of Assyria during his war campaigns. This group was defined as a special category for certain purposes, which are not clear from the relevant documents (though possibly they became the king's property).

In the Masoretic text of the Bible, the term *segula* appears only six times. In rabbinic sources the term serves mainly to designate a certain kind of separated or allocated property and refers to inanimate property. The designation of the status of the people of Israel as "a people of *segula*" by God, appears only in quotes from the Bible, including, of course, the phrase *ʿam segula* (Deuteronomy 26:18).[19]

Apparently, since it was common in ancient societies (though not only in them) to view an owner of property as a respected person, it was said that someone who was *segula* was a respected figure, and not as Even Shoshan comments in his dictionary, "an exceptional person." The root *s-g-l* does not embed this meaning in Biblical Hebrew until the late Middle Ages. In the midrash and rabbinic language, the meaning of the word *segula* is "asset" or "property," and not the meaning that prevails today. Therefore, in the verse, "Now therefore, if ye will hearken unto my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own *segula* from among all peoples; for all the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:5), the meaning of the word *segula* is "asset" or "property," and everything found on the land belongs to "my property" because, "all the earth is mine." This is the meaning of the term in the verse "And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his own *segula*" (Deuteronomy 26:18), which is to say that of all the nations, you are the property or herd of God.

On the basis of very rich ancient documents and literature, including Jewish "External Books" and many early and later midrashim, the prevailing view in the

ancient world was that different spirits or gods, and not one god, govern all the nations. One special god was in charge of each tribe and the management of its members' affairs, and the tribes in turn recognized the gods of the other tribes (researchers conceptualize this view as henotheism). There are midrashim that add that Jehovah was revealed to the world and became the governor of the people of Israel alone only after the appearance of Abraham. Therefore, in the contexts in which the term *segula* appears in the Bible, the people of Israel are the exclusive property of Jehovah, they are his *segula* and he is their exclusive deity, whereas other nations are the *segula* of other gods.

Almost all of the medieval commentators who wrote in Judeo-Arabic understood and translated the biblical word *segula* into the word *khasa*, members of the elite as opposed to the common folk, with "members of the elite" being the Jewish people and the "common folk" being the other nations. In any case, the term *segula* does not assign any attribute to the herd or asset itself; rather, it means that its owner became a respectable figure thanks to that ownership. On the other hand, since the late Middle Ages the noble or the honorific, which was derived from ownership of a herd or asset, turned into a quality in its own right. In other words, the connection between the honorific and the herd/asset was severed, and the honorific itself turned into an essential value of the herd/asset, an integral part of them. From here on, the "People of Israel" receives an essential attribute regardless of God himself.

The translators who operated within the medieval Islamicate world, such as Saadia Gaon, translated the Hebrew term *muvchar* to the Arabic word *akhyar*, or to the Arabic word *al-mukhtar*, which means "of the highest quality." In Yehuda ibn Tibbon's translation, the word *safwa* (choice, elite) was translated into the biblical-Akkadian term *segula*. From then on, and to this day, this biblical term received the semantic load of the Shiʿi term *safwa*, and there is nothing to do about it.

Yehuda Halevi borrowed the term *safwa* from a Shiʿi doctrine that focuses on prophecy and used it in his book primarily to characterize the essential difference that separates the people of Israel from the rest of the nations. In his poetry, Yehuda Halevi sought a biblical term close to that term and found the term *mivchar* (Isaiah 22:7, Ezekiel 24:2).[20]

Nonetheless, the late Michael Schwarz, the last translator of *The Kuzari* into Hebrew, adhered to that translation even though he was convinced it was a quintessential Shiʿi term that does not conform with the biblical term, and he explained that "this has been the accepted term from the Bible until this day!"[21] Therefore, this translation fixes the meaning that already struck root with Yehuda

ibn Tibbon's twelfth-century translation, where Halevi's word *safwa* is identical to the biblical word *segula*. In Ehud Krinis's comprehensive study, and in many other studies, it emerges that translators continue to use this erroneous translation, even though they know it is erroneous and misleading, because they are afraid to digress from their predecessors' tradition.[22]

Yehuda Halevi's argument on this issue discloses that any sensible person, familiar with the cultural and religious landscape in which the book was written, and with whom Halevi is in dispute or polemic, will find that this is a polemic tightly related to an interreligious—Christian-Muslim-Jewish—polemic. The Christians argued that "the true Israel" (Latin: *verus Israel*) moved to Christianity and that ancient Israel was condemned to annihilation because they denied the Messiah. On the other hand, the Muslims argued that God changes his commandments according to the place and time but maintains the principles of the religious creed. Therefore, the principles of the religion are not tied to place and time, and therefore the Muslim faith is a more current version of God's law and commandments. To respond to those two challenges, Yehuda Halevi used a Shiʿi doctrine that was already quite developed, according to which divine choice, beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve, is transmitted through both individuals and groups, usually by heredity from father to son, and with the appearance of Jacob, according to Halevi's modifications, it began to transfer collectively only within the people of Israel. In other words, Yehuda Halevi's answer to the two challenges stated above resides in the argument that divine chosenness is passed on through heredity and cannot be changed at all.

Like many other terms, *segula* also received a new meaning in the middle of the nineteenth century, at a time when a person's "racial" affiliation characterized them more than their religion (such as in the writings of Moshe Haas, for instance). This *segula* turned, during the Zionist and national-religious era, into a purely racist philosophy with a mix of "spirituality." Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, one of the central leaders of today's religious-Zionist stream, determined on the basis of *The Kuzari* and following the insights of his master and teacher Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook (supposedly the heir of his father, Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook) that the Jewish people is essentially substantively different from the other nations, and he emphasized not that the Jewish people became the people of *segula* because they received the Torah but that they received the Torah because they are the people of *segula* from the genesis, from the beginning of creation.[23]

Eretz Yisrael

Hebrew speakers used and still use archaic names of places and countries. For instance, biblical names are identified with countries: Sepharad (Spain), Tzarfat (France), Ashkenaz, and Bavel (which became synonymous with Baghdad).[24] The phrase "Eretz Yisrael," which appears in the Bible only four times (1 Samuel 13:19; Ezekiel 40:2, 47:18; 2 Chronicles 34:7), is a much more complicated case, as I shall demonstrate here.

Like other Jewish commentators and thinkers of the Middle Ages, Yehuda Halevi used the term "Bilad al-Sham" to designate what we call today "Greater Syria." It is very likely that the source of the name *Bilad al-Sham* is Shem, the son of Noah (i.e., "the lands of Shem"). But we cannot actually translate the phrase into Hebrew because it is a proper noun, just like we do not translate the name Iceland into Hebrew. Nonetheless, the Jewish translators of both then and now translated *Bilad al-Sham* as *Eretz Yisrael* without any comment or reservation.

There is no dispute that even before *The Kuzari* was written, the Hebrew term *Eretz Yisrael* was in use. Why, then, did Yehuda Halevi choose to use the Arabic term *Bilad al-Sham* throughout most of the text rather than the Hebrew? And why did he choose to use the term *Eretz Yisrael* only in two contexts—when he quoted from the sources (such as the Mishnah, midrash, and Talmud, where the phrase is common) and when referring to the halacha (such as commandments that are related to the land)?[25]

These questions touch upon another issue. "The Mourners of Zion," a Karaite movement that existed from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, tried to promote the idea of the centrality of the land as one of the pillars of the religion, as well as attributing to it transcendant, primal attributes. The movement's followers often used *Eretz Yisrael* rather than *Bilad al-Sham*. Why, then, did Halevi use the Arabic term—especially since the common view among researchers in the modern age is that he wrote his treatise mainly to promote the very idea of the centrality of *Eretz Yisrael* in Judaism.

I believe that when Yehuda Halevi and others used the term *Eretz Yisrael* they did not mean the geographical land but a religious kingdom, a sort of "celestial Jerusalem" versus the "terrestrial Jerusalem." Nehorai Meir Chetrit recalls an episode that might contribute to this argument. Chetrit quotes the view cited by the rabbi of a town in Morocco to the effect that *Eretz Yisrael* is not a geographical land but adherence to God's commandments.

> Two letters arrived in Gourrama from *the Holy Land*. It was a pleasant and exciting surprise. What kind of a wonder was this? Was it a dream or reality? People asked

themselves. The letter came from Jerusalem, the one from the Book of Books, to which Jews had arrived from a remote and forgotten town in one of the outlying parts of Morocco. There, in that town, lived for all those years innocent, decent, and honest Jews. They always preached for the well-being of Jerusalem, they sang love songs to Jerusalem, they lamented and cried out of a deep longing for Jerusalem. Every morning, in synagogue, every noon, every meal and evening, in prayers and blessings, these innocent Jews offered with their whole hearts and souls the traditional-conventional blessing: "Next year in Jerusalem," or "Blessed is he the builder of Jerusalem," or "May the all-merciful lead us upright to our land." . . . One letter was sent from Shimon Amos, known as "Zo," to his dear friend Avner Levy. Avner Levy, who had served for many years as the synagogue manager and member of the community board, stroked his beard emotionally, burst into tears, kissed the letter, stared at the stamp, and checked and rechecked the envelope from every side. The group of Jews sitting next to him in his shop . . . waited impatiently for the moment Avner Levy would open the letter and read it to them. But he took his time, wiped away his tears, casually lit a cigarette after he calmed down a little, and said: "Blessed is my friend Zo, who merited to get to *the Holy Land* before the rest of us, to work there and live there. Woe to us who remained here!" . . .

The tense anticipation turned into disappointment and everyone scattered quietly. . . . But most of all, Rabbi Baba-Ana argued that finally someone had been found who had arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* and confirmed his claim that there was nothing to live from there, and that it was incumbent upon the Jews to wait in their exile, which was imposed on them for their many sins, until the coming of the Messiah. "*Where do you want to go?*" the Rabbi asked everyone and preached to them at every opportunity against the idea of ascending to Israel: "*Anyone who wants Israel can make it in their home*," he used to say to all whose hearts desired *the Holy Land* and spoke about it with love and hope. "*You can perform many commandments and good deeds. That is Eretz Yisrael.*"[26]

Rabbi Baba-Ana was still steeped in the traditional value system and could not understand that a "new spirit" prevailed. He adhered to the idea that the term *Eretz Yisrael* is a sublime spiritual state, is the "celestial Jerusalem," devotion to God through worship, and by no means a piece of land, whose worship was perceived as idolatry. The case of Rabbi Baba-Ana was typical of the Jewish religious conception of *Eretz Yisrael* until the failure of the emancipation projects in Eastern and Western Europe, including France, and especially after the peak of the horrible anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century.

Expropriation for the Public Good

As Adam Shear has demonstrated, since *The Kuzari* was written it has been used by different communities and different ideological and religious factions in all times and places for different and even conflicting purposes. The book received a significant boost in the second half of the nineteenth century in Jewish communities throughout Europe and the United States.[27] In April 1897, four months after the First Zionist Congress, the Jerusalem researcher, educator, and activist David Yellin initiated a series of daily lectures and classes for the Jewish public in the Public Library.[28] He gave a lecture on the history of the poetry of Sepharad, whereas his father-in-law, Rabbi Yechiel Michel Pines (1843–1913), one of the fathers of religious Zionism and the director of the Public Library, chose to give a series of classes about *The Kuzari*.[29] The Sephardi Jerusalem researcher Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877–1951) told of Rabbi Yudel Lomzer, David Yellin's paternal uncle, who "studied the *Guide of the Perplexed* and *The Kuzari*."[30]

Alongside translations into Hebrew of *The Kuzari* from the Middle Ages, four different translations of the book have been published in Israel in the last five decades. It is apparently the only book that has undergone so many translations in such a short time. Furthermore, different editions of the book have come out: a popular edition, a religious edition, an academic edition, dozens of government and civilian editions for youth, and even children's editions, by the translators Yehuda Even-Shmuel (Kaufman) (1972), Yosef Qafih (1997), Yitzhak Shilat (2010), and Michael Schwarz (2017).[31]

Why was there a need for so many translations in such a short time, in a society that has difficulty—because of the very limited market for Hebrew books—issuing a second edition of many other important books?

In light of all the diverse uses of the book today, the answer apparently rests in the need to provide an established and ancient validity to the claim of the superiority of Jews over other human beings, along with the obvious ideological uses of the book. Each publisher has its own considerations. At least Rabbi Yosef Qafih apparently lamented the expropriation of Mizrahi heritage and its translation into what he considered a distorted spirit. He described Even-Shmuel's translation with these words: "After many years the book came out in a supposedly new and modern translation by Rabbi Even-Shmuel. . . . Meanwhile I saw a vision that horrified me. I saw Rabbi Yehuda Halevi dressed in mourning sitting alone on a rock, his countenance dark, and lamenting." He goes on to say that "the book came out with great fanfare and noise. And I am surprised at all those scholars who attested to the veracity of his work, because I know for a fact that some of them do not know a word of Arabic."[32]

The researcher of Arabic literature Abraham Shalom Yahuda complained about the first group of Jewish Orientalists who focused on the study of Jewish heritage in the Orient without knowing the Arabic language. He claimed that without knowing the language you cannot understand that heritage in depth. Shalom did not mean the language only as a means of communication but also as a language of culture. He said:

> Our authors (the Jewish scholars) are prejudiced against our Arabic literary heritage from the Middle Ages. No one would dare to write about Philo without knowing Greek, or about Spinoza without Latin, or about Mendelsohn without German. But, except for a select few, nearly all who write about our medieval literature take no interest in studying the language that gave them most of their methods and ideas. Even with regard to their Arabic books, most of them are satisfied with understanding them using the Hebrew translations, which in themselves are influenced by the Arabic language and cannot be fully comprehended without knowledge of Arabic.[33]

The researcher Yuval Evri points out the ideological layer inherent in Abraham Shalom Yahuda's complaint. He claims that Yahuda lamented the dominant trend among Orientalists who sought to reshape Judaism on a Eurocentric basis:

> Even though Yahuda composes his critique as a scholar with scientific authority, it exceeds the limits of scientific discourse. In it, he writes of the ideological motives behind the discourse of the Jewish scholars. In a private letter sent in 1899 to his cousin, David Yellin (1863-1941), Yahuda argued that the European Jewish scholars were trying to forcibly transfer Judaism into the tradition of Western civilization, against its true nature:
>
> "*Truly, more than our literature needs Europe-ism it needs Easternism. I am so upset when I see these authors among us who wish to bestow upon us ideas that are foreign to the spirit of the Israeli nation, which is essentially Eastern. If these people only knew our Eastern literature and recognised our Eastern culture that developed with our prophets, then they wouldn't turn to the new, Western, Aryan European culture, so strange to our cultural spirit. Our Eastern culture was the fruit of human emotion.*"[34]

In fact, Yahuda is complaining about the attempt to expropriate the heritage of Oriental Jews and reshape it in terms of European culture. This also seems to be the reason for the sharp criticism by Rabbi Yosef Qafih of Yehuda Even-Shmuel's translation, even though he does not say it explicitly.

I believe that the bear hug in which various parties, some of them deluded, hold *The Kuzari*, has caused it irreversible, intolerable, and even very cruel damage.

The case is especially severe and extreme when it comes to attempts to provide new editions of *The Kuzari* for children and youth and to quite selectively emphasize certain ideas, which today sound racist, disconnect them from their context, and present them as ahistoric sacred ideas.

The Hermeneutics of Suspicion

In the midst of the translation work, I was astonished by another thing that had nothing to do with either the text itself or the time and culture in which it was written but rather with its translation into Arabic. Again and again I noticed how surprised Jewish members of the research community—researchers, teachers, and students—were that I was working on preparing a new edition of *The Kuzari* in Arabic. Almost all of them asked me why I chose to translate this of all books.

At first I did not understand why they kept asking me this strange question. After all, hardly any books had been translated from Judeo-Arabic into Arabic, except for a handful of works that were published by academic publishers and are not even accessible to the general public, including the scholarly public. But gradually, I understood that in the surprise over my translation work there were two elements: the first was the fear of transferring the Arabic-Jewish knowledge to the Arabs, a concern that for some reason does not arise in translation to other languages; the other was the fact that they found the "racist" contents of *The Kuzari*, translated into Arabic, very disturbing.

Apparently, my personal identity as an Arab worsened that concern. One member of the research community even interrogated me in an attempt to disclose my hidden motives. He wanted to know whether my goal was political—whether I was trying to criticize the Jews or Judaism, and maybe even Israel, to the Arab public—or if I was trying to incite Arabs against Jews by choosing to translate a "problematic" text into Arabic. Naïvely, I did not understand those concerns at first, but within a short while I realized that either he had not read the book at all or, like the vast majority of researchers in this field, he had not read it in the original language and had not studied the context in which it was written or the culture within which it grew.

As a result of this distortion, he honestly thought the book was about the question of the non-Jewishness of the Ashkenazim, and therefore he was concerned that Arab bodies and institutions—possibly even the Arab countries or the Arab League—would take advantage of the book to promote political objectives. He was especially afraid that Arab organizations would use the text of *The Kuzari* in Arabic, but he was not concerned at all by the interpretation that radical right-wing organizations or anti-Arab Zionist institutions could give the text translated into

Hebrew, an interpretation that deepens and feeds Jewish racist ideas that view Jewish superiority ("the chosen people") and Arab inferiority ("savages") as a natural state.

I understood from many other Jewish friends that in fact there is a resistance, even among many Jewish Orientalists, to translating Jewish materials into Arabic at all, as well as to the transliteration and annotation in Arabic of texts written in Judeo-Arabic. I could not find any rational reason for this resistance among Orientalists, of all people, and I have understood it since that time as an ignorance that has been imposed on us because of the political conflict.

I was astonished yet again when a large number of my fellow researchers in the field of Judeo-Arabic ignored my translation. Some of them were surprised when I told them I wished to continue publishing in Arabic transliteration additional works that were written in Judeo-Arabic. Many of them were not happy with me over my bold initiative. One researcher, with a senior position at one of the leading research institutes in Israel, questioned me in very strange language, asking offensive questions: "Why did you choose this book of all books? Who is your target audience? Do you not think that Rabbi Yehuda Halevi would not be happy to have his book published in the Arabic alphabet? Do you not think there will be parts of the Arab public who will use it for malicious purposes against the Jews?" And he even claimed, without any connection, that "the Arabs stole from us a book that we published in the 1970s and reprinted it without printing the name of the Hebrew University, which published it."

The Institute of Oriental Studies (later renamed the Institute of Asian and African Studies), which is next to the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the Hebrew University, was founded in 1926. That same year, a conversation occurred between the well-known French Orientalist Louis Massignon and the Zionist activist Victor Jacobsohn, who asked Massignon to document in writing an idea he presented to him. Massignon indeed sent him a letter in which he proposed his idea to publish, in the Arabic alphabet, central Jewish works written in Judeo-Arabic in the Middle Ages, "because this is the only way to establish a serious shared cultural basis between the Arab Muslims and the Israelites in Palestine."[35] Anyone who knows Massignon's background would not be surprised by his proposal, or surprised that Jacobsohn made sure to toss the idea in the direction of the new institute.

Jacobsohn is known as an unconventional Zionist figure. He supported the Arab national movement and opposed the dominant stream in the Zionist movement that perceived a sharp contrast between the aspirations of the Arab national movement and the Zionist project and appointed itself to the role of a European agent to the Arab Orient. Jacobsohn, who on the eve of World War I was the representative of

the Zionist movement in Constantinople and whose goal there was to establish a Zionist lobby to influence the Turkish government to support Zionism, viewed the Arab national movement as a positive element and in fact sought to see Zionism integrated in the emancipation and even renaissance of the Orient.[36] He sent his friend's letter to the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University. Two senior researchers in the Department of Classical Arabic Language and Literature at the Institute, Levi Billig and David Zvi Baneth, took it upon themselves to respond to Massignon's proposal. The last paragraph of their response includes the following:

> The Arabic writings of the medieval Jews could have served as a basis for cultural understanding between us and the Arabs if we wished to assimilate with the Arabs and accept their language in the future as well. Since we want a Hebrew culture and not a Judeo-Arabic culture, it does not make sense for us to boast to the Arabs about the Arabic culture of medieval Jewry. We think a better way to achieve mutual understanding is to disseminate the knowledge of the culture of the Arabs themselves among the ranks of our people, as the culture of a people that lives with us.[37]

In my opinion their answer draws more attention to what is left unsaid than what is said. What did the two respondents mean by the phrase "mutual understanding"? And what understanding did they mean? Massignon knew well from his years of personal experience that ignorance can lead to hatred and to the outburst of severe and violent emotions, and he talked about a "common ground for cultural understanding" (*un terrain commun d'entente culturale*). Although these two Orientalists can be suspected of not completely understanding what he had in mind, it is much more likely that they translated that idea into the dominant mold of the Zionist movement, and apparently also of the Institute of Oriental Studies: as befits any typical colonialist movement, the total disregard for the local population and the provision of the information necessary for the colonialist Zionist movement to overcome the "Orient." Otherwise, why would the publication of Jewish works in the Arabic alphabet mean "assimilation with the Arabs and acceptance of their language in the future as well?" What is the source of this lack of interest in the exposure of the other side, as suggested by the word "mutual," to Jewish culture?

Another way to understand the subtext of this response is the heavily fear-based European Jewish heritage of "how will the gentiles respond." This could easily be understood in 1920s Palestine, but why does it continue to this day, when Israel perceives itself as a superpower on many levels? Indeed, in every heritage, religion, and culture, there are many things that should or can arouse discomfort, to put it mildly, but why was there no resistance, reservation, or surprise when *The Kuzari*

was translated into so many European languages, such as Latin and German?[38] Why did the publication of the book precisely in its original language, Arabic, arouse such negative responses?

I happened to overhear part of a conversation between two senior researchers. One of them accused me of committing "rape" with my work! This opinion seems to be common among many Jewish researchers in Israel and abroad, including celebrated researchers, even if they do not declare it openly. It seems that such reservations and opposition are not a modern phenomenon, but an old one.

The scholar Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (1162–1231) arrived in Egypt in 1191 and spent quite a long time there, during which he wrote a monumental book about Egypt—its people, customs, monuments, medical topics, and popular medicine—only brief segments of which survived. In one place he mentioned that Maimonides visited him, and he described him as follows: "I found him a distinguished man . . . who wrote a book for the Jews called *The Guide*, and he cursed anyone who were to copy it in anything but the Hebrew alphabet. I read it and found it to be a bad book, which undermines the foundations of the laws of religion and faith, whereas he believes he is correcting them."[39] Out of this curse, and it is not clear how al-Baghdadi heard of it, we can understand that *Guide of the Perplexed* did in fact exist in the Arabic alphabet, and the findings of the Cairo Genizah confirm that, but it was apparently done without Maimonides's consent.

The Jerusalem Orientalist Israel Wolfensohn (Ben-Ze'ev) studied in Cairo in the early 1920s. After completing his studies there, he embarked upon an academic career as a researcher and lecturer at the University of Cairo, until his return to Jerusalem in 1938. In 1935, while he was living and working in Cairo, he published many books in Arabic, among which was his book about Maimonides, which included a long introduction by the mufti of Egypt, Mustafa Abd al-Razzaq.

In this book Wolfensohn provides interesting information on the subject. As we know, Maimonides published all of his works, including his medical works, in Judeo-Arabic, except for his *Mishneh Torah*, which was published in Hebrew. Wolfensohn informs us that a scholar, Yusuf bin Jaber al-Baghdadi, offered to translate the *Mishneh Torah* into Arabic, but Maimonides refused.[40] Maimonides's negative answer meant that he refused to have the book translated into Arabic, and not that he rejected that specific offer and would have accepted had he been presented with a better translator.

Wolfensohn added that Maimonides published *Guide of the Perplexed* in Hebrew because he "wanted the book to be read only by Jews, because he was afraid that parts of the book attacking rationalist theologians, the [Muslim] Muʿtazilites and

Ashʿarites, could have been a disaster for him."[41] Wolfensohn revealed that the French Jewish Orientalist Shlomo Munk, who in the middle of the nineteenth century published the first scientific edition of *Guide of the Perplexed* in Judeo-Arabic, could not publish the book in the Arabic alphabet because of "the memory of Maimonides himself objecting to his book being published beyond the boundaries of members of the Jewish faith."[42] Munk nonetheless took the trouble of translating it into French! Therefore Wolfensohn's explanation is only an excuse—there were other reasons that prevented Munk from doing so.

There was also a different kind of reaction in the public sphere. Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin—son of Orientalist Yosef Rivlin, who had translated the Qur'an into Hebrew—opened the Knesset session on May 15, 2012, by personally appealing to the finance minister and the media to please release my translation of *The Kuzari*. He stated it was a scandal that caused unnecessary unpleasantness. He said:

> I think the dissemination of the principles of the Jewish religion is very important, and if a publisher who published it in Arabic wants to bring the book to Israel, you cannot prevent bringing it into the country just because it was published in an enemy country. After all, this is extremely important, in the highest degree, both to Judaism and to the State of Israel and to the ability of all the peoples of our region to understand each other. . . . I recommend that the finance minister immediately approve the entrance of the book. It is also a cultural matter. What does it matter where it was printed? It is a book about the tenets of faith and the Jewish religion, from the viewpoint of a man who lived in a very central place in the world at the time.[43]

Reuven Merhav, a senior Mossad official and former senior diplomat in the Foreign Ministry, also expressed surprise:

> Forbidding the import of the Arabic edition of *The Kuzari* from Lebanon—under the charge of trading with an enemy country—is a combination of stupidity and evil. The Arab-Israeli doctoral student Nabih Bashir deserves an award for toiling over the translation of the classical Jewish work, so deeply rooted in our region, and every possible encouragement should be given to its dissemination among Arab scholars, including the subsidy of additional editions, whether they are printed in Beirut, Cairo, or Jerusalem. All the more so at a time of attempts to delegitimize our presence here from time immemorial.[44]

What is missing from all of the public comments is that the book was prohibited by force of a remnant of the emergency legislation of the British Mandate, the Prohibition of Trade with an Enemy Country (1938), whose purpose was to stop the

trade relations between Palestinian Jews and Nazi Germany during World War II. I have no doubt that the officials at the border terminal had no idea what all the noise was about. After all, that is what they do every day: confiscate thousands of books every week by virtue of that very law, without anyone saying a word. Those officials, including the director of the terminal, could not understand, despite all my attempts to explain it to them, that it was a Jewish book written by one of the greatest figures in Jewish thought. None of that, of course, is relevant to the fact that it is written in the Arabic alphabet and that it was printed and imported from Lebanon, which is an "enemy country."

Conclusion

In this article I have indicated a layer that does not receive proper attention in research: the semantic changes that occur in the course of translation from one language to another, from one cultural landscape to another, while focusing on a work that was removed from its homeland and that migrated throughout the world.

Translation is a very difficult art and becomes all the more challenging when it makes transitions between cultural domains far removed from one another in time and space. When that happens, the translation receives a completely new character. Translating a work like *The Kuzari* becomes more difficult, even impossible, when the translation is undertaken in two stages. The translation of compositions that were written and published in the Middle Ages is a case in point: one stage includes the translation of ideas and concepts borrowed from ancient Jewish literature—from Hebrew and Aramaic—into Arabic, while reprocessing them; the second stage includes translation from Arabic and Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew of the very same work. Distortions and falsifications occur, even today, in the translation of such works into Hebrew or any other language, especially because they migrate to a completely different cultural domain and time from those in which they were written.

Furthermore, the unfortunate reality in which we live requires us to establish a Mizrahi renaissance in Israel, in order to find a path toward the resolution of the bloody conflict, help the Arab "Orient" find a way out of the vortex in which it is still caught, and disconnect ourselves from European ethnic nationalism and the nation-state framework. This requires historic and cultural depth: strong, continuous, and uninterrupted historic roots. My translation of *The Kuzari*, and other works that have yet to be published, contributes to the establishment of such a renaissance—a multidimensional and multilayered identity, a very rich cultural

identity, fed by the long history of the area of *Bilad al-Sham*, aware of its twists and turns and inclusive of them all.

One central dilemma has not been fully resolved as part of the present article: the insistence on not making Jewish works available to the Arab public. The Arabic speaker has been forbidden from accessing the Jewish bookshelf. Even the Bible is not available in a Jewish translation into Arabic. What should an Arab scholar who wants to learn about Judaism do? Where to start? What works are accessible? How can you expect the Jews to become an integral part of the Middle Eastern region when barriers are placed before those on the Arab side who wish to study Jewish religious works? The Eurocentric aspiration is an important and central answer, but it is not enough. Another partial answer is the agreement between the Arab and Jewish national movements in the twentieth century that separation lines needed to be drawn between the two movements.[45] The translation and publication of Jewish-Arab works, which to this day is in a no man's land, might shake and cross the separating boundaries.

At the beginning of my journey in Jewish philosophy, in the first class of one of the courses at the Hebrew University, the lecturer was very interested in the presence of a young Arab in his course. At the end of the class, he invited me to a meeting, during which he wondered why Arab students do not sign up for courses in Jewish philosophy. A difficult question for which I could not find a convincing answer at the time, except that Jewish philosophy is not a subject that can help you find a job when schooling ends. Apparently, Arab students also understand the message that the fields of Jewish philosophy and Jewish studies are closed to them. Furthermore, why should an Arab student sign up for an academic field where he does not know what to expect and in which he has no background? Although the curriculum in the Arab schools in Israel includes Bible, Mishnah, and midrash, it is important to understand that these subjects are forced upon the Arab students and are not offered to them in a language and interpretation that they can understand. Why not present them with at least some Jewish works in the Arabic language so that they can connect with them and understand them, since, after all, a Jewish work written in Judeo-Arabic is no less of an Arabic work than any other Arabic work?

Notes

1 Yehuda Halevi, *Sefer ha-Kuzari shel Rabbeinu Yehuda Halevi*, trans., annotated, and intro. Yehuda Even-Shmuel (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1972).

2 Yehuda Halevi, *The Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*, trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld (London: Routledge, 1905).

3 See Yossef Charvit, "Renassia, Joseph," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, accessed June 3, 2019, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com.

4 Recently, Avi Elqayam of Bar-Ilan University published two important articles on the subject: Avi Elqayam, *Gumhat ha-orot: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali,* ed. Avi Elqayam (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2018); Elqayam, "Ha-tirgum ke-merhav hadash," in *Manha le-Hannah*, ed. Avi Elqayam and Ariel Malahi (Tel Aviv: IDRA Publishing, 2018), 55–118. In these articles, Elqayam references important, basic studies on the Hebrew translations of works from Arabic into Hebrew as intermediaries of the migration of knowledge to Europe in the Middle Ages. However, there is a notable absence of studies focusing on the Hebrew translations themselves and the cultural and political dilemmas that arise from them. Gad Freudenthal has devoted many articles to the subject, but he focused on the cultural mutation and the modes of acceptance of translation from Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew in Italy and southern France, rather than on the semantic changes of the translated materials themselves and their understanding in the realm of the receiving culture. Likewise, Freudenthal emphasized the negotiation between the joint enterprise between the translator and the patrons and clients of the translation. See Gad Freudenthal, "Abraham ibn Ezra and Yehuda ibn Tibbon as Cultural Intermediaries," in *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World*, ed. Sarah Stroumsa and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2013), 52–81; Freudenthal, "Arabic into Hebrew: The Emergence of the Translation Movement in Twelfth-Century Provence and Jewish-Christian Polemic," in *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. David M. Freidenreich and Miriam Goldstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 124–143. See also Rina Drory, "Ha-heksher ha-samui min ha-ayin," *Peamim* 46-47 (1991): 9–28; Dov Schwartz, ed., *Pirush kadmon al Sefer ha-Kuzari* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007).

5 The first Judeo-Arabic edition I used was Yehuda Halevi, *Kitab al-radd wa-'l-dalil fi 'l-din al-dhalil*, ed. David Baneth and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1977).

6 "David Ben-Gurion to Nathan Rotenstreich, April 29, 1957," in *David Ben-Gurion: Rosh ha-memshala ha-rishon – Mivhar teudot (1947-1963)*, ed. Eli Shaltiel (Jerusalem: Israel State Archives, 1996), 547. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Arabic and Hebrew are my own.

7 "David Ben-Gurion to [Samuel] Hugo Bergman, August 15, 1960," in ibid., 549.

8 Robert Henry Robins, *General Linguistics: An Introductory Survey*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 343–345; Martin Vanhove, ed., *From Polysemy to Semantic Change: Towards a Typology of Lexical Semantic Associations* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008).

9 Igal Yannay, "Hilun (secularization) ha-Ivrit ha-hadasha—Perek ba-semantika shel ha-safa," *Ha-Kongres ha-Olami ha-Shishi le-Madaei ha-Yahadut* (August 13–19, 1973), vol. 4 (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1980), 101–113, quotation appears on 106.

10 See introduction by Rabbi Yosef Arousi Halevi and Rabbi Yosef Qafih's preface to his translation. Yehuda Halevi, *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, trans. R. Yosef Qafih (Kiryat Ono: Makhon Mishnat ha-Rambam, 1997), 1–3, 5–7.

11 Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Shear's aim is not so much to discuss or elaborate the ideas, status, images, authority, and themes of the book, but to clarify the way they were used by generations in constructing and shaping new paradigms of Jewish identity under quite different cultural circumstances over the centuries until the beginning of the twentieth century. In doing so, they reconceptualize both its overall message and its content so as to address the concerns of their own generation. Neither the secular Zionist era nor our recent religious zealous era are exceptions. While some factions in secular Zionism used the book to empower the Jewish "pure race" and their supremacy, many if not most of the religious Zionist factions used it as a sacred book because one of its main arguments regarding the innate supremacy, essential uniqueness, and chosenness of the Jewish people as a "holy people." See, for example, R. Shlomo Aviner, *Sefer ha-Kuzari: Perush*, (Beit El: Hava Publication House, 2007); Menachem Kellner, *Gam hem kruyim adam: Ha-nokhri be-einei ha-Rambam* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2017).

12 Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity*, viii.

13 Ibid., 293. Emphases added.

14 Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, vol. 1, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 57.

15 Elqayam, *Gumhat ha-orot*, 154.

16 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 82–83.

17 Cited in Karen Grumberg, *Place and Ideology in Contemporary Hebrew Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 59.

18 William W. Hallo, *Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996), 18.

19 All the cited biblical verses in this article are based on the Masoretic Text (JPS 1917).

20 Ehud Krinis, *God's Chosen People: Yehuda Halevi's Kuzari and the Shiʿi Imam Doctrine* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

21 Yehuda Halevi, *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, trans. Michael Schwarz (Beersheba: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2017), 20n149, and elaborations in the list of terms, 368. Yehuda Even-Shmuel and Yosef Qafih both adapted the same translation (See Qafih's translation, Halevi, *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, 11, and Even-Shmuel's very popular Zionist-domesticating translation of the book: Halevi, *Sefer ha-Kuzari shel Rabbeinu Yehuda Halevi*).

22 Krinis, *God's Chosen People*.

23 Rabbi Aviner's exect words: "The truth is that precisely because we are the people of Israel and therefore we study Torah, because God created us with special powers, in a special way, that is why he gave us his Torah, which is so suitable to our inherent nature. The Torah does not create us, but the Master of the Universe created us, and the Torah helps us to discover and realize our inner essence. A nation has a special nature, character, public psychology, a special divine personality, and the Master of the Universe created this special nation" (Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, "Limudei Torah ve-hiyuniyuto," *Aturei Kohanim*, vol. 174, Sivan 5759, 15–20, 25). See also Kellner, *Gam hem kruyim adam*, 15.

24 In the Middle Ages, and maybe before, Jewish communities throughout the Middle East and Europe customarily identified themselves with biblical locations: Tzarfat, Ashkenaz, Sepharad, Aram Tzuba (Haleb), Kalneh (al-Raqqa), Shafrir Mizrayim/Shafrir ha-Nilus/Zoan Mizrayim (Fustat), and Bavel (Baghdad). This phenomenon continued into the modern age. It seems to be related to another phenomenon related to the preservation of archaic names in the Jewish languages. Most of the time, these identifications are patently wrong, indicating the possibility that we are looking at a later adaptation of biblical names. I am grateful to Prof. Miriam Frenkel for turning my attention to some of the examples and discussing the subject with me.

25 In Moshe Gil's collection of documents from the Genizah (*Bi-malhut Yishmael bi-tkufat ha-Geonim*) we learn that the phrase Eretz Yisrael appears in the entire collection of documents only twice: once in a letter written in Hebrew to Saadia Gaon in the context of the calendar (vol. 2, p. 18), and in another letter to a Jewish merchant from Egypt written in Judeo-Arabic (vol. 4, p. 552). The term "al-Sham" (and "Sham") appears seventeen times, scattered among thirteen different documents (vol. 2, pp. 32, 553; vol. 3, pp. 356, 491, 549, 950, 954; vol. 4, pp. 60 (twice), 63, 64 (3 times), 184, 339, 44, 422). Moshe Gil, *Bi-malhut Yishmael bi-tkufat ha-Geonim*, 4 vols. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Bialik Institute, and The Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1997).

26 Nehorai Meir Chetrit, *Emat ha-halom: Prakim ma-ha-epos shel Yahadut Moroko* (Tel Aviv: M. C. Nehorai, 1983), 83–84. Emphases added.

27 Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity*.

28 Its complete name: The Public Library of the People of Israel and Midrash Abarbanel and Ginzei Yosef in Jerusalem. This first name was used during the years 1910–1925 and is one of the different names given to what is known today as "The National Library of Israel."

29 David Yellin, *Kitvei David Yakin*, ed. Benjamin Rivlin, 7 vol. (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass Publication House, 1972), 1:195–196.

30 Abraham Shalom Yahuda, *Ever va-Arav: Osef mehkarim u-maamarim* (New York: Ogen, 1946), 229–247, 231; Eliezer Raphael Malachi, "Drashat R. Yechiel Michel Pines Z"l," *Talpiot* 1, no. 3-4 (1944): 753–746.

31 Nitsa Dori, *Ha-Kuzari – R. Yehuda Halevi* (Haifa: Shaanan Academic College, 2014).

32 Halevi, Qafih, *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, 5, 6.

33 Yahuda, *Ever va-Arav*, 73, cited in Yuval Evri, "Translating Arab-Jewish Tradition: From al-Andalus to Palestine," in *Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien* 1 (Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien, 2016), 18.

34 Evri, 18–19.

35 I thank my friend Prof. Sarah Stroumsa for sending me a copy of the letter. The original letter (dated July 19, 1926) is found in file no. 91 in the Central Archive of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

36 Israel Kolatt, "The Zionist Movement and the Arabs," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 617–647, 624: "They wanted Zionism to be an integral part of the emancipation - even the renaissance - of the Orient" (624).

37 The Central Archive of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, file no. 91, cited also in Yohanan Friedmann, *From Zákamenné to Jerusalem: Chapters on Memory* (Jerusalem: privately printed, 2019), 113; Dawud al-Muqammas, *Twenty Chapters*, ed. Sarah Stroumsa (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press), xiiiin4.

38 Since the seventeenth century *The Kuzari* has been translated into numerous European languages, most of the time in numerous editions and translations, including Latin, Spanish, German, English, French, Dutch, Italian, Russian, and Hungarian.

39 Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, *Al-Baghdadi fi Misr* (Cairo, n.d.), 9; Israel Wolfensohn, *Musa bnu Maimun* (Cairo: Writing, Translation and Publishing Committee, 1936), 33.

40 Wolfensohn, *Musa bnu Maimun*, 50.

41 Ibid., 127.

42 Ibid., 141.

43 General Assembly of the Knesset, Knesset Protocols, meeting no. 347, vol. 26, May 15, 2012, p. 9.

44 Reuven Merhav, "Lahafokh timtum le-sikui," *Haaretz*, May 18, 2012, in response to an article by Akiva Eldar, *Haaretz*, May 15, 2012. He expanded on the subject in another article with the same title "Lahafokh timtum le-sikui," accessed June 2, 2019, http://news.walla.co.il/?w=//2537362.

45 Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

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Sama Hasan

No

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prose

If only she could find that word in her vocabulary. If only that word would cross the threshold of her mind and heart and make its long way from the depth of her bowels to her lips. After all, it was the shortest word a person could utter. Two letters, that's all, as opposed to "*naʿam*," yes, which was three letters, and which she uttered all the time. If not out loud then with a nod, or with another word, such as "*hader*," "at your service," and sometimes, when the bitterness and despair overwhelmed her, she placed her hand on her head as if she were saying, "*ʿala rasi*," "on my head," "just name it."

How she longed to say no. Sometimes, when she thought no one was watching, she tried to whisper it, but nothing came out of her mouth but breath. Damn! Didn't that word exist in her lexicon? Why was it so hard for her to pronounce the letters "n" and "o"? She had uttered them many times, but never in the right order. She tried and tried, but only air and spit came out of her mouth, sometimes in bubbles of foam, as if she were having an epileptic seizure.

Once, she watched a TV show of which she understood nothing, except for a single fact that was seared in her memory: an organ that is used grows, and an organ that is neglected shrinks.

She memorized that fact. Her hands are surely the biggest and strongest organs in her body, because she uses them more than any other organ. She wakes up early in the morning, hurries to the concrete cast tub, and stands in the shower bowl, pouring water over her head the customary three times, to wash the remnants of her husband off her body, and then rushes to cook and bake for the members of her large family who go to work every morning in her husband's father's nearby field. They work endlessly, dashing from here to there and from there to here, coming

home at night and saying nothing but: come, bring, take, pick up. How she would like just once to say "No, I'm tired." But all it takes is one withering look from her father-in-law, with his thick white mustache and burning eyes, to strike her mute. She swallows the two letters and continues to work until the sun sets.

Despite the sweat that drenches her body that never stops working, she can still feel the remnants of her husband on her thighs. She presses them with her hands, to stop the liquid she imagines pouring onto the grass in front of everybody.

There is not a single night her husband spares her exhausted body, even though he is even more tired than her. Not even when she gets pregnant. She still remembers how he laughed one evening while still chewing his food and said: "Nothing will stop me from exercising my right, even if this child turns out to be the hero who liberates Palestine."

That small opening in her body leading to her womb is the showcase of her husband's manhood. She feels it grow and turn into an empty cave emanating the stench of death and loss. The more her husband plumbs the depths of the cave, the more exhausted she feels. If only she knew the magic words that opened and closed her Ali Baba cave.

Though she has little education, she can read some Qur'an, and one verse lingers in her mind: "Your wives are your fields." She understood that her body, like a field, needed to be cultivated so that it could give her husband the best fruit. Once, she tried to plant a seed in front of her house. She watered it casually, as if she were relieving herself, but it didn't sprout. Later she replanted it, this time watering it like a mother giving her infant the breast, praying it would grow and blossom. And sure enough, the seed broke forth and rose from the earth and turned into a handsome plant. Every time she saw it she grieved for her body plowed by her husband.

One night, when he brought his face close to hers, she tried to push him away. He didn't try to kiss her or smell her face or bury his face in her hair. Exhausted from work, he plowed her body relentlessly. Outside he was nothing but one of ten sons who obeyed their tyrannical father, but here in this narrow room he was a man. Once, only once, did she dare to close her thighs and raise them before him. He looked at her surprised, growled silently, and struck her forcefully between the knees. She opened them, fearing further pain.

When he mounted her again she closed her eyes tight. A giant hand, like the one she saw on their visit to the city, appeared and filled the darkness. Her husband explained to her at the time that it meant "stop" and expounded on the problem

of speed in the city, as if he had ever lived there. In fact it was their first visit to the city together, to go to the doctor after she had a bloody discharge from her womb.

The doctor hinted to him that all his wife needed was rest, and winked at him, but on their way out he cursed her and the money she charged for the appointment.

When he possessed her again that night, she felt as if her whole body were that painted hand, but he didn't see anything. He cut into her flesh with his thrashing until an uncontrollable cry of pain rose from her lips. She felt her flesh turning into letters, one letter attached to the other. Only two letters, "n" and "o." He stopped for a moment, grabbed her by the shoulders, and stared at her face as if he were asking, "What's gotten into you?"

She shook her head as if she were saying "Nothing," and felt the failure blind her eyes, as if she were drowning in the amniotic fluid in which her fetus was floating while her husband hacked away at them both. You are nothing but family property, the thought pierced her mind. Hands and womb, hands and womb.

About Sama Hasan

Sama Hasan is a Palestinian author and journalist living in Gaza. She has published five collections of short stories in Arabic: *City of Silence* (2008); *Diary of a Besieged Woman* (2012); *Gentle Chaos* (2014); *Laughter and Play, Tears and War* (2015); *Corners* (2016). Selected stories have been translated into many languages.

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Atheer Safa

A Tweet

Translation from the Arabic: Serene Husni

Literary editor: Shoshana London Sappir

"Good evening! Are you Mr. Allam?"

I hadn't lifted my head yet, but . . . that voice, and those feminine, sculpted legs, their formation showing from under her grey pants, they were so tight at the ankle, and her shoes that cost enough for me to buy beer and food for two months. Altogether, she looked "expensive." My blanket costs as much as her tissues. I'd seen her before at a glance, like an idea, like the crackle of a finger, I'd seen her a moment ago, before the dinosaur age! There she was!

She introduced herself: "I am the journalist who spoke to you from *The Guardian* newspaper; we have an appointment, sir."

I just happened to lift my head for her to read me.

I said: "Good! Good evening!"

She stared at me to make sure I was the guy, but I beat her to it: "I'm the animal!"

She smiled, and she was a little puzzled . . . I think.

And then the earth cracked and swallowed any evil that ever came her way or mine before today, and it swallowed me too.

Things become as brittle as potato crisps.

They say the first impression matters the most, but what was I to do with the lava festering inside me!

She said, to control the situation and not to have to apologize: "I thought you were a little older, you have a history! You're younger than you should be."

I laughed . . . "Seems you have the Electra complex."

She held back her fury, forced to be wise, and said: "Don't worry. I won't love you."

As if she knew. Before I knew her, she knew I knew.

Damn her! I was right.

Her scent in my nose was penetrating and aromatic. 16.9 ounces of luxurious perfume. And there she was standing like a bottle of endless perfume, filling the air, my sinuses, the chambers of my lungs, and the earth's entire geology.

If she died, she'd have to freeze first to become a piece of pure glass (carbon pressed in the earth's layers). Then she'd face more pressure, then explode and shatter in space, giving rise to a thousand stars, and she'd leave an ether—this time—one wherein God's soul lies.

His Holiness's Perfume.

*****

The ceiling of the reception hall in the Roman emperor Nero's palace was raining perfume and flower mist, flower souls, you were that light rain.

******

She who can replace eighty-two pairs of shoes with eighty-two pairs of men, she takes one off and puts one on.

******

We sat at the same table! It was round, its diameter not too wide, which allowed me to cross the social distance between her and me, to enter the realm of her intimate zone (less than 45 cm). Call it fate, or luck, or a table.

I ordered two short espressos for us, short like my breath, and then . . . it slipped me by . . . etiquette, I stupidly forgot my manners.

She cleared her throat: "Excuse me, for me, a Nescafe with skimmed milk, no foam, with a little brandy."

She finished me!
And why would you bother? Sip it up! Sip it slowly!

****

He who had one pair of navy blue pants he never changed, with a hole at the knee, a cigarette burn. Allam was always trying to hide it, as if spontaneously, when he wasn't interested in what was being said, while I was always searching for it with audacious eyes, intending to show him that I could see it. I was seduced by the idea of confusing a stubborn person like him, so self-assured, I took pleasure in embarrassing him. From that hole I derived my strength.

At the same time almost apologizing for being well-dressed, for being, as he called me, a lady. Who said that strength can't come from a hole?

******

"Ever since that first time you didn't step on any of my limbs, I fell in love with you."

That's what I wrote once on his cast, when he was otherwise fine but had a broken arm, when his fractures could still mend.

Allam smells of masculinity like a ram in mating season; my aristocratic nose never misses him, even among a thousand men. (He used to say that I had a Pharaonic nose like Nefertiti's when I sat across from him, but it breaks as soon as it heals. But what royal sweat remains when I sniff him like a bitch at the hour of love and lick his ear?)

When I offered him a biscuit once, he said: "I don't eat biscuits; biscuits are for children like you and the well-to-do. If I could, I'd eat you all alive."

When he enters the bedroom, he kicks the door with his foot like a donkey, an introduction to everything rough that will follow when he "plants his bayonet in my mud."

His tree trunk of a neck was created for more than one woman, for more than a regular woman (Supergirl). I used to lick his sweat off his neck when it dried up and turned into salt. He used to say when I cried that Supergirl doesn't cry . . . she flies, she burns trees, she soars above the seas, and he would lick my tear with his tongue.

He wrote his poems with ink on my body like he used to do with sculptures, then he'd copy them into his notebook. Sometimes when he was sleepy, he'd beg me: "Don't shower."

******

I went crawling back to my father, who had shut me outside his door, but this time he didn't let me sit on his lap like he used to do. I was his only child who made him go to bed early and not want to wake up. He said I scandalized him by marrying a shepherd when princes and thieves would line up at my door.

When I was young, I used to peel the stickers off of fruit and Ferrero Rocher chocolates and stick them on my fingernails. I didn't realize that poverty too had a claw over its nail, until I grew up, when I collided with an artist with Allam's storms.

******

I went back to my dad—at least four times I went back! When Allam wore a bright yellow shirt, he said it was yellow because his gallbladder exploded! He said it was an artistic way of expressing his artistic oppression. The spotted hyenas were circling him because of the only way he could express himself and assert his being; because of his poetry this time. They accused him of moral, religious, and political debauchery, and they accused him of deviance because he spoke through a woman's voice, and he touched the essence of Muslim women. This was implicitly expected because his poem was far from any educational sample, from any mold resembling a manufactured sweet cake. His expression was novel in poetry and in action: both were forms of resistance, both a protest! That's how all the doors closed in his face until he went hungry, and so did I.

******

"They give me poison for food; they offer me sour wine for my thirst."
(Psalm 69:21)

******

My father spit out his dentures the first time he read Allam's poetry. He stuck his thumb behind his teeth and spit them out! I could have known how bad things were by measuring the distance they crossed into the living room! Allam would end up killing my father at the end of the road. He was going to die of a heart attack, and nothing would be left of him but his dentures!

******

And there he was, absent for two weeks, in the pathways of prison, and he returned with a broken arm. He fell into me crying, drowning my face with wet kisses, sobbing, then he would hold back his tears, and then take a breath, then sob like a child . . . "So tell me . . . has anyone touched your shoulder? If only to console you? Has anyone, even if without meaning to, felt the marks of the bra on your back?" I spread my legs open for him . . .

"Then We told Moses by inspiration: 'Strike the sea with thy rod.' So it divided, and each separate part became like the huge, firm mass of a mountain."
(Qur'an 26:63)

. . . and my lady disappeared, and she returned with her satin dress falling behind her like a long, loose ruffle, and there she is now in front of me, her left arm on her hip and her right arm holding a whip for a mule. She releases a small chuckle and says:

"Wait a while, sway under my whip like a dog."

About Atheer Safa

Atheer Safa was born in Baqa al-Gharbiyya in 1984. She has an MA in Arabic language and literature from Tel Aviv University, and is an author, poet, translator, and editor. Her novel *Tweet* (Arabic) was published in 2013 (Dar Mirit, Egypt); it was nominated for the Arabic Booker Prize.

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The Philological Revolution and the Latinization of Arabic

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Introduction: The Philological Revolution

Beginning in the eighteenth century, a comprehensive academic development that had a great influence on the field of language studies took place in Germany. The "philological revolution," which emphasized the use of a diachronic approach to the study of languages and saw the value of language in understanding historical developments, began gaining dominance in Europe, particularly in Germany. Though initially applied to the study of Latin and Greek, which were considered the central and most relevant classical languages, Hebrew, as well as other sacred languages that were "discovered," including Sanskrit, gradually fell under the sway of the new approach. The study of languages—using only texts—was emphasized as a breakthrough in the attempt to "redraw the family tree of nations by creating a history of the world's languages."[1] Philology—from the Greek for "love for words"—became, especially in Germany, associated with the passion for the study of classical languages, using only the elite register of the language. As James Turner sees the beginning of this process, the "teaching of classical languages became, as a rule, ahistorical gerund grinding, barely aware of the ancient civilizations that spoke those languages."[2]

In Germany this approach was heavily oriented toward the study of grammar, as part of the attempt to trace language families, and was focused on "accurate translation." It was made in a similar vein to the *sola scriptura* (Latin: by scripture only) principle—a central pillar of the Protestant theological doctrine that cherishes

accurate translation—and the return to the interpretation-free "original text." This approach did not raise protest in departments of theology in Germany, where classical languages were traditionally studied, as the principles of study were no different. As Edward Kanterian describes it, this grammarian-oriented method and submission to the "accurate translation" was "a development that could not be halted by the Protestant theologians, as it was related to the *sola scriptura* principle."[3]

These philological principles stood at the heart of and actually designed the evolution of the German field of Oriental studies from the eighteenth century onward. Interestingly, Ursula Wokoeck discovered that the modern German academic tradition in Oriental studies commenced with the transition of chairs of Oriental languages from faculties of theology—where Oriental languages, especially Biblical Hebrew, were studied within a general Christian logic—to faculties of philosophy.[4] This shift allowed for a broadening of the spectrum of languages beyond the requirements of biblical/theological studies, and with regard to Middle Eastern studies, it paved the way for Arabic to become a main language of study. This underlines that German Orientalism stemmed from a philological essence, and as Wokoeck points out, "with regard to the languages of the Middle East, the range [of focus] extended from a framework of *Biblical studies* to a *distinctly philological one*."[5]

Sabine Mangold-Will has shown that in the second half of the nineteenth century, German Orientalists were by and large part of the field of philology.[6] The German scholars of the evolving field of Oriental studies focused on grammatical and lexical details, and as such, relied heavily on meticulous, accurate translations, as the exact translation of the texts was considered more important than their historical classification or the cultural and social contexts in which they were conceived.[7] This was the dominant spirit in the field, and it became the marker of the chief institutions in Europe at the time, led by German academic institutes such as those in Leipzig, Göttingen, and Strasbourg.[8] These features of the German philological approach, with relation to Semitic languages, stood at the heart of what was to become known as the German field of Oriental studies, or as German Orientalism (*Orientalistik*). This connection between philology and Oriental studies, though evident in Europe in general, was particularly strong in Germany and has been highlighted by a number of researchers who emphasized the philological roots of the field.[9]

An example of the dominance of the grammar-oriented, textual approach following the philological revolution can be seen in the place given to grammar in the study of Arabic. Interestingly, the flagship publications of the emerging field of German Orientalism included projects dedicated to Arabic grammar. These, including the works of Johann D. Michaelis, Theodor Nöldeke, and Albert Socin,

were to become essential reading for researchers in the field of Oriental studies in Germany and in European centers influenced by the German approach.[10]

This dominance echoes in the rise of Heinrich Fleischer (1801–1888), one of the most renowned German Orientalists and the scholar who laid the basis for the modern study of Arabic. Fleischer, who founded the Leipzig School, centered on grammatical positivism and had an enormous effect on the study of Arabic in German academic institutes as part of the German field of Oriental studies.[11] Baber Johansen has argued that "Fleischer transformed the Orient into grammar and lexicography."[12] Whether or not this was indeed the case, following the philological revolution, the German approach to Oriental studies made a stronger tie between grammar studies and classical texts and perceived that the meticulous study of the rules of grammar—as was the case with Latin—also had disciplinary virtues.[13]

It therefore makes sense to highlight another important component of the evolving German philological approach to Oriental studies, including Arabic studies: the conviction that the study of mathematics is parallel to grammar and can contribute to the development of coherence and accurate thought among students. Wokoeck underscored that this was indeed the classical German approach to the study of all languages: "The emphasis on formal structure connected logic in mathematics (and by extension the sciences) with grammar in language studies/philology (and by extension the humanities). . . . The grammar-oriented approach was necessarily applicable to all known languages, not only in theory but also in practice."[14]

As discussed above, the influence of the philological revolution on the rise of language studies, particularly on the rise of a specific type of Arabic studies in German Oriental studies, was a driving force in the Oriental field's formation. From the very beginning the study of Arabic was not deemed to be of any importance to the language actually used in the Arab world at the time. This disregard was twofold: it ignored the living Arab people—as experts, teachers, or even as subjects of research—and it ignored the living Arabic language as a language that is spoken and heard, a language that produces new and modern knowledge, and a language that like all other spoken languages serves various functions, from giving a lecture to reading a newspaper.

In addition, the study of Arabic (as one of the Oriental languages) was framed in light of the internal academic shift of chairs from faculties of theology to those of philosophy, so basic language orientation was influenced by theology. Arabic was compared in this way with the study of ancient and sacred languages—especially those having no native speakers, and at times no speakers at all—including Latin, ancient Greek, and Biblical Hebrew.

The result was that this situated the methodology used to teach Arabic on two "Latinized" feet that completed each other and corresponded with the German field's founding logic. One foot was planted firmly in the study of grammar and was promoted as part of the greater philological "quest" for language families. The second foot promoted the study of texts—and their study through meticulous translation—as the only way to study Arabic.

Altogether, this orientation toward Arabic studies, which was conceived in a number of German academic centers, helped advance a certain expertise and various features of Arabic studies in Europe. However, the arrival of this orientation in the East—in Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem—and its acclimation to the Jewish academic sphere and the school system, created a tension that produced unexpected results. It is these "traveling ideas," concepts produced in one social and cultural context that were applied in another, that this article wishes to uncover, to better grasp the creation of the field in the Jewish community in Palestine.[15]

Two Spheres of "European" Arabic

German philological knowledge—which at the beginning of the twentieth century was evidently a leading stream in the field of Oriental studies in the West—was "translated" into late Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine through the arrival of Jewish scholars who had graduated from the German academic system and immigrated to Palestine. These scholars laid the foundation for the study of Arabic in both the Jewish academic sphere and the emerging education system. While different aspects of Arabic studies would be challenged or complicated—throughout the 1920s and 1930s and from 1948 onward—by different actors from the political and security-oriented Zionist administration or by experts in Arabic who were native speakers of the language, the fact that the field was based on German philological ground is crucial. It was this element that cemented the field's "grammar"—in all senses of the word.

As Allon Uhlmann has demonstrated regarding Arabic instruction in the Zionist domain in general, and in the Israeli Jewish field of Arabic studies in the school system and academia in the twenty-first century more particularly, this European and Orientalist grammar-oriented approach had a significant, far-reaching influence on the field, on both the Jewish and Palestinian Arab students. As Uhlmann has shown using the term "Latinization," this resulted in two, non-haphazard, pedagogical underachievements: a Jewish failure to achieve Arabic proficiency in various skills of the language and an Arab under-performance in the European-oriented, university-taught Arabic grammar.[16] Focusing on Israeli Jewish society, Uhlmann refers to the Latizination of Arabic while highlighting a few elements that are of great importance for this article as well: Arabic

as a "textually-bound" and "dead language," the Westernized grammar approach adopted by the Israeli Jewish education system, Arabic as a language taught in Hebrew only, Arabic as a language that needs to be decoded and interpreted, and Arabic as a language that drives a wedge of alienation between the Israeli Jewish student and the language.[17]

This does not mean that the study of Arabic in the Jewish community did not go through changes in the last century, but as I argue, while the veneer of the study of Arabic has perhaps changed over the years—for example, by adding the translation of modern texts (such as newspapers) instead of using the German-oriented classical texts only—the core of the study, one that relies on grammar and translation, and one that looks at Arabic as Latin, has never been altered.

Hereafter I will refer to two central institutions in which the discourse surrounding Arabic studies in the Jewish community was shaped. I will show how these institutions—the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University and the school system (with a focus on the Hebrew Reali School as its spearhead)—acted as a network of experts, expertise, and knowledge.[18] By looking at these two institutions, in which educational knowledge of Arabic—for students in school and academia—was most significantly produced, I will emphasize how the forging of the field of Arabic language studies was made surrounding German philological knowledge.[19] I will highlight two foundational moments: the establishment of the Institute of Oriental Studies in 1926 and the initiation of Arabic studies in the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa during the years 1913–1933 and the developments that were applied to the general Jewish school system.

"In Search of Arabists Trained in Europe": The Hebrew University and Arabic

Analyzing the European, classical, and philological orientation of the studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University unearths the context in which the Institute (as part of the university) was conceived, as well as its main vision. The German philological spirit of the Institute will become clear, as I will highlight the place of Arabic grammar in the studies there, the "Latinized" approach to Arabic, and the main faculty members. Another element is the people who were *not* there—for example, the obvious absence of Arab scholars (whether Jewish or not) in the Institute in its crucial early years, as I will demonstrate with regard to the university's first decade. As a matter of fact, Bernard Lewis himself stressed the "importance of the German philological method in the development of Arabic and Islamic studies in Europe—a philological tradition which *significantly shaped* the character of Arabic and Islamic studies at the Hebrew University."[20]

These features are obviously related to the fact that the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was established as part and parcel of the Zionist (and European) project in Palestine. From its very beginning, this was a Western academic institution whose academic staff was composed of Jewish immigrants, the vast majority of whom were from Eastern and Central Europe.[21]

The Institute of Oriental Studies was established at the university in 1926, one year after the university's establishment, and was preceded by only one institute, the Institute of Jewish Studies, which had been established a year earlier. The founding members and scholars of the Institute of Oriental Studies were all from Europe, and the vast majority were German Jews. They included Josef Horovitz (1874–1931; PhD: Berlin, 1898), who was director in absentia; David Hartwig Baneth (1893–1973; PhD: Berlin, 1920); Leo Aryeh Mayer (1895–1959; PhD: Vienna, 1927); Walter Joseph Fischel (1902–1973; PhD: Giessen, 1926); Noah Braun (1890–1962; PhD: Heidelberg, 1923); and Levi Billig (1897–1936; PhD: Cambridge, 1925).[22] Over the next few years, the Institute recruited four more scholars who together are considered "the first generation" of scholars at the Institute. These four were Gotthold Weil (1882–1960; PhD: Berlin, 1905); Joseph Joel Rivlin (1890–1971; PhD, supervised by Josef Horovitz: Frankfurt, 1927); Shlomo Dov (Fritz) Goitein (1900–1985; PhD: Frankfurt, 1923); and Hans Jakob Polotsky (1905–1991; PhD: Göttingen, 1926). Of the ten scholars mentioned above, nine graduated from German-speaking universities, and only one of them (Billig) from a non-German Institute (Cambridge University, from where he graduated with distinction in Classics and Oriental Languages). Furthermore, nine of the ten (the exception being Rivlin, who was born in Jerusalem) were born in Europe, and all ten were Ashkenazi Jews (though Rivlin was part of the "Old Yishuv," his roots went back to Ukraine, Austria, and Belarus): not one was a Mizrahi Jew, an Arab Jew, or an Arab scholar.

As Menahem Milson shows, the Institute's roots—with regard to both its scholars and the overarching rationale behind it—lie in Germany. In fact, two decades earlier, when Judah L. Magnes, who later became the first president of the university, stayed in Berlin for two years, he was highly impressed by a group of Jewish scholars from the Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Higher Institute for Jewish Studies, a rabbinical seminary), some of whom were also students of Islam and Oriental studies. Their work captured his imagination and "played a decisive role in shaping his spiritual world," and some of them—including Horovitz, Weil, Max Schlesinger, and Arthur Biram—were to play a leading role in shaping the Jewish field of Oriental studies in British Mandate Palestine and post-1948 Israel.[23]

As Lewis argues, the Jewish interest in Oriental studies that was evident in European universities at that time was encouraged by the connections between Hebrew and Arabic, and between Judaism and Islam, as well as by the desire for emancipation through Oriental studies.[24] Yet for the Hebrew University there was an additional, sociopolitical incentive for establishing Oriental studies: "the desire to establish bridges of understanding with their Arab neighbors . . . and even a naïve belief that Arabs and Moslems would be deeply moved when they saw Jews immersed in the study of their culture."[25]

On paper, this indeed seems a possibility, especially as a wishful desire, yet one can argue that the European, classical, and philological orientation of the studies at the Institute, not to mention the complete lack of Arab scholars whose native language and culture was Arabic, can hint at an obvious limitation of that "bridge" discourse.

These solid German philological boundaries, as I argue, allowed for very little change in the way Arabic was taught at the Institute or how Oriental studies were perceived. For example, in the founding memorandum of the Institute, composed in Frankfurt on May 14, 1925, its founding father, Josef Horovitz, wrote that "the head of the Institute can only be an Arabist trained in Europe or in the United States; there are at the moment no scholars from the Orient (*orientalische Gelehrte*) that have completely mastered the methods of modern science."[26] With regard to possible recruits to the Institute, he prepared a list "of European and American Arabists of Jewish origin . . . that includes: Marcel Cohen in Paris, Richard James Gottheil in New York, Giorgio Levi Della Vida in Rome, Herbert Martin Loewe in Cambridge, Eugen Mittwoch in Berlin, William Popper in San Francisco, Oskar Rescher in Breslau, and Gotthold Weil in Berlin."[27] Of the eight scholars named above, six were of German origin or had been supervised by German philologists.[28]

Horovitz, however, did not only mention Jewish scholars; he also highlighted the point that since the Hebrew University is not located in Europe or the U.S., but in the Middle East, where Arabic is the dominant culture, the attitude toward the language should encourage the Institute to recruit an Arab scholar. However, he did not see the Arab scholar as someone who would become part of the department: "For the position of Arabic professor it would not be important to me that he would stay permanently."[29] As Horovitz saw it, there were only two possibilities: "I suggest two names, Muhammad Kurd Ali, the director of the Arab Academy of Damascus (an academy of Arabic language), and Dr. Taha Hussein from the Egyptian University in Cairo."[30] I was not able trace any attempt to contact these two scholars, beyond Horovitz's listing them here. In any case, they never taught at the Institute.

With regard to their being mentioned by Horovitz, there are a few salient points. First, when envisioning the "Arab scholar," Horovitz did not see as part of his academic reservoir any Jewish Arab professors (such as Abraham Shalom Yahuda, who finished his PhD in Germany in 1904) or local Arab Palestinian scholars (such as Khalil al-Sakakini, who was then at the peak of his career as an original teacher and educator in the field of Arabic studies in Arab schools in Palestine, and who, like Kurd Ali, did not have a PhD). Second, Horovitz did not envision the "Arab scholar" becoming a permanent part of the department but rather some kind of needed "enrichment," since the university is, at the end of the day, in the Middle East. This is an interesting point, as it seems to spell out the logic of the Institute—even when in 1938 the university did recruit an Arab Jewish scholar, Aleppo-born Yitzhak Shamosh, and even though he did finish his PhD at the Hebrew University, he was never made a professor nor was he ever promoted, and he felt until his last day inferior and discriminated against when compared to his Ashkenazi peers.[31] Third, the Institute has always functioned without an Arab scholar. Even today, more than ninety years since its establishment, the Department of Arabic studies (which is one of the offshoots of the Institute) has never had an Arab scholar as a tenured professor.

In his memorandum Horovitz also laid out the principal methods for the basic study of Arabic in the Institute. According to him, neither the European (or the American) head of the Institute nor the Arabic scholar should be concerned with teaching Arabic courses for beginners. As he saw it, a *lektor*, in this case a scholar whose native language was Arabic, should be hired to teach the language. Yet even this lector, as Horovitz saw it, should be restricted to following the European approach: "The best solution would be to assign a lecturer familiar *with European teaching methods* [my emphasis]."[32]

On top of this, Horovitz believed an Arab member could be added in order to contribute to the study of Islamic theology:

> It could be also wise later on to hire . . . one or more of these *old style Arab shaykhs*, who would be responsible for the teaching of different currents of Islamic theology, like Tafsir [Quranic exegesis], Hadith [report of the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad and other early Muslims] or Fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence]. . . . This should be done though only later and not at the beginning.[33]

Here again, in relation to the "lector" and the "traditional shaykh," there are hints pointing toward one of the founding principles of the Institute—that Arabic should be studied according to the grammar-oriented German philological approach—while the "living" Muslims should be "old style." The Arabs to be selected to take part

in the field should therefore be representatives of early Islamic belief, which can be explained using Edward Said's criticism of the European approach to Muslim cultures that viewed them as still "frozen" in time and that would primarily have contributed to understanding Islam as being unchanging in nature.[34]

Looking at the main pillars of study at the Institute, Lazarus-Yafeh emphasizes that study stemmed from the philological approach and had a strong emphasis on the study of classical literature and Islamic texts.[35] Eyal Clyne points out that the Institute was based around scholars whose "approach to studying the East was through assiduous philological scrutiny of text, which maintained that distance from the research objects that is essential for guaranteeing objectivity."[36] Menahem Milson, who looked at the contribution of the only Arabic-speaking scholar at the Institute—Yitzhak Shamosh, who as mentioned above was born in Aleppo—believes that the boundaries of the field did not allow Shamosh to change the main pillars of Arabic instruction in the Institute. The German philological tradition, which was cemented in the Institute's foundation and its most influential and founding members, did not allow Shamosh's arrival to change the general attitude toward and study of Arabic.[37] As Milson concludes: "This generation of scholars determined the character of the departments of Arabic and Islamic studies for many decades to come. Priority was given to extremely careful study of texts and rigorous standards of scholarship."[38]

The founding principles of the Institute, which I argue has had an enormous influence on the field of Arabic studies in the Jewish community, can also be seen in the courses taught at the Institute, in the Institute's flagship project, and—stemming from this—in the Arabic that was seen as the appropriate vehicle to meet the needs of both. The courses that laid the academic foundation of the Institute in the first decade of its existence included those on Islamic art and archaeology, Mamluk heraldry, Muhammad and the Jews, the history of Jews in Yemen, reading Ibn Qutayba's ninth-century *Ta'wil mukhtalif al-hadith*, reading Abu Bakr ibn Tufayl's twelfth-century *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, Palestine under Muslim rule, modern literature on Muslim antiquities, the history of Arabic literature, philosophical texts, Arabic syntax, Classical Arabic poetry, and Qur'anic studies. Arabic language courses were taught at the time mainly by Rivlin, and they included "Arabic for Beginners" and "Arabic for Beginners, part B: Reading Texts," which is rather telling about the aim of the studies.[39] Furthermore, among the basic requirements for study in the Institute, it is mentioned that students would be admitted as long as they had "adequate knowledge of Hebrew and Arabic," and regarding Arabic it is explained that they must be "able to read *original texts*," meaning primary—classical—sources.[40]

The Institute's first two research projects, which were completed only decades later and hence had an extended impact on the spirit of the Institute, were oriented toward the German philological approach, and one of them was directly connected to a German institute. These were two flagship academic projects that were considered the pinnacle of Arabic studies at the Institute. The first was the "al-Baladhuri project"—Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir al-Baladhuri's *Ansab al-ashraf* (Genealogies of the nobles)—which was a joint initiative undertaken by the Prussian State Library and the Institute of Oriental Studies. The second was the creation of a concordance of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.[41] This also echoes what Amit Levy saw as an example of the German approach: he believed that these projects prove that "by and large this new institute maintained its German Jewish scholarly legacy during the first years of its existence, both in terms of research interests (Classical Arabic and early Islamic history) and scholarly methods (meticulous philology and version comparison)."[42]

I argue that this German philological legacy forged the academic debate about the study of Arabic in the Jewish community. This approach did not change, even when pressure was put on the Institute—for example, by the Hartog Survey Committee, which highlighted that study in the Institute should not neglect classes on the modern Orient and should include modern Arabic language and literature.[43] People at the Institute perhaps introduced new researchers, methods, and motivations to the Institute—for example, translation of modern texts—but they did not challenge the existing basic approach. As Milson states, when looking at five generations of Oriental scholars at the Hebrew University, "two essential qualities of the founders continue to characterize the research and teaching . . . a deep respect for the written text, which inevitably dictates stringent language requirements . . . and a complete separation between scholarship and personal political bias."[44] While I can agree that the first characteristic is indeed an example of the German philological roots of Oriental and Arabic studies—which pushed forward the grammar-translation approach—and a source of cementing the Arabic language as taught in a Latinized way and from that perspective, I believe the second comment is rather misleading. The ongoing connection between scholars of Middle East studies and the Zionist (later Israeli) security establishment, which began in the 1930s, cemented the Jewish-only approach to Arabic studies and used the philological approach for security and political needs in other spheres—for example, the translation of modern newspapers in the school system—as I have highlighted elsewhere.[45] In academia the result was not politically biased research—in the simple sense of being "pro-Jewish" and "anti-Arab"—but rather in an ongoing approach that was based on nonintegrative study of the Arab world, in other words, in a decision to focus on

written texts as a source of knowledge and not, for example, on oral interviews. The result was a field that is perhaps studied *in* the Middle East but one that does not take its students *to* the Middle East.

"Arabic Should Be the Latin of the Middle East": Arabic, the Hebrew Reali School, and the Jewish Education System

The Institute of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University was the Jewish community's most important institute to be dedicated to the study of Arabic. As such, it is interesting to study it in relation to another institute, the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa, which was by no means the leading Hebrew educational institute for the study of the language during the British Mandate.[46] For example, in a 1946 report, S. D. Goitein highlights that

> in the Hebrew Reali School the number of students who took the external final exams in Arabic in the sixth year of studies is the largest . . . while the number of students who take the final exams in the highest level in the eighth year of their studies is constantly shrinking in the Hebrew education system, and actually in 1945 we reached a situation in which only 11 students took the exam – all of them from the same institute [the Hebrew Reali School].[47]

The relationship between the Hebrew Reali School and the Hebrew University in the field of Arabic is noteworthy, and as I stated above they were the two main institutions that founded a network of scholars, ideas, and expertise. Looking at the major figures in each institute—and they were the prime movers in the field of Arabic—will make this clearer; two of the most important teachers of Arabic who taught at the Hebrew Reali School eventually moved to the Hebrew University's Institute of Oriental Studies: Martin Plessner (1900–1973; PhD: University of Breslau), and Meir Jacob Kister (1914–2010), who conducted his academic studies at the Hebrew University. Furthermore, following his arrival in Palestine from Germany, S. D. Goitein, who later became one of the most famous Orientalists in Israeli academia, initially taught at the Hebrew Reali School (where he focused on Bible studies) before moving to the Hebrew University's Institute of Oriental Studies.

One of the explanations for the dominance of the Hebrew Reali School (established in 1913) in the field of Arabic studies is connected to its founder and first principal: Arthur Biram. The Saxony-born educator, who had earned two PhDs, one in classical studies and another in Muslim scholastic philosophy (*ʿilm al-kalām*) at the University of Berlin, was a product of the German philological approach. This meant that for him the study of the people of the Orient and Islamic/Arabic

studies, together with a focus on Jewish studies, were closely bound up. His German Orientalist expertise, as was the case with other scholars, emphasized the study of Semitic religions, viewed biblical scholarship, for example, as a "motivating force for the study of Islam," and saw Islam as a derivative of Judaism.[48] This combination of Hebrew national identity, Islamic studies, and Jewish religion was merely common sense for Biram, who in addition to his doctoral degrees held a certificate of ordination as a rabbi from Berlin's Higher Institute for Jewish Studies (Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums). His background shaped his teaching philosophy, which highlighted the importance of humanistic values, focused on Jewish studies and Jewish-Muslim historical encounters, and aimed to create a new generation of students "who would function as the vanguard of the national enterprise."[49]

Yet national concerns were not the only justification for Biram's paying special attention to Arabic: other considerations stemmed directly from the German philological approach, which connected grammar studies, classical texts, disciplinary virtues, and Jewish-Muslim interactions. Biram argued that through Arabic studies the pupils would be able to learn the compositions and creations of Jewish philosophers and intellectuals who worked in the Islamic and Arab world, especially during the medieval period. Hence, according to Biram, through Arabic the pupils would become acquainted with Jewish-Muslim relations, with humanistic values that were produced at the time, and with cultural values that prospered within the Muslim societies in which Jewish thinkers had operated.[50]

In parallel to this, Biram's approach to Arabic studies included another German philological aspect, one that presented Arabic as the Latin of the Middle East.[51] According to this notion, the study of Arabic grammar, with its particular and logical set of linguistic rules, would have a positive, constructive effect on formal education. In that regard the teaching of the grammatical Arabic concept of *iʿrab* (inflexion), for example, was comparable to the teaching of Latin *casus* (case). This, according to Biram, would result in disciplinary values connected to the study of grammar, which would be based on a comparison of the virtues of Latin for European schools and the virtues of Arabic for Jewish schools in Palestine.[52] It would also improve the pupils' precision of thought.[53] "Arabic should become the Latin of the Orient!" Biram used to declare in the Reali School, emphasizing the importance of proper and compulsory teaching of Arabic grammar there.[54]

Biram, whose school was not only the education system's leader in the field of Arabic studies but also the one that produced the most scholars who studied in the Institute of Oriental Studies and shaped the field of Arabic studies and expertise in the Jewish community, repeated the Latin example. He regarded the study of Arabic

as an essential element in the teaching of the humanities in the Hebrew education system and believed that knowledge of Arabic would strengthen and consolidate the mastery of Hebrew among his students in the same way that Latin used to form a basis for the study of modern European languages.[55]

The way in which Arabic studies at the Hebrew Reali School evolved produced changes that were to influence and inspire the general Hebrew education system.[56] Among these changes was the blending of political and security considerations with the German philological foundations of the emerging field, resulting in the "practical Arabic" approach. Yet this approach preserved central German philological ideas; even though it was ready to include more modern texts, especially texts with political vocabulary such as Arabic newspapers, the main pillars were not contested.[57] These principles included a heavy focus on Arabic grammar and syntax, and on written, not spoken Arabic; a strengthening of the fragmentation between textual Arabic and oral Arabic; and a distinct absence of Arab teachers, textbook writers, pedagogues, and decision makers. In other words, while I analyzed this new "practical" focus as part of the emerging partnership between the security, political, and educational establishments in the Jewish community in the field of Arabic studies during the British Mandate, it is important to highlight that this "shift" did not change the main philological pillars of the field.[58] It retained German philological tools, such as the ongoing use of the grammar-translation method and the focus on meticulous translation, but it changed the exclusivity of the subject studied from one that focused on classical texts alone to one in which classical texts were studied in parallel with modern, politically oriented, topics. Writing about the approach to Arabic studies, the German Jewish philologist Moshe Henry Gottstein stated in 1948 that "the argument that we often hear, according to which Arabic should fulfill the same role that was played by Latin in Renaissance European circles—especially regarding the formal grammatical sense but also the cultural sense—is still as valid as before."[59]

The all-encompassing German philological framework was evident in both the Hebrew Reali School and in the general education system, while within this framework different shifts and developments occurred, though without challenging the framework's boundaries. An example of this is the gradual disregard of Arabic textbooks that were written by non-European scholars. During the period of the British Mandate in Palestine, Arabic textbooks composed by Arab scholars who were not part of the European approach to Arabic ceased to be used in the Hebrew education system. In the first half of the twentieth century, Hebrew schools still used textbooks written by Arab scholars—for example, *Al-durus al-ʿArabiyya*, by Mustafa al-Ghalayinni (Beirut: Al-Matbaʿa al-Ahliyya, 1912); *Darajat al-qiraʾa*,

by Khalil Baydas (Jerusalem: Maktabat Falastin al-ʿIlmiyya, 1913); *Al-majmuʿa al-ʾusuliyya*, by Elias Nasrallah Haddad (Jerusalem: Dar al-Aytam al-Suriyya, 1920); *Al-jadid fi al-qiraʾa al-ʿArabiyya*, by Khalil al-Sakakini (Jerusalem: Al-Maktaba al-ʿAsriyya, 1929); or *Al-qiraʾa al-musawwara*, which included texts composed by a number of Arab writers (Beirut: Maktabat al-Kashaf, 1932). By 1948 all schools relied exclusively on textbooks composed by Jewish scholars, who were for the most part of Ashkenazi descent, and all of them were written from a Western approach. I argue that the disappearance of textbooks written by Arab scholars using an Arab approach is part and parcel of the Latinization of the Arabic language in the Jewish community.

I do not argue that there is no difference between textbooks written by Jewish scholars during that period. For example, there was the obviously German philologically oriented *Torat ha-dikduk ha-Aravi: Sefer ezrah le-vatei sefer Ivriyyim* (The theory of Arabic grammar: A guidebook for Hebrew schools), published by German Jewish scholar Martin Plessner in 1935, as well as the supposedly "practical" textbook, *Al-dalil al-hadith* / *Ha-moreh ha-hadash* (The new teacher), composed by the Jewish-Arab educator Eliyahou Habouba in 1938.[60] But the German philological approach, which was definitely not an Arab approach, was maintained. This is evident in several ways. The foundations laid by Plessner's textbook show the long-lasting impact of the emphasis on grammar and syntax in the study of Arabic.[61] The academic experts of Arabic from the Hebrew University's Institute of Oriental Studies continued to influence the field of Arabic language studies, and once the boundaries of the field were set, the discourse demanded an emphasis on the European approach. Even Habouba, who was born in Damascus and graduated from Beirut University, found it important to highlight that "the textbook was written according to the approach of the English scholar West," referring to Michael Philip West's *New Method Readers for Teaching English Reading to Foreign Children* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936).[62] Interestingly, Habouba highlights two topics included in the book: "literary and grammatical subjects . . . as set by the Education Department of the Jewish National Council," and the new challenge that he experienced, according to which "the students who are new immigrants and not native-born and Arabic-speaking are now the majority in the schools." This required a change that I call the foreignization of Arabic—apropos the system of "Teaching English to *Foreign* Children"—and its ultimate Latinization.

With regard to Latinization, the question of teachers also needs to be highlighted, as the field of Arabic studies went through a process of de-Arabization, or at least de-Palestinization. The vast majority of Arabic teachers at the end of the nineteenth

century and the beginning of the twentieth century were Arabs—Muslim, Christian, and Jewish—who knew literary and colloquial Arabic, had mastered the spoken, written, literary, and grammatical aspects of language study, used textbooks composed for Arabs, and felt themselves to be a genuine part of the Middle East, the Arab world, and Arabic culture. But the situation changed dramatically with the rise of Zionism, the Jewish-Arab conflict and the separations that followed it, and the rise of the German philological approach toward Arabic studies that happened in parallel. In a short period, not only did Arabic textbooks written by Jewish scholars in a philological orientation replace textbooks written by Arab scholars and used in Arab schools throughout the country but the teachers themselves changed. See, for example, how Israel Wolfensohn (Ben-Ze'ev), who from 1940 was the supervisor of Arabic studies in the Education Department for almost twenty-five years, described it in 1938:

> In the period before the [First World] War, the Arabic teachers [in Jewish education institutions] were shaykhs, most of them graduates of al-Azhar [University in Cairo] who did not have a particular pedagogic training [for schools]. There were also some Jewish teachers whose [pedagogic] level was higher. After the War, the Arab shaykhs *stopped teaching in our institutions*. And to the old [Jewish] teachers of Arabic joined a group of new and young scholars, from the country and abroad. . . . Those from abroad do not do well in *speaking useful Arabic* [*lashon shimushit*] and they did not adopt the *Arabic accent*.[63]

Ben-Ze'ev's insights are significant for our understanding of one of the changes that enabled the Latinization of Arabic in the Jewish community: the people who were actually doing the teaching. In other words, the dramatic shift in the way Arabic was taught and perceived had several aspects. One was the dominance of the German philological approach, discussed above. Another was the "materiality" of things: the composition of new textbooks—written by Jewish scholars and echoing the philological approach—and the hiring of new teachers who shifted the field's center of gravity toward teachers whose Arabic was limited to the command of grammatical rules. The end result of these changes was a field of study in which the language taught is translated rather than spoken, read aloud rather than heard, and is presented by people—both teachers and textbook writers—who are not connected to the Arab region in which the language is studied; there is a new generation of scholars, the vast majority of whom do not feel at home in either the Arab world or in the Arabic language.

Epilogue: Arabic among Jews in the Twenty-First Century

In 2015, an academic report written by Yehouda Shenhav et al. was published. It was based on a survey of a representative sample of the Jewish population of Israel that was conducted by the B. I. and Lucille Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research at Tel Aviv University.[64] The survey offers a number of insights that are of critical importance for this article and that show the cementing of the Latinized version of Arabic that has become dominant among Jewish Israelis. When interviewees were asked about their general knowledge of Arabic, 9.8 percent ranked their general knowledge level of Arabic as high or very high; yet when they were asked to provide answers with respect to specific knowledge, there was a significant drop in the proportion of those knowing Arabic. Indeed, it appears that only 6.8 percent of the Jews in Israel are able to identify written Arabic characters, only 2.6 percent are able to read a short article; a mere 1.4 percent of the Jews in Israel stated that they could write an email or short letter in Arabic, and only about 0.4 percent said that they could read a book in Arabic. Furthermore, the data presented in the report covered a representative sample of the entire population of Israel, including those Jews who originated from Arab countries and whose first or second language was Arabic. These low numbers also appeared in the report of the Central Bureau of Statistics conducted in 2011. The latter indicated that 2.3 percent of the Jews in Israel asserted that their knowledge of spoken Arabic was at a good level or higher; 0.6 percent could read Arabic; 0.6 percent could write the language; and 2.4 percent said they could understand it.[65]

The Shenhav report found an evident alienation of the Mizrahim from the Arabic language, which is the end result of a process that I see as the Ashkenization of the language.[66] It was striking to see that—owing to several sociological and political processes, and as part of the binary opposition between "an Arab" and "a Jew" that the Zionist movement and Israel created—while 58 percent of the Ashkenazi interviewees supported preserving the official status of Arabic, this proportion is some 10 percent lower among the Mizrahim, whose mother tongue used to be Arabic. Similarly, 74.2 percent of immigrants from Arab countries claim that Arabic should be learned in order to "know the enemy," as compared to a lower proportion, some 60 percent, among the Ashkenazim. With relation to the Ashkenization of Arabic studies in Israel, it is striking to see that according to the survey, the proportion of Ashkenazi Jews who studied Arabic at the university level is more than *four times* that of those from Arab countries, and that the proportion of Ashkenazi Jews who studied Arabic in the army is *three times* greater than those who originated from Arab countries.[67]

The findings of the 2015 survey seem to correspond with the Latinization of Arabic in Jewish society in Israel. This has first of all to do with the *distancing* of Arabic from Jewish life. The general connection that was underscored between knowledge of Arabic and the "Arab enemy" speaks loudly about the disorientation of the Jewish people in the Middle East and the separation between Jews and Arabs. Furthermore, the Mizrahi (Arab) Jews' attitude toward this connection is very telling: it relates to the same disorientation—the disconnection between Jews and Arabs, Jews and Arabic, and Arab Jews and their original mother tongue—created by the new Israeli approach (Orientalist, philological, and security-oriented) toward Arabic studies.

Another very clear element in the survey is the diminishing number of Arab Jews who have knowledge of Arabic. Among these Jews, knowledge and use of Arabic plummeted from native level to being their third language—and this despite the fact that Arabic was an official language in Israel from 1948 to 2018, Arabic and Hebrew are both Semitic languages, and the country is located in the heart of the Arab world. In contrast to this diminishing of a rich knowledge of an Arabic that was both heard and seen, we find the rise of Ashkenazi Jews in the new field of Arabic studies—a field that has almost no Arabs in it and that focuses mainly on Literary Arabic, grammatical texts, and the dominant grammar-translation approach. This dissonance between the rise in the number of Ashkenazi Jews who study Arabic at the university—where Arabic is barely heard and where it is studied according to the German oriented grammar-translation approach—and the extremely low number of Arab Jews who know the language and speak it, is an example of the Latinization of Arabic. The result is an Arabic that has no native speakers and no friends or peers who speak it; it must be studied through texts and is more frequently grammatically analyzed than it is communicatively used.

Notes

1 Anthony Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 182.

2 James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 49.

3 Edward Kanterian, *Kant, God and Metaphysics: The Secret Thorn* (Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 26.

4 Ursula Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 88.

5 Ibid. Italics added.

6 Sabine Mangold-Will, "Josef Horovitz und die Gründung des Instituts für Arabische und Islamische Studien an der Hebräischen Universität in Jerusalem: ein Orientalisches Seminar für Palästina," *Naharaim – Zeitschrift für deutsch-jüdische Literatur und Kulturgeschichte* 10, no. 1 (2016): 7–9.

7 Sabine Mangold-Will, "Ueble Leistung er ist fünfmal gehupft," Zum arabistischen Unterricht an den deutschen Universität des 19. Jahrhunderts, in *Vorlesung, Seminar, Repetitorium*: *Universitäre geschichtswissenschaftliche Lehre im Historischen Vergleich*, ed. Gabriele Lingelbach (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2006), 59–87.

8 Ibid.

9 For further reading, see John Efron, "From Mitteleuropa to the Middle East: Orientalism through a Jewish Lens," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94, no. 3 (2004): 490–520; Sabine Mangold-Will, "Zur Etablierung der Orientalischen Philologie an den deutschen Universitäten: Anmerkungen zur Entstehung einer Disziplin," in *Geschichtlichkeit von Sprache und Text. Philologien – Disziplingenese –Wissenschaftshistoriographie*, ed. Wulf Oesterreicher and Maria Selig (Paderborn: Fink, 2014), 115–129; Susannah Heschel, "German Jewish Scholarship on Islam as a Tool for De-Orientalizing Judaism," *New German Critique* 117, vol. 39, no. 3 (2012): 91–107.

10 See Johann David Michaelis, *Arabische Grammatik* (Göttingen: V. Bossiegel, 1781); Albert Socin, *Arabische Grammatik* (Karlsruhe: Reuther, 1885); Theodor Nöldeke, *Zur Grammatik des classischen Arabisch* (Vienna: Gerold, 1896).

11 Achim Rohde, "Asians in Europe: Reading German-Jewish History through a Postcolonial Lens," in *Orientalism, Gender, and the Jews: Literary and Artistic Transformations of European National Discourses*, ed. Ulrike Brunotte, Anna-Dorothea Ludewig, and Axel Stähler (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 26.

12 Baber Johansen, "Politics and Scholarship: The Development of Islamic Studies in the Federal Republic of Germany," in *Middle East Studies: International Perspectives on the State of the Art*, ed. T. Y. Ismael (New York: Praeger, 1990), 77. Ursula Wokoeck disagreed with this statement and argued that it was not the Orient that stood at the center of the field, but actually Oriental languages. See Wokoeck, *German Orientalism*, 160.

13 For further reading on the disciplinary orientation of grammar studies in German philology, see Yonatan Mendel, "From German Philology to Local Usability: The Emergence of 'Practical' Arabic in the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa," *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 1 (2016): 5; Menahem Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," *Judaism* 45, no. 2 (1996): 177; Sarah Halperin, *Doktor Arthur Biram u-Veit ha-Sefer ha-Reali* (Jerusalem: R. Mass, 1970), 442; Martin Kramer, *The Jewish Discovery of Islam* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1999), 20.

14 Wokoeck, *German Orientalism*, 107.

15 For further reading on "traveling ideas," see Bruno Latour, "The Powers of Associations," in *Power, Action and Belief*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge and Paul, 1986), 264–280.

16 Allon J. Uhlmann, "The Field of Arabic Instruction in the Zionist State," in *Pierre Bourdieu and Literacy Education*, ed. J. Albright and A. Luke (London: Routledge, 2008), 95–112; Allon J. Uhlmann, *Arabic Instruction in Israel: Lessons in Conflict, Cognition and Failure* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). See also Uhlmann, *Arabic Instruction in Israel*, x, 77.

17 Studying the situation in Israel, Uhlmann refers to the Westernized grammar approach as "Israeli-Jewish grammar of Arabic" and to the variety of Arab grammatical approaches as "Israeli-Arab grammar of Arabic." Chapter four of his book provides concrete examples of the two approaches, showing for example how they differ in the range of linguistic phenomena treated as verb morphology. For further reading on the differences between the European and Arab grammatical approaches, as analyzed by Uhlmann, *Arabic Instruction in Israel*, 76–126; see also ibid., 20, 24.

18 Compare with Eyal's analysis of the crucial place of German Jewish scholars in the creation of Orientalist knowledge in British Mandate Palestine. See Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 62.

19 Owing to the limitations of space, I will not focus on internal debates, vis-à-vis Jewish scholars who studied Arabic in a German-oriented approach yet challenged the way it was taught in the Jewish education systems in Palestine. Instead, I will focus on the way Arabic linguistics de facto evolved in the Zionist education system. That said, at least one example tells the story of the road not taken: Jochanan Kapliwatzky, a graduate of Vienna University, went as far as going on a hunger strike because of the way his take on Arabic studies was disregarded by the main decision makers.

20 Mentioned in Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," 170. Emphasis added.

21 Following the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany in 1933, this European element was further strengthened, and Jews who graduated from German universities and fled Germany became the majority of the scholars at the university. For further reading, see Shaul Katz and Michael Hed, eds., *The History of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Roots and Beginnings* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997); Hagit Lavsky, ed., *The History of the Hebrew University: Plans and Beginnings* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005); Nurit Kirsh, "Hokrim be-Ivrit, holmim be-Germanit: Madaanim Yotzei Germania ba-Universita ha-Ivrit bi-tkufat ha-Yishuv," *Galileo* 117 (May 2008): 48-54.

22 Billig was born in London and studied in Cambridge. He was cherry-picked by the director of the Institute, Josef Horovitz.

23 Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," 170.

24 Bernard Lewis, "The Pro-Islamic Jews," *Judaism* 17, no. 4 (1968): 391–404. See also Heschel, "German Jewish Scholarship on Islam as a Tool for De-Orientalizing Judaism," 91–107.

25 Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," 170.

26 Mangold-Will, "Josef Horovitz und die Gründung des Instituts für Arabische und Islamische Studien an der Hebräischen Universität in Jerusalem," 31. All translations are my own. I would like to thank Andrea Kirchner for her kind help with translations from the German.

27 Josef Horovitz, "Vorschläge für die Errichtung eines Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Jerusalem," May 14, 1925, The Hebrew University Archive, File 91/1: Oriental School 1925–1927, Jerusalem.

28 Marcel Cohen was born in Paris and studied at the École des Langues Orientales; Giorgio Levi Della Vida was born in Venice and studied at Sapienza – Università di Roma.

29 Horovitz, "Suggestions for the Establishment of an Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Jerusalem."

30 Ibid.

31 See Amit Levy, "Darush baal signon tov be-Aravit ve-hi sefat imo," *The Librarians* [The Hebrew University's Librarian Blog], June 26, 2018, accessed June 8, 2019, https://blog.nli.org.il/teacher/.

32 Horovitz, "Suggestions for the Establishment of an Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Jerusalem."

33 Ibid. Emphasis added.

34 See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

35 Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "The Transplantation of Islamic Studies from Europe to the Yishuv and Israel," in Kramer, *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, 255.

36 Eyal Clyne, *Orientalism, Zionism and Academic Practice: Middle East and Islam Studies in Israeli Universities* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 72.

37 Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," 177.

38 Ibid., 178.

39 Compare with ibid. Information is taken also from "Ha-Universita ha-Ivrit: Ha-makhon le-madaei ha-Mizrah," The Hebrew University Archive, Institute of Oriental Studies, file 91 (1925-1927) and 91A (1928).

40 "Ha-Universita ha-Ivrit: Ha-makhon le-madaei ha-Mizrah," The Hebrew University Archive, Institute of Oriental Studies, file 91 (1925-1927). Emphasis added.

41 This project was published, in part, seventy years later, in 1999. See Albert Arazi and Salman Masalha, *Six Early Arab Poets*: *New Edition and Concordance*, based on W. Ahlwardt's *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1999.)

42 Amit Levy, "The Archive as Storyteller: Refractions of German Jewish Oriental Studies Migration in Personal Archives," *Simon-Dubnow-Institute Yearbook* XVII (forthcoming).

43 Among other justifications for this change, the Hartog Committee used politically oriented reasons, mentioning that "no Arab will change his political views on the Jewish question because of a preparation of a Concordance of Ancient Arabic Poetry." See Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient*, 71.

44 Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," 181.

45 Yonatan Mendel, *The Creation of Israeli Arabic: Political and Security Considerations in the Making of Arabic Language Studies in Israel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

46 Mendel, "From German Philology to Local Usability," 3.

47 S. D. Goitein, "Al horaat ha-Aravit," *Shviley hinukh* 4 (1946): 91.

48 Heschel, "German Jewish Scholarship on Islam as a Tool for De-Orientalizing Judaism," 91.

49 Ofer Ashkenazi, "The Biramschule in Context – The 'German' Influence on Jewish Body Culture in Mandate Palestine," in Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte (41), ed. José Brunner (Göttingen: Moralpolitik, 2013), 22. See also: Mendel, "From German Philology to Local Usability," 4.

50 Halperin, *Doktor Arthur Biram u-Veit ha-Sefer ha-Reali*, 442.

51 On the perception of Arabic as the "Latin of the East," see G. Dagmar and W. Reuschel, "Status Types and Status Changes in the Arabic Language," in *Status Change of Languages*, ed. U. Ammon and M. Hellinger (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), 85–86, 94.

52 Mentioned in the Aviezer Yellin Archives of Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora – Tel Aviv University (AYAJE), 8.45/3236, p. 9.

53 M. J. Kister, "Summary: The Teaching of Arabic in High School Classes," *Yediot la-morim 123-124*, The Hebrew Reali School Archive (HRSA) (March 1956), 15.

54 Halperin, *Doktor Arthur Biram u-Veit ha-Sefer ha-Reali*, 443.

55 Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," 178. Menahem Milson, "My Early Life with Arabic," *Mosaic*, March 18, 2018, accessed May 3, 2019, https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/2018/03/my-early-life-with-arabic/.

56 Mendel, "From German Philology to Local Usability," 1–26.

57 An indication of this approach is the fact that during the years 1939–1945, there was an unprecedented number of textbooks (six) that were written for the Hebrew education system (the first was a textbook published by the Hebrew Reali School) and that were dedicated to news-oriented pieces, to selections from the Arabic press, and to the vocabulary of daily Arabic newspapers. See ibid., 15.

58 For further reading, see Yonatan Mendel, *The Creation of Israeli Arabic*.

59 Moshe Henry Gottstein, "Horaat ha-Aravit be-veit ha-sefer ha-tikhon," *Ha-hinukh* 2 (1948): 201.

60 Plessner mentioned the following books as those that had inspired and guided him in writing the textbook: *Arabische Grammatik* by Adolf Socin and Carl Brockelmann (Berlin, 1918); *Die*

Syntaktischen Verhältnisse des Arabischen by Hermann Reckendorf (Leiden, 1895); *Arabische Syntax* by Hermann Reckendorf (Heidelberg, 1921); *Arabische Grammatik* by Carl Paul Caspari (Halle, 1887); *Grammaire Arabe* by Donat Vernier (Beirut, 1891); and *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* by William Wright (Cambridge, 1896). These references show even more clearly the connection with the philological German approach to Oriental studies, which was evident in the textbook and included a large number of tables, a division into three separate sections ("writing and accentology," "morphology," and "syntax") as well as the decision to write all the book's explanations in Hebrew. Information on both textbooks is found in Yonatan Mendel, "German Orientalism, Arabic Grammar and the Jewish Education System: The Origins and Effect of Martin Plessner's 'Theory of Arabic Grammar,'" *Naharaim* 10, no. 1 (2017): 57–77.

61 Mendel, "German Orientalism, Arabic Grammar and the Jewish Education System."

62 Eliyahou Habouba, *Al-dalil al-hadith / Ha-moreh ha-hadash* (Haifa: Hebrew Reali School, 1938).

63 Yisrael Wolfensohn (Ben-Ze'ev) said this in the following meeting: 10-11.4.1938, Central Zionist Archives, J17-319, Jerusalem. Emphases added.

64 Yehouda Shenhav, Maisalon Dallashi, Rami Avnimelech, Nissim Mizrahi, and Yonatan Mendel, *Yediat Aravit be-kerev Yehudim* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2015), accessed May 4, 2019, https://tinyurl.com/yam792fe.

65 *Social Survey 2011* (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

66 See Yonatan Mendel, "The De-Arabised Israeli Arabic: Between Eradication among Arab-Jews and Ashkenization in Society," in *Handbook for the Arabic Language and Identity*, ed. Reem Bassiouney and Keith Walters (Oxon: Routledge, forthcoming).

67 Shenhav et al., *Yediat Aravit be-kerev Yehudim*.

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More than a Mere "Welcome" – The Linguistic Landscape of Welcome Signs in Palestinian Localities in Israel

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Linguistic landscape (LL) is not only a means for marking linguistic boundaries between geographic territories.[1] It is also a device used by minority groups to break down boundaries and power relations. The LL in the present case study—welcome signs in Palestinian Arab towns in Israel—reflects coping with a complex political situation through an integration of the linguistic meanings of the Israeli sovereign and the Palestinian Arab subaltern. The analysis of this landscape exposes political and civilian undercurrents, the deepest of which are the aspiration for shared living in a conflicted space and equality under conditions of institutionalized discrimination.

Michel Foucault coined the term *heterotopic space* to designate such a physical space of activities that take place contiguously within the dominant social space, but that reverse its logic.[2] These activities suspend or neutralize all relations through which they may be indicated, mirrored, or thought.[3] Furthermore, heterotopy allows groups to accomplish diversity within the hegemonic space.[4]

The representation of languages on official signs in the public space is usually the product of an official policy. Language policies determine the languages used in government communications, in education, and on street signs.[5] In this way *social space* is produced by a variety of social actors who are aware of the powerful symbolic role of language in creating spatial identity.[6]

In countries experiencing ethnic conflict, the visible presence or absence of the minority language has tremendous psychological value, and worldwide, minority

groups struggle for their rights to linguistic representation. Examples include French signage in Quebec, Welsh road signs, and in Israel, Arabic on national road signs.[7] In addition the analysis of road signs in South Africa, which are usually written in English, Afrikaans, and the local indigenous language, brings to the fore the tensions that exist between languages and politics.[8] Although usually perceived by users as strictly functional, signage is integral to spatial politics. It marks the boundaries between linguistic communities, producing identities of place, as it is steeped with meanings of spatial control and (lack of) recognition of political and historical rights.[9] Signs in conflict zones are thus important indicators of majority and minority language and ethnicity status and have a significant impact on residents and on users' sense of place. In Israel the relationship between Hebrew, the language of the Jewish majority, and Arabic, the language of the Palestinian minority, is a colonial one, between the hegemon's language and that of the disempowered.[10]

The present article examines the LL of welcome signs in Palestinian Arab minority communities in central and northern Israel—home to some 76 percent of the country's Palestinian Arab citizens.[11] A critical reading of those signs in conjunction with quantitative data exposes the socio-ideological meaning inherent in the depth structures of linguistic representation; examination of the number of words on the signs, the number of translated and transliterated signs, and the number of uni- and bilingual signs and more, exposes the link between the LL and the everyday experience and sociopolitical status of Palestinian Arab society in Israel. The welcome signs researched previously were mostly signs for tourists posted at airports and border crossings. In his study of those signs, Adam Jaworski addresses them as a social phenomenon, showing how the sense of belonging and personalization implied by their greetings is artificial, whereas they in fact convey a message of supervision and turn a social service into a commercial product.[12] In contrast, the present study deals with official welcome signs at the entrances to Palestinian Arab towns and villages as a form of translation of political and social consciousness, while examining them in the context of the historical national conflict. The aim is to discern the official position of local municipalities regarding the political and cultural identity of the space and its relation to the Israeli "other."

As in most countries, in Israel there are uniform regulations for official state signs, including place names and the representation of different languages, although municipalities are usually authorized to determine their design and content within their municipal borders, including welcome signs.[13] The LL of welcome signs to cities, in particular, is not limited to their referential or phatic functions, which are designed to initiate and maintain contact with the addressee.[14] Rather, they can be

seen as official signs whose content and function are dictated by the municipalities' top-down policies. They include the name of the locality, often accompanied by public messages, such as a greeting, a sociopolitical motto, and information about the community, such as the year it was established. Welcome signs are usually highly visible, as they are located on the main road entering the city, specifically on the state road crossing it, or in a major square.

Geographically, the welcome signs mark the boundary between the municipal area and its external environment, both separating and connecting them. They separate the municipalities' space from the general space but may also provide manifestations of the identity of the municipality and the local space. Functionally, welcome signs are the localities' display windows for their users, both local and nonlocal. In certain cases, welcome signs represent isolationist aspirations. An example, elaborated below, is the welcome sign of the Palestinian Arab town of ʿAraba (fig. 5), which includes a quote from a poem conveying the message of Palestinian Arab rootedness and steadfastness, symbolizing the tensions between the Palestinian Arab minority's identity and the majority population of Israel or recognition of national pride and shared history.

Review of the Literature

Israel is an ethnonational state in which two peoples speaking different languages struggle over physical and symbolic control of space. The Palestinian Arabs were the majority in the country before the establishment of the State of Israel. However, in the course of the 1948 War, they and their language became a minority defined by the Jewish state as a national minority, albeit with hardly any of the civic or linguistic rights commonly associated with that status.[15] Moreover, after 1948, Arabic names of all the country's localities and geographical features were replaced by Hebrew ones.

Palestinian Arab society is religiously diverse and includes Muslims, Christians, and Druze. To this day, owing to a historical combination of security fears, land expropriations, and other forms of economic discrimination, as well as ethnic prejudices, if not outright racism, the employment and social mobility options of this minority remain limited.[16] In recent years Israeli discrimination has shifted from the practical to the legal sphere, with governments increasingly promoting laws designed to prevent Palestinian Arabs from claiming their rights in court.[17]

This article argues that the language and content of the signs in public spaces are aligned with the imagining of Palestinian Arab space as remote, and as such they constitute an aspect of the linguistic discrimination against the Palestinian Arab minority. This insight is based on several studies that demonstrate that while Arabic

is spoken by one-fifth of Israel's citizens and was recognized as an official language, in practice, until the end of 2018, the state has not treated Arabic as such, and its visibility and status in public space and life remain limited.[18] The Knesset (Israeli parliament) has frequently discussed various bills designed to restrict the presence of Arabic in the LL. In 2018 Arabic lost its status as an official language when the Knesset passed the so-called Nation-State Law.

Arabic is currently marginal in Israel's public space.[19] State road signs attest to the government's policy of linguistic discrimination. Arabic toponyms are severely underrepresented, and if signs are in only one language, it is invariably Hebrew. Bilingual signs are usually in Hebrew and English, despite the fact that English is not an official language in Israel. Arabic is seen almost only on trilingual signs.[20] When place names do appear in Arabic, they are visually less prominent and are often irrelevant to the minority's language and history. Moreover, the translation and transliteration of Hebrew names into Arabic and vice versa are often inconsistent if not erroneous. Conversely, Hebrew is superior in terms of distribution, visibility, and accuracy, indicating the clear priority given by national policy to Hebrew toponymy.[21]

As noted, the LL reveals political and local cultural and economic considerations. Critical linguistics views the way languages are used on signs as multifunctional representations of social ideologies and values.[22] In an ethno-linguistic space, the relative location and visibility of languages on a sign may reflect social hierarchies.[23] In multilingual communities, the choice of language is highly politicized, especially if the interrelation between the languages reflects a colonial setting.[24] Such is the case in Israel. When the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel uses the majority language, Hebrew, it is a political and collective matter.[25] As such usage is related to social mobility, it reflects an attempt by the weak minority to attain a sense of equality with the majority culture and improve their standard of living.[26] The sociolinguistic reality in Israel is a reflection of the sociopolitical colonial order that subordinates Palestinian citizens as a group whose material existence depends on the state's mechanisms, and is determined by the hegemonic majority.[27]

The use of Hebrew and Arabic in Israel has been studied in a variety of contexts, but rarely in the context of municipal signs. Most studies of signs in Israel have made no distinction between private, municipal, and state signs, or between Jewish, Palestinian Arab, and mixed communities.[28] The physical aspects of the LL have also been examined in private and "spontaneous" signs.[29] This literature has attached greater weight to linguistic elements and the way they are determined, as well as to the relative status of languages and related social trends.[30] They have usually done so, however, without delving into the signs' verbal content.

The present study aims to bridge the lacuna in the literature by examining the presence and relative visibility of Hebrew and Arabic on welcome signs posted by Palestinian Arab municipalities in Israel. It demonstrates the shaping of the official LL and the extent to which this landscape expresses the views of Palestinian Arab citizens regarding their relationship with the Jewish majority society and vice versa. The fact that Israel had two official languages (until 2018), whose communities have distinct cultural characteristics and are in the midst of an ongoing conflict, offers an opportunity to discuss the interaction between the LL and sociopolitical justice as it is embodied in a common, everyday object.

Conception and Research Questions

The present study draws on two conceptual frameworks. The first consists of sociolinguistic approaches that consider the LL to be the outcome of specific social actors, as exemplified by Eliezer Ben-Rafael and others.[31] They have formulated four principles for studying LL. The first emphasizes that different codes in the landscape must be studied in terms of social power relations. The second highlights the "good reasons," to borrow from sociologist and philosopher Raymond Boudon, that shape the landscape—the expectations that landscape actors design their items according to their honest understanding of local interests.[32] The third principle views linguistic activity as a symbolic interaction related to the way the self is represented in particular social situations, reflecting the individual's expectations of society and vice versa. The fourth principle sees the LL as embodying collective identities related to the actors who design it, often involving ideological clashes.[33]

The second conceptual framework is a semiotic approach that commonly informs the study of the LL, focusing on how the visual and spatial representation of communication products embodies ideological meanings and constructs reality, which in turn is interpreted against the backdrop of power relations, historical processes, social interests, the language users' perspectives, and political and geographical contexts.[34]

The design of the present research is guided by the assumption that the LL of Palestinian Arab society in Israel is affected by spatial power relations and that the welcome signs are linked to political and/or economic considerations and to the way the Palestinian Arab minority's identity is presented in the official public space. It is also assumed that the landscape and the people inhabiting it shape one another.[35] In its deep structure the LL is reflected in welcome signs and is indicative of the local Palestinian Arabs' spatial worldview—that is, the symbolic organization of space and the way it is interpreted—as well as the relationship the Palestinian Arab

inhabitants expect to establish with the Jewish majority society and the message that the expected relationship would send to the Israeli authorities. The discussion of the verbal and visual characteristics of the signs is influenced by social context and communicative reality. In other words, signs both reflect and create awareness; they impact the awareness and perceptions of those who use them, owing to their content and components, including the addressor, addressee, linguistic expression and its purpose, the signs' locations and, as stated above, the relative locations of languages on the signs.[36]

The literature commonly distinguishes between official, or top-down, and nonofficial, or bottom-up, signage. Yet, informed by Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space," the present study proposes a third category that encompasses both the official top-down language policy of the municipality identified with the regime and the ethnocultural aspirations of the minority population it administrates.[37] This third category challenges hierarchic boundaries by incorporating a hybridity of identities and interactions.

This study aims to investigate the following questions: What are the characteristics of the LL in welcome signs? What are the perceptions of place and allocation of space, and the sociopolitical relations between Palestinian Arab society and Jewish society in Israel? Do the welcome signs enter into dialogue with the official signs of the Jewish Israeli sovereignty in terms of content and form, and if so, what can we learn from this dialogue?

The research sample includes 110 Palestinian Arab communities in northern and central Israel. Most of the welcome signs analyzed were posted from the mid-1990s to 2012, a time when multiple nonelected committees were appointed by the Ministry of Interior to govern Palestinian Arab municipalities.[38] Between 2013 and 2015, thirty-eight welcome signs were documented and one sign was selected for each municipality, representing 34.54 percent of the communities. Eight signs (ʿAyn Hud عين حوض, al-Muqaybala المقيبلة, Maysar ميسر, Maʿalot Tarshiha معلوت ترشيحا, al-Naʿura الناعورة, Sandala صندلة, al-Shaykh Dannun الشيخ دنون, and al-Tayyiba الطيبة) were posted by elected Jewish mayors of regional councils that include Palestinian Arab populations, and seven (Bayyada بياضة, Musmus مصمص, al-Mushayrifa المشيرفة, Salim سالم, Turʿan طرعان, Zalafa زلفة, and Zimer زيمر) were posted by Jewish mayors appointed temporarily by the ministry. The remaining twenty-three signs were posted by Palestinian Arab mayors. The signs erected by Jewish and Palestinian Arab mayors will not be discussed separately, other than in cases of significant differences between them.

The focus of the investigation is on the visual-formal aspect, including the visibility of language and linguistic aspects: the content of the sign, the place names it uses, and their translation and transliteration.

Welcome Signs in Palestinian Arab Communities: Formal and Linguistic Aspects

In this section, the findings will be presented thematically, and each one will be discussed before moving on to the next item. These various strains will be brought together in the next section, assessing the wider implications. My discussion here aims to shed light on indirect negotiations between Palestinian Arab society, state authorities, and Palestinian Arab and Jewish inhabitants and visitors to Palestinian Arab communities, in order to understand the considerations of the signs' designers. It is based on the assumption that in a multilingual area, formal representation of languages may promote conciliation, but it can also stir criticism and protest.[39]

Visual-Formal Representation: Languages and the Order of Languages

The findings indicate that the *languages* on the signs are mostly Arabic, closely followed by Hebrew, with some English. Concerning the visual aspects, the *number of words* in each language is indicative. As seen in Table 1, here too Arabic and Hebrew are dominant.

Table 1: Percentages of signs and total number of words in Arabic, Hebrew, and English on the signs

	Arabic	**Hebrew**	**English**
Percentages of signs in each language	97.36	86.84	23.68
Number of words on monolingual signs	31	3	-
Number of words on bilingual signs	84	82	-
Number of words on trilingual signs	29	27	24

A third visual aspect is the *number of languages* on the signs. Just under two-thirds of the signs (24) are bilingual (with either Arabic or Hebrew on top); nine signs are trilingual; four are in Arabic only; and one is in Hebrew only (Table 2).

Table 2: Number and percentage of mono-, bi-, and trilingual signs

Type	Number	Percentage
Bilingual (Arabic and Hebrew)	24	63.16
Trilingual (Arabic, Hebrew, and English)	9	23.68
Unilingual (either Arabic or Hebrew)	5	13.16
TOTAL	38	100%

A fourth aspect pertains to the *language hierarchy* in multilingual signs. In more than a quarter of the signs, the languages are arranged horizontally, with Arabic (54.5 percent) on the right (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Deir Hanna. All photographs were taken by the author in 2016.

The horizontal layout, compared to the vertical, reflects a desire to maintain a balance between the languages and promote equality and respect for the local inhabitants' identity, without compromising the status of the majority language. Nevertheless, as both languages are read from right to left, placing Arabic on the right prioritizes the identity of the inhabitants, all of whom are Palestinian Arab. It is only in the Gilboa Regional Council and in some of the LLs of the Hof HaCarmel Regional Council, whose mayors are Jewish, that Hebrew comes first in Palestinian Arab communities within the councils' jurisdictions. This horizontal layout is symbolically important in representing Arabic on an equal basis, despite its bureaucratic definition as a "minority language."[40]

In the vertical layout, there are six styles, of which three are dominant: Hebrew above Arabic, Arabic above Hebrew, and Arabic, Hebrew, and English. In the first two, the Hebrew is highly visible compared to the Arabic, but in the trilingual signs, this gap narrows. Overall, in both horizontal and vertical signs, Arabic's visibility is higher than that of the Hebrew.

Placing Arabic above Hebrew is antithetical to the signage in the Jewish space, in which Hebrew is above Arabic. The prioritization of Arabic reflects the relative status of the language, not in the national space, but in the local Palestinian Arab space, in which Arabic is the majority language—another aspect in which the dominance of Hebrew stands out.

The majority status of Arabic speakers is not evident in bi- and trilingual signs posted by Jewish mayors in Maʿalot Tarshiha معلوت ترشيحا, Turʿan طرعان, the communities of the Maʿale ʿIron Regional Council, or those posted by Palestinian-Arab mayors in Kaʿabiyya كعبية and al-Buqayʿa البقيعة (Peqiʿin in Hebrew) (fig. 2). The relative location of the two languages on these signs reconstructs their layout in national signs, in which the Hebrew is invariably on top (fig. 4).

[From left to right] **Figure 2.** Al-Buqayʿa. **Figure 3.** Yirka. **Figure 4.** Maʿale ʿIron Regional Council, Musmus.

In the case of al-Buqayʿa, the order—Hebrew, English, Arabic—may be explained by the fact that the Zionist narrative highlights the Jewish roots in Palestine, since Peqiʿin was a Jewish village in Roman times. Because of that, Israeli Jews feel more at home there and many visit the place, contributing to the local economy. Interestingly, while the sign was placed by the local municipality, it still reflects the state's ideology, as it dovetails with the municipality's economic interests.

In one case, that of Yirka (fig. 3), a monolingual sign in Hebrew is posted, which may be explained by the local Druze community's identification with Zionism (nearly 89 percent of Yirka's young men serve in the IDF).[41] This approach is also evident in the statue shaped like the map of Israel seen in the background. Here, the economic factor is added to the ideological one, as Yirka attracts many Jewish shoppers on weekends. It may also be that the exclusive use of Hebrew is due to the cultural impact of Jewish majority society: the sign in Yirka mirrors the monolingual landscape on the welcome signs in nearby Jewish locales.

Welcome signs that place Hebrew above Arabic reproduce the hegemonic discourse in Israel. The order of languages on the official landscape serves to naturalize Zionist ideology. As a result, ideology is "handed out" to the users of space as if it were a natural, integral, and neutral part thereof.[42]

The official state LL is not exclusive; in postcolonial readings, the oppressed often challenge spatial power relations by using the LL, among other things.[43] Examples in this dataset include monolingual Arabic on four signs in ʿArabat al-Batuf عرابة البطوف (also ʿAraba, fig. 5), Umm al-Fahm ام الفحم (fig. 6), Tamra طمرة, and Rumanah رمانة. Visual exclusivity of Arabic on welcome and other signs (in Umm al-Fahm, for instance) is a form of "symbolic resistance."[44] These signs are semiotic protest of the disempowered against Hebrew's visual dominance and related political injustices in the "general Israeli" space.

[From left to right] **Figure 5.** ʿAraba. **Figure 6.** Umm al-Fahm.

These Arabic-only signs stand out because of their location and design. The ʿAraba sign is posted on a square on Road 805, used by both Palestinian Arabs and Jews. This means that it is also directed at the "general Israeli" space. The cloth used for the signs in ʿAraba and Tamra is reminiscent of protest signs. The monolingual Arabic signage may also be related to the towns' local histories. ʿAraba has a strong nationalist reputation: the first martyr of Land Day in March 1976 died there, and two local protesters died in the October 2000 killings.[45] Three martyrs died in Umm al-Fahm, also known for its nationalism and Islamic zeal. Another reason relates to the relative remoteness of the locality and the resulting ethnolinguistic identity of the users of the surrounding space. Rumanah, for example, is located far from national transportation arteries, and Jews rarely visit the place.

Content—Including Meaning, Translation, and Transliteration of the Signs

On thirty-two of the thirty-eight welcome signs, a *greeting* is added to the place name. On twenty-five of those, the greeting is comprised of the Hebrew and Arabic words for "welcome." On seven signs, the English word is also included. The English transliteration of the Arabic name appears on seven signs, and the Hebrew form appears on one.

Multilingual signs are not solely used to indicate the town's location—they present it to visitors, both Palestinian Arab and Jewish. The greeting highlights the positive image and the local inhabitants' hospitality. The high frequency of Hebrew greetings, despite the fact that the target audience is mostly Palestinian Arab, expresses the desire of the national minority to counter negative stereotypes held by the Jewish majority society and to help make members of that society feel more at home. Perhaps it is also motivated by the marginalized minority's desire not to unnecessarily confront the authorities.[46] A third explanation is economic: Jews are invited to spend their money in Palestinian Arab towns. For example, in figure 7, the private, monolingual Hebrew business advertisement attests clearly to the "bottom-up" desire for integration, at least by some sectors in Palestinian Arab society.

Figure 7. Al-Biʿnah.

Finally, the presence of the Hebrew greeting may also be connected to the language's symbolic status as an agent of modernization in local Palestinian Arab society. Conversely, Arabic is absent from almost all welcome signs in Jewish towns, as well as in towns inhabited by both Jews and Palestinian Arabs such as Nazareth Illit, where Arabic is almost completely absent from signs (fig. 8).

Figure 8. Nazareth Illit.

Five of the signs included additional messages beyond the greeting. The signs in Sulam سولم and Rumanah feature social slogans. The first, in both Arabic and Hebrew, states: "Driver, slow down for children." The Hebrew translation of this message is designed not only to protect local children but perhaps also to combat Jewish stereotypes of reckless Palestinian Arab drivers. The second, in Arabic only, is "No to violence"—evidence of the growing violence in Palestinian Arab society in recent years.

In the three remaining cases, the messages are political. In Baqah, the Arabic and Hebrew message is "Baqah – City of Peace باقة مدينة السلام" (fig. 9). This sign should be understood in light of its location on a road frequented by Jewish citizens and state representatives and the orientation toward coexistence that characterizes the town. This is also indicated by the name of its main street, which was named after Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann. Both the welcome sign and the street name convey a message of national reconciliation and, at the same time, conceal the painful realities of the conflict.

Figure 9. Baqah.

In ʿAraba, a line from a poem by Palestinian Arab national poet Mahmoud Darwish appears only in Arabic (see the concrete wall below the sign in figure 5). Unlike the Baqah sign, the ʿAraba sign: "We were here in the past . . . and are here in the present . . . and in the future," does not promote Jewish-Arab reconciliation; rather,

it emphasizes Palestinian Arab indigeneity and historical continuity and highlights the territorial aspect of the conflict.

Finally, the message, "Umm al-Fahm at heart," appears on the Arabic-only sign seen in figure 6. These aspects are embodied by the photograph of the man's head on the sign, which includes the subject in it, and are also formalized by its physical structure—a large iron board that conveys strength. It is also notable that the message, quite unique in the overall landscape discussed here, is hidden from the view of non-Arab users, as it is located within the town, away from the eyes of those just passing by on the main highway at the town's entrance.

Another aspect pertaining to the content, namely *transliteration*, is also a key issue on welcome signs. On all bilingual signs, and on the great majority of trilingual signs, the Arabic names are transliterated into Hebrew, but English transliterations are rare. On most signs the Hebrew transliteration is accurate, except for rare cases. One common inaccuracy is due to the fact that Arabic has consonants that have no parallel in Hebrew. In these cases, an apostrophe is customarily added to a similar Hebrew letter to indicate that the original Arabic letter is different. Two common examples are the letters *jim* (ج, equivalent to the English *j*), transliterated into Hebrew as ג׳, and *ṣād* (ص, no English equivalent) transliterated as ס׳ (even though the Semitic parallel in Hebrew is the letter *ṣadi* – צ). The name of Jūlis (جولس), for example, was transliterated as גוליס, without the apostrophe and with the vowel י that is missing from the Arabic name, which uses a diacritic instead. Similarly, Muṣmuṣ (مصمص) was transliterated as מוסמוס, without the apostrophe and with the vowel ו. In a few cases, the Hebrew transliteration followed the diction and orthography of native Hebrew speakers and the related conventions of national signage. For example, the place names al-Muqaybala (المقيبلة) and al-Mushayrifa (المشيرفة) are transliterated, respectively, מוקיבלה and מושירפה, with the vowel ו added instead of the Arabic diacritic. Given that place names on signs very rarely include diacritic marks in either Arabic or Hebrew, this may have been done to help Hebrew speakers, most of whom do not know Arabic, pronounce the name correctly.

Another aspect observed on the signs is the use of two names, one Arabic and one Hebrew, for Palestinian Arab localities, with English transliteration that reflects the Hebrew form. In the bilingual sign in Yafat al-Naṣira, for example, the Hebrew word יפיע (Yafiʿa) appears under the Arabic name. In the welcome sign in al-Buqayʿa, the English transliteration Peqiʿin follows the Hebrew form פקיעין rather than the Arabic البقيعه. On these signs the local LL reproduces national signage conventions. These

respect Jewish linguistic and historical traditions; as mentioned above, al-Buqayʿa has a Jewish past, and thus may make Jewish visitors feel more at home. The reliance on Hebrew in the English place name may be due to the fact that the Palestinian Arabs, who gave the places their names (unlike their Jewish Israeli counterparts, perhaps), consider themselves followers of previous cultures who settled the country, as opposed to people who destroyed those who came before.[47] Alternatively, it may be that this is a case where the subaltern people have followed Jewish traditions "automatically," without realizing that the English and the Hebrew transliteration actually erase or downplay the local Palestinian Arab identity and history.

An important distinction between Hebrew and Arabic speakers must be made in this context. While very few Hebrew speakers are bilingual, the majority of Arabic speakers in Israel have at least some fluency in Hebrew. This means that any sign that includes Hebrew makes the Arabic form immediately irrelevant for most Jews. The Hebrew form addresses visitors, mostly Jewish tourists, enabling them to relate to the Zionist Israeli spatial perspective without knowing anything about its Palestinian Arab past. Adding the Hebrew alternative—particularly when the Hebrew name has its own history, as in localities previously populated by Jews such as al-Buqayʿa—creates two different linguistic signifiers for the same signified, serving two addressees who are differentially affected by this linguistic choice. For Arabic speakers who understand both languages, this attaches a split identity to the place. They may wonder whether they should use the Hebrew or the Arabic name in official or business correspondence.

A similar concern arises with the regional council welcome signs posted by their appointed Jewish mayors. In the case of Maʿale ʿIron (מעלה עירון, طلعة عارة), the Hebrew word *maʿale* was translated into Arabic as ṭalaʿah طلعة (English: "mountainside"), while the name ʿIron was replaced by the Arabic place name ʿArah (both refer to the riverbed, or *wadi*, that is the main geographical feature of this area). The Zimer Regional Council is also named after a nearby *wadi*. Here the shared name is a compromise between Hebrew and Arabic, as its grammatical root exists in both languages. This has led to the space "losing" its Palestinian Arab roots, since the regional council has not posted signs to indicate the names of the Palestinian Arab communities within its jurisdiction. Both ʿIron and Zimer increase the visibility of Hebrew toponymy. However, since this is related to the landscape, the usage may attest to a deliberate effort to avoid any political connotations.

Minority LL, Sociopolitical Justice, and Sublocality

The welcome signs in Palestinian Arab communities represent highly significant political paradigms. The situation in which Israel's Palestinian Arab citizens are a minority whose culture is repressed enables the minority to look at public space with a twofold gaze: one that is internal, within the boundaries of Palestinian Arab society, and one that is external, directed at Jewish society.

Jürgen Habermas considers the public sphere, such as political clubs, literary salons, and pubs, as intermediate spaces between the state and civil society, where social power relations may be redesigned.[48] The salient representation of Arabic and Hebrew on the signs, the horizontal bilingual layout, the greeting in both languages, and the use of both original Arabic and Hebrew names for some of the communities may reflect an intermediate space of a dignifying LL, placing the minority/subaltern and the majority visually on the same level, thus allotting dignity to both. In other words, the space of welcome signs re-signifies Israeli public space: it creates a linguistic reality and offers a worldview that challenges monolithic and hierarchical power relations. The LLs of these signs redefine the boundaries of sociopolitical relations vis-à-vis the majority society and present the lived realities of the Palestinian Arab minority in a manner adjusted to the needs and preferences of that majority.

The space of Arabic welcome signs in Israel is a local one that enters into dialogue with the hegemonic Israeli space; in most cases the Arabic space differs from the hegemonic space, challenges it on different levels, but still includes it—much like Foucault's heterotopic space.[49] The high visibility of Hebrew compared to Arabic, and the Hebrew greeting, "Welcome," demonstrate how the LL designed by Palestinian Arabs in Israel is related to the special status of this society—a minority group that enjoys limited civil rights only on the individual level, without formal political or cultural autonomy.[50] Therefore, the LL of the signs mediates between the Israeli hegemony and the subaltern Palestinian Arab minority. In this intermediate position, Palestinian Arab municipalities present a unique "display window" of linguistic locality, cutting themselves off from the national territory and creating, within their own boundaries, a semiofficial space that is distinct not only from the state's official space but also from the local identity. From a position of weakness, Palestinian society acts to reduce the possibilities the hegemonic power has to reject it, as well as to increase its own ability to integrate into the majority culture.

Despite these welcome signs' official status, their LL does not follow a uniform linguistic or formal policy. They present an array of representations. Is this lack

of uniformity accidental or deliberate? The design of linguistic space is affected by the different ideologies of the municipalities—what Henri Lefebvre calls representational spaces.[51] This diversity is probably related to the discretion given to the municipalities in designing the signs. In discussing the power-language relationship, Yasir Suleiman suggests that when there is imbalance in power relations, a certain type of balance may be achieved, under certain circumstances, by mobilizing the resources of language.[52] By playing on the organization of the languages in the LL, following Pierre Bourdieu and Suleiman, power relations are changed, and the spatial concepts of sovereignty and their political meanings may be challenged.[53]

The lack of linguistic and visual uniformity in the signs makes for a landscape rich in flexibility, diversity, local nuances, sublocality (specific groups within the Palestinian Arab locality), creativity, and autonomy. The varying degrees of match between the Arabic and nationwide signage relate to the viewpoints of the various actors in that space. The categories of the changing LL vary with socioeconomic, political, and perhaps even personal agendas. Their diversity is derived from distinct local perceptions and preferences (as in the monolingual signage in Umm al-Fahm, ʿAraba, Tamra, and Rumanah, as opposed to the bilingual signage in Deir Hanna دير حنا, Baqah, Kafr Kanna كفركنا, and Zimer) that ultimately form subcategories in the category of LL on Arabic welcome signs.

The frequently random variations of the signs betray the lack of ethnic, political, or geographical regulation. The LL dictated top-down by the mayors is far from uniform. The Palestinian Arab and Jewish mayors of Palestinian Arab municipalities, whose authority is determined by the state and whose budgets also include a major element of state funding, do not exactly follow the traditional dichotomy of the elite "at the top" identified with the sovereign and the locals "at the bottom." The LL in these municipalities forms an intermediate category between the national and local levels of (in this case, Palestinian Arab) citizens, as they collaborate with the state in some activities, including reproduction of its LL, while challenging it in others, to the point of redesigning space.

The LL that is dignifying in terms of its content and language demonstrates how these municipalities blur ethnonational distinctions and act as a bridge between Palestinian Arab and Jewish societies. By making both Hebrew and Arabic almost equally present in space, the landscapes they design infuse the space with bilingual and bicultural meanings, making it truly binational. Through this process of mutual

translation, the welcome signs offer a new cultural interpretation of reality—a symbolic attempt by Palestinian Arab society to design a hybrid cultural space. These signs create a "third space," in which the linguistic representation of both subaltern and sovereign are represented in a dignified manner.

Through the linguistic space, Palestinian Arab mayors promote political ideas of linguistic justice and social equality. To borrow once more from Boudon and his "good reasons," the high visibility of Hebrew on welcome signs can be viewed as instrumental behavior motivated by economic considerations in terms of state budgets and Jewish purchasing power. This reflects an economic rationale that is common worldwide, as in the representation of English alongside local languages in Paris, Berlin, and Kazan.[54]

Legally speaking, the signs comply with the former official status of the two languages. In practical terms, they are representative of the bilingualism of Palestinian Arab society. Nevertheless, the few cases of Arabic monolingualism may be viewed, according to Eliezer Ben-Rafael, as motivated by national pride.[55] It can also reflect a tendency to oppose top-down linguistic boundaries and state attempts at imposing linguistic naturalization—the hegemonic imposition of linguistic arrangements that cater to the majority and prioritize Hebrew, while pretending to maintain neutral language representation of all citizens.[56]

The discourse on the welcome signs voices the locality and sublocality that are constantly silenced by the national narrative. The division of space on the signs offers the potential to reach a more nuanced and differential view of Palestinian Arab society, which is often referred to by umbrella terms such as "the Arabs in Israel" or "Palestinian citizens of Israel," which promote an essentialist perspective that ignores the diversity within this society. This is particularly true of the Jewish mayors: local Palestinian Arabs tend to view them and the signs they have posted as articulating a dominant and marginalizing power.

The notable absence of English from most signs is perhaps evidence of the Palestinian Arab municipalities' failure to attract foreign tourists, or of the Israeli governments' ongoing failures to promote tourism in these places. It also has to do with the relative status of non-native languages: among the Palestinian Arabs in Israel, Hebrew has a higher status than English, and their "display window" is directed at the national rather than the international scene.

Conclusion

The contents of the entrance signs to Arab localities—that is, the welcome, the normative messages, the translation, and the names—reflect and reproduce power structures in the State of Israel. They diverge from the issues and cultural messages of the Israeli hegemonic space, not only in order to challenge them but also to contain them. The use Palestinians make of the entrance signs represents a sociolinguistic strategy of highlighting the complex history and, by implication, the frayed identity, of the space in Israel while minimizing the potential for friction inherent in that space.

As we have seen, welcome signs not only provide information or promote local economic interests but also articulate political ambitions, such as shared existence. Within this general framework, the formal organization of the linguistic landscape of the Palestinian Arab towns suggests the following four sociopolitical approaches:

1. A relatively balanced approach, represented by horizontal bilingualism, is represented by twenty-four signs with the place names in both Hebrew and Arabic (about two-thirds of the total sample). The same approach also characterizes twenty-four signs that include, in addition to the place name, a welcoming message in both Hebrew and Arabic. This approach expresses a desire to integrate into the Israeli sociocultural fabric and to reap the political and economic benefits of such integration. This is evident, for example, in the sign in Deir Hanna (fig. 1).
2. A mildly oppositional approach that locates the Arabic above the Hebrew (eleven signs, or 29 percent): this approach challenges but does not completely deny the hegemonic design of Israeli space. It also expresses a desire to reap the benefits of integration.
3. Prioritizing the Hebrew language and toponymy without excluding the Arabic language and toponymy (ten signs, 26 percent), as seen in figure 2 (al-Buqayʿa): this approach indicates a strong desire for integration into the Israeli hegemony.
4. Arabic exclusiveness that excludes Hebrew and challenges the Israeli hegemony (four signs, 10 percent), as in Umm al-Fahm (fig. 6).

Each of these four approaches represents a certain way of coping with the Israeli reality, and all are suggestive of local, internal sociopolitical worldviews in Palestinian Arab society. Three of them suggest that the majority within the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel subscribes to social integration and wants space to be reallocated and redefined as a shared space for both peoples. The time-space of Palestinian

society is linear, moving forward. Erving Goffman refers to human relations as a theater in which people perform and present themselves to others.[57] The dignifying LL, presented by Palestinian Arab society on the welcome signs, is a performative practice wherein this society seeks to outwardly express the Israeli-citizenship aspect of its identity, while temporarily marginalizing its dominant Palestinian Arab national identity. By doing so, it hopes that the majority society will consider the Palestinian Arab minority to be equal citizens, entitled to share the space and its resources.

To conclude, when examining linguistic space, not only does the identity of those responsible for the signs (top-down or bottom-up) need to be taken into account but also the signs' content and forms as affected by sociopolitical and historical reality. At the same time, the LL should be examined as a subtle mechanism that seeks to shape that reality. In addition to the insights regarding the specific case study analyzed above, the official design of the LL of the Palestinian Arab localities in Israel raises broader questions regarding the way the relations between the hegemonic majority and the marginalized minority are reflected in the landscape. The practices revealed in this study are relevant to other communities all over the world, especially where the official LL of an ethnic minority is shaped in the context of power relations with the hegemonic majority and an attempt to cope with them. The welcome signs at the entrances to Palestinian Arab towns in Israel articulate a complex field of co-optation and resistance, forming a third Arabic-Hebrew space of "soft" symbolic dialogue with the Hebrew-speaking hegemony. In this reality, LL can either exacerbate or mitigate tensions. In such conflicted areas, LL is a subdued but significant example of the way the marginalized use this space to bridge gaps and deliver messages to the establishment. The welcome signs, despite being official, mediate in diverse ways between the uniformity imposed by central authorities and the ethnic aspirations of minorities. LL reveals the exposition of complex mediatory practices between local community identity and various levels of government.

Notes

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Cloak and Dagger Exposé: Ars Poetica in the Halls of Justice

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The State of the Jews v Dareen Tatour:
A Theater of the Absurd in Two Acts

Dareen Tatour is a Palestinian citizen of Israel, who lives in the village of Reineh, near Nazareth. She had wanted to be a poet since she was little. The police prosecutor, diligent and determined, destroys her dream: Tatour is not a real poet—this is exposed for all to see, in an unprecedented discussion of the art of poetry that occurred in the halls of justice.

Editorial Note: The Israeli police arrested Dareen Tatour in October 2015, and in November 2015 an indictment was filed against her for incitement to violence and support for a terrorist organization. At the center of the indictment appears a poem that was published on YouTube and Facebook under the title "Qawem Ya Shaabi Qawemahum" (Resist, my people, resist them). A full—and distorted—translation of the poem as made by a police officer is cited in the indictment document. Tatour remained in detention for three months, then spent eighteen months under house arrest at her parents' home in Reineh (الرينة). She was convicted on May 3, 2018, and on July 31, 2018, she was sentenced to five months' imprisonment. She was released in September 2018. Yehouda Shenhav-Shahrabani's text describes two bizarre scenes from the courtroom during Tatour's trial.

The prosecutor, with a cloak and a dagger, insists for seven full hours—about a third of a short academic course—on solving the unsolved riddle of poetic theory: who is a poet? As if this were the poetic equivalent of Fermat's Last Theorem.

The prosecutor is a lawyer. She has a career and she is trying to be objective, as her profession requires. But she also has thoughts. Every once in a while her mouth loosens and discloses her thoughts. You have to read it to believe it. Instead of the discussion focusing on the semantic and political meanings contained in the poem written in Arabic for Arabs, the discussion in the halls of justice surrounds the "faithfulness" of its translation into Hebrew.

Act one: Who is a poet?

Witness: Prof. Nissim Kalderon, a professor of Hebrew poetry and editor of poetry magazines.

Cross-examination: two hours.

Prosecutor: You are assuming that the defendant is actually a poet.

Witness: Yes.

Prosecutor: Will you agree with me that you do not have prior acquaintance?

Witness: No prior acquaintance, except that I read the indictment and it contains a poem, and someone who writes a poem is a poet.

Prosecutor: If I told you that some would say the text is immature, would that change your position?

Witness: All poetry, even immature, enjoys the status of poetry.

Prosecutor: Who defines it as a poem?

Witness: There is no authority that defines a poem as a poem. Whatever the poet defines as a poem is a poem.

Prosecutor: How do you know the defendant defines it as a poem?

Witness: It was published in short lines, and since it contains a rhythmic element it is reasonable to assume it is a poem.

Prosecutor: What rhythmic element?

Witness: Musicality. "Resist, resist my people," that is musicality that stems from repetition. There is a musical and verbal connection between the repeating lines, which are sometimes called a refrain. When they charged her, they did not dare write it in continuous lines, but in short lines. Even the prosecutor understood before me that it was a poem.

Prosecutor: If I write a text and the text has eight lines, short lines, and after every two lines there are another two lines that repeat themselves, would you call that a poem?

Witness: Yes.

The prosecutor wishes to establish rules for the theory of poetics and expounds with unusual diligence on the differences between prose, poetics, literal figure, faithful poetry, and derivative poetry. The prosecutor does not seem to agree with the positions of the poetic giants through the ages. For her it is do or die. Dareen Tatour is not a poet, even if this is not her first poem in Arabic written with a rhythmic element in short, repetitive lines. If Tatour is a poet, this trial is a farce because democratic countries do not take poets to court and do not isolate poets from the outside world for three years.

In democratic countries poem writing is protected by freedom of speech, the minority view needs to be heard and so on—other values that all have the stench of leftism. The prosecutor will not let Tatour be called a poet, because if Tatour is a poet, Israel is North Korea or the People's Republic of China. Slowly the prosecutor begins to understand that she is facing a leftist professor. She tenses when the poetry expert explains that the poem was written in a genre accepted in Palestinian nationalist poetry, thousands of whose like line bookshelves in Arabic, just like their parallels in the traditions of all nationalist poetries, including Zionism's.

Things come to a head when the witness says that "there is no authority that defines a poem as a poem." The prosecutor is now going to prove that the court is looking at a leftist in the disguise of objectivity.

> Prosecutor: You participate in literary evenings and even attended an event . . . in Tel Aviv, called "Poetry in the Shadow of Terror."
>
> Witness: I attend several events a week, and I don't remember them all.

Surely when the prosecutor gets back to her office, she will demand regulations and an ethical code, and maybe somebody up there will understand the state of emergency and write an outline of a "poetry law." The Ministry of Culture will establish a licensing unit to authorize poets, like dentists, and set standards for poetic negligence; the Ministry of Public Security will make sure there are no imposters and will impose administrative detention as needed; and the Ministry of Health will revoke the license of a poet struck by madness or divine inspiration (whichever comes first).

Now all that remains for the prosecutor, who shows no signs of fatigue, is to prove that the word *shahid* (شهيد) means terrorist. Slowly but surely it becomes clear that the prosecutor does not understand Arabic. She asks a translator to take the stand on her behalf.

The witness is an older man with thirty years tenure in the Nazareth police. For the first time in his life, he was asked to translate a literary text into Hebrew, a language whose intricacies he does not know.

When the translation in Hebrew was submitted to the court, the translator apologized for several omissions and defects. Unfortunately, he did not realize that "Merkava" is the name of a tank, and other things and words were lost in translation. And what about the word *shahid*? The translator for the prosecution got stuck somewhere in the middle, between Arabic and Hebrew. *Shahid* is *shahid* (sh-a-h-i-d) in a Saussure-esque style. For the prosecution that is enough, because in Hebrew culture *shahid* means terrorist.

But the next witness, a translation expert for the defense, lists the different meanings of the term *shahid* in the dictionary "Tongue of the Arabs": "casualty," "victim," "martyr," "fallen." I assume that the prosecutor realized that she was again facing a witness who was not objective and had leftist views. She probably believes that it is important, apparently, for every word in Arabic to have only one meaning in Hebrew, even if it is taken out of its semantic context. As far as the prosecution is concerned, it would be best to leave the word *shahid* in its Hebrew transliteration and to rely on its meaning in Hebrew culture—as if the word's meaning in Arabic were identical to the meaning loaded onto it in Hebrew.

Act two: Who is a translator?

Witness: Dr. Yonatan Mendel, translator and researcher of translation between Arabic and Hebrew.

Cross-examination: five hours.

In the cross-examination, during which it seemed that the witness had become a defendant, videos (having nothing to do with Dareen Tatour) were shown depicting riots throughout the West Bank. The soundtrack played words like "*shahid*," "terror," "blood," "sanctity of the soil," "right of return," again and again, so much so that a Jewish ear might have thought these were quotes from the Zionist poems of Uri Zvi Greenberg that we learned in school ("It is blood that will decide who the sole ruler here is"; "A land is conquered by blood. And only she who was conquered by blood will be sanctified to the people of sanctity of blood"; "A miraculous return to the village, a cut down tree reconnecting with its trunk"; "I hate the peace of the surrendered").

Prosecutor: Do you consider yourself an objective witness?

Witness: Yes.

Prosecutor: How good is your Arabic?

Witness: Excellent.

Prosecutor: When you listen, it is hard for you to understand. Why?

Witness: There is a difference between simultaneous translation and translation of a written document.

. . .

Prosecutor: Do you think the Palestinian people is a people living under occupation?
Witness: The Palestinian people is a divided nation, it does not live in a free country.
. . .
Prosecutor: Do you think it has a right to resist occupation?
Witness: I support nonviolent resistance.
Prosecutor: You claim that Israelis automatically interpret the word *shahid* as related to terror.
Witness: Yes.
Prosecutor: You say that the Israeli Jewish interpretation of the word is distorted . . . and any Palestinian who heard it would understand it as "casualties" rather than "martyrs"?
Witness: I would actually say "victims" rather than "aggressors."
Prosecutor: First you wrote "casualties" rather than "martyrs," and now you are saying "victims" rather than "aggressors."
Witness: The word "*shahid*" in Hebrew is loaded. The vast majority of *shuhada* [the plural of *shahid*], or as we call them in Hebrew "*shahidim*," are civilians who did not seek to hurt Israelis.
Prosecutor: According to the police translation, it indicates a call for violence.
. . .
Prosecutor: You translated "rise up," whereas he translated "resist."
Witness: The root of the word in Arabic is قوم (q-w-m), and I looked for a similar root in Hebrew, so I chose "rise up." "Resist" is not wrong, but "rise up" is better.

Maybe someone will also propose a "translation law," because how could a certain word have a number of meanings? And so goes the discussion in Hebrew about a poem in Arabic, by people who are not competent in Arabic. Like Robinson Crusoe, who was certain that Friday would speak his language, they believe that each word in a language they do not understand has only one meaning in Hebrew. All the more so when it is a familiar word such as *shahid*.

The many hours the court spent considering the question of translation are a masquerade ball, a farce. Does anyone really think such a discussion can be held in Hebrew? Translation came up because the prosecutor—like everyone else in the courtroom—does not understand Arabic. After all, had the discussion taken place in Arabic, which until a year ago was an official language in Israel, the court would not have needed a translator. Had the prosecution, which repeatedly reiterated its pretension to objectivity, really had integrity, we could have expected it to humble itself and lay off of this case. Perhaps the prosecution was also exposed to a study

published in 2015 that shows that only 0.4% of the Jews in Israel are capable of understanding a text in Arabic. For its own reasons the prosecution did not let go of this case. On the contrary: it only increased its determination to produce this theater of the absurd.

Prosecutor: The poem does not refer only to the West Bank.

Witness: Correct.

Prosecutor: Actually, it also refers to within the Green Line.

Like a shot in a concert hall, the Green Line is the real issue. The same miserable border line that has long been erased from the Jews' maps in an impressive stroke of colonialism. Nobody talks about the Green Line anymore—except for our prosecutor, the anti-Semites from the United Nations, and a handful of peace envoys who come to the region every once in a while. The Jews have no Green Line anymore. Judea and Samaria are here, this is the land of our forefathers, and the Green Line is crossed by Jews, but only by Jews. And in order for the Palestinians—those who are called the Arabs of Israel—not to cross the Green Line, it has to be seared into their consciousness.

Had Dareen Tatour been the resident of a village near Ramallah, I believe nobody would be asking whether she is a poet. She would have been put in administrative detention for incitement. But within the Green Line, the administrative detention of a poet is no small matter. Therefore it needs to be proven that she is not a poet. Down below, beneath it all, behind the facade of the supposedly "liberal" law, the prosecutor is doing what she is supposed to do: intimidate, deter, censor poetry, and turn the poet into an enemy. So shall it be done to anyone who dares write nationalist—not Zionist—poetry within the Green Line. Now all that remains is to call her an "inciter." If we repeat the speech act enough times, it will work. And what about all those who were not suspected of incitement, despite their words? A senior member of Knesset ("Anyone who pulls out a knife or a screwdriver—needs to be shot to kill"), a senior Likud member ("The Sudanese are a cancer in our body"), and a prime minister ("The Arab voters are swarming in huge numbers to the polls")—and that is just a partial list.

Nobody in the courthouse could see that it was an absurd sight: that we were faced with a prosecutor arguing in Hebrew about the meaning of words in Arabic that can be understood only within the Arabic poetic tradition. More so: the argument was not about the poem or about its quality, but about the quality of its translation into Hebrew.

Yet still, within that whole mess, we learned—with the help of the erudite prosecutor—some fundamental facts about the state of culture in Israel. What is an Arabic poem? One that can be explained in Hebrew, because it has no existence in

the original. What is a translation? One that uproots the sapling from its cultural soil and environment and plants it in foreign soil to create a Tower of Babel of words. Who is a translator? Someone authorized by the government to find for every word in Arabic a single meaning in Hebrew. Who is a prosecutor? Someone who will do whatever they can to prevent Palestinian nationalist poetry from happening within the Green Line. Who is a poet? She who exposes the depths of the soul and the lies of the regime. The prosecution's questions reveal what it wishes to hide: that there are people suffering under oppression and disenfranchisement who are not entitled to the same privileges as the Jews.

Below is Tatour's poem, "Qawem Ya Shaabi Qawemahum," in the original Arabic:

قاوم يا شعبي قاومهم
في القدس ضمدت جراحي
ونفثت همومي لله
وحملت الروح على كفي
من أجل فلسطين عربي
لن أرضى بالحل السلمي
لن أُنزل أبداً راياتي
حتى أُنزلهم من وطني
أركعهم لزمان الآتي
قاوم يا شعبي قاومهم
قاوم سطو المستوطن
واتبع قافلة الشهداء
مزق دستوراً من عار
قد حمل الذل القهار
أردعنا من رد الحق
حرقوا الأطفال بلا ذنب

وهديل قنصوها علناً
قتلوها في وضح نهار
قاوم يا شعبي قاومهم
قاوم بطش المستعربْ
لا تصغِ السمع لأذناب
ربطونا بالوهم السلمي
لا تخشى ألسن ماركافا
فالحق في قلبك أقوى
ما دمت تقاوم في وطن
عاش الغزوات وما كلّ
فعليٌّ نادى من قبره
قاوم يا شعبي الثائر
واكتبني نثراً في الندّ
قد صرتَ الرد لأشلائي
قاوم يا شعبي قاومهم

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Tamara Naser

Ice Cream in the Car

Translation from the Arabic: Serene Husni

Literary editor: Shoshana London Sappir

prose

Before the flaming ball of the sun, I stood and saw my summer projects vanish. Dust of flying nihilism that was crushed, faded without passing through the orderly phases of disappearance. I had an elegant abortion: no blood, no tissues, no internal organs, no intestines, no liquids, and no mucus. The sun rays slipped away inside me, and I had the feeling that my organs were swelling and bloating like a fruit that overripened and rotted.
I stole a glance at a shady spot and I headed toward it, defeated. I had a headache. She put her hand on my shoulder and said: "It's OK sister, it's only a driver's license . . . Take it easy."

"What's OK? No, it's not OK, don't touch me!"

She was trying with me in different ways. She brought a bottle of water; I swallowed it at once, then spat it out in consecutive rounds. She reached into her purse, looking for something for me to wipe my face with while repeating her sentence that everything would be all right, and that my reaction was somewhat excessive and wasn't proportionate to what had happened. I felt that what had preceded this anxiety attack was just a blurry event that I hadn't cried about. I wasn't crying about the driver's license that the police and the Israeli court had just taken away from me, I was crying about something I'd lost a long time ago . . . something that wasn't mine to begin with. My mindset just chose to adopt the story of the license.

I said: "I'll calm down now . . . I don't know what came over me . . . yes it's just a license." Her smile was racing a river of tears that I didn't immediately understand, like I was used to. Was she happy that I was quickly convinced that she was right and everything would really be OK? Or did she allow herself to fall apart quickly and delicately only when I began to show some composure?

The sun was burning, melting layers of skin off of me slowly. "Let's get out of here," she said.

I drove the car back. The decision would only go into effect two months from today. Things appeared in high definition through the windows—the details were a lot clearer than they should be, and the colors were so bright they appeared to me to be outside the spectrum.

"What now?" she said hesitantly.

"How should I know?" I snapped.

prose

Then silence fell like a closed curtain dividing the space into two shores: one of language and another that didn't know language. We didn't say a word for a while, then I saw her pull out her phone and write a text with two thumbs that seemed to me to be competing for screen space. Meanwhile, I was searching in my head for what she meant by "What now?" Ontologically: "What now? What later? And what about before? And what about God?". . . My head was noisy with words and the edges of their letters were sharp like a knife, which caused me more pain.

I said: "I'm thinking of going to visit my parents."

She said: "How come?"

"How should I know?" I said; then silence fell over us again.

The sun was mean, and I felt like it was kissing me on hell's grill; it removed the first layer of my skin. I pulled the car over, and before she left the car to head to the apartment, she said, "OK, send me a message when you arrive." I nodded and watched her get out of the car and walk toward the stairs, while her thumbs returned to that wrestling match in the center of the glass ring. And when I was sure I was out of her sight, I drove the car so fast, the speed was nearly excessive and illegal. Who cares about "legal" after today, I told myself, they'd confiscated my license. Then a thought crossed my mind that the worst they could do now was throw me in a cell with clear borders. Was that what I wanted?

I continued at the same speed and flipped radio stations: Al Shams, Galgalatz, Kol Yisrael, Sawt el Mada, Sawa. I turned the radio off. I tried to ignore and distance the voices of my father's wrath because of the way I dealt with car issues, the driver's license, the insurance and the test (in Yarka), the water and oil check (whenever I had the chance), and the handbrake (which should always be pulled all the way up). . . But why should I worry about these things now? They weren't what was terrifying me.

The sun was hellish and the car's air conditioner couldn't handle the heat. My complexion liquefied and dripped out. How was it that tires didn't melt in heat like this? My father continuously reminded me that when I was a child, I asked him that question every summer, and his response came to me readily. He'd say: "How will they melt? We humans will melt and decompose before these tires do." Then he'd step out of the car while I watched him fill his tires with air (bar 2.5 with a smile on his face, or what I thought was a smile, and it eluded me that his facial expression might have been annoyed with the sun). I looked at the fuel gauge and, contrary to expectations, it was fine.

While I tried to adjust the air conditioner, I received a message: "So did you make it?" I read it and threw the phone at the passenger's seat, as I did with everything that got into the car with me.

An old memory suddenly came to me: we were in the car coming back from school. I had just finished enjoying a big ice cream, and it seemed my body had been injected with the dose of sugar, and with a random and elaborate arm movement, I threw the ice cream stick in the car, thinking it was kind of cute. A moment later, I saw my father gradually slow down until the car came to a stop at the side of the road. It seemed as though his yelling was coming from the depths of the world. He scolded me for what I'd done, and bit by bit his yelling took the form of a lecture in which he said: "Dima, the car is like a house, by God, it's like a house, Dima! Is this how you behave in your house now? Is this how you'll behave in your house in the future? . . . A human spends as much time in the car these days as they do in the house. You have to take care of the car the same way you take care of yourself and your house."

I remember when we arrived at home that day: my mother was at home by chance. She looked at me and asked what had happened, and my father quickly responded that he had taught me an important lesson today: "Your daughter treats a car like a garbage dump." My mother patted my shoulder: "It's OK, my love, the car to your dad is like his wife . . . I wish he took as much care of me as he does of his shit car."

I got bored with trying to adjust the air conditioner and surrendered to the heat. How would I tolerate the rest of the road? I started speeding, then I took a quick look at my phone at my side: "So did you make it?" Where was I going anyway this early in the morning, even though I already knew the house was empty at this time? Was this what I wanted? For it to be empty?

I slowed down and grabbed the phone. I looked at it again. I looked up at the street for a moment, then looked down at the phone again, and during this dance,

a stray creature appeared before me—it seemed to me a dog from a distance, and when I got closer, I thought it was a jackal, and then I saw a cat in it. Why didn't this creature get out of the road? How stray is this animal, I said to myself; then out of nowhere, my tears started to fall. Tears and sweat and heat. Ice cream, I want ice cream. I stopped the car at the side of the road. I wrote a message: "No, that's it, I want to turn back." I recalled those small summer projects that I thought were forever gone, so I turned the car around, and drove back to them.

About Tamara Naser

Tamara Naser is a Palestinian author. She studied English literature, film, and psychology, has an MA, and is a certified bibliotherapist, providing therapy through stories and writing, at Haifa University.

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Sheikha Hlewa

The Gate to the Body

Translation from the Arabic: Shoshana London Sappir

Literary editor: Maisalon Dallashi

prose

For two weeks she's been listening through the peeling wall to the argument between her mother and father over whether to send her to boarding school. She can't catch most of the details, or understand why they are even discussing it. Not a word has been said about the virtues of the nuns and their role in girls' education. The conversation focuses solely on her and her body: how much of it other people will see, how they will see it, and what consequences that will have.

When the argument becomes heated, they start to whisper, when they talk about the reason she has to be sent to boarding school.

Her father claims they have reached the size that attracts the looks of the truck drivers passing in the morning on the road running next to the village, while her mother says they are hardly noticable behind her bra. Even when she takes it off and throws it on the nearest chair, you can hardly see them. She has not gotten used to the garment that traps her body, and she deftly slips it out from under her school blouse and breathes in relief.

But her father swears he saw with his own eyes a truck slowing down and the driver's eyes following the girl hurrying to the bus stop. A sleepy and lecherous driver. If it weren't for the morning mist, you could have seen him drooling.

"Have you no fear of God? Do you want somebody to seduce our daughter? When we're not looking, one of them will grab her and something terrible will happen!"

The size of her breasts and their roundness.

Her mother tells her in a harsh whisper to conceal their growth to soothe her father's wrath.

Meanwhile, she resists all of his attempts to send her daughter away from home to a school meant for orphans and the downtrodden.

"What will people say about us? That we can't raise our own daughter? What is she, an orphan?"

She doesn't think about the boarding school very much. She doesn't know a lot about it anyway. She has heard it is strict and harsh, but she is more disturbed by her parents' talking about a part of her body. Until now she hasn't been that concerned with it. Certainly, she never thought of it as an obstacle or something to drool over.

Once, she asked her best friend, "Did your father ever think of sending you to boarding school?"

"Why?"

"How big are your breasts? I mean, what is your bra size?"

"What's wrong with you? Are you nuts? First boarding school, then my bra size? What's the connection?"

"I don't know. I think my father thinks there's a connection."

If she hadn't burst out laughing hysterically at that moment, their precious friendship might have been ruined.

She spends many weeks trying to find the logical basis or equation between the sizes and development of teenage girls, and their refinement.

She spends more time than usual in front of the mirror, stroking her body more than usual. She focuses on her breasts and wonders what they can be compared to.

What comes to her mind makes her laugh. She imagines her aunt picking tomatoes from the family garden and sorting them into three containers: big, medium, and small.

The nun will arrange us, all of the new students, in a line, and sort us like tomatoes, she laughs to herself. I'll be with the medium ones, probably. I don't know.

Butheina is the only girl in her class who lives at a boarding school. After her parents died and her brothers' wives didn't want her, she was sent to live away from home. She continues to go to regular school in the morning, and in the afternoon she goes back to the boarding school. Her white school blouse is big on her. It is hard to tell whether she went to the boarding school because of the size of her breasts or because of the tragedy.

She doesn't talk or smile much. That's how she is, everyone says, and it has nothing to do with her nightly prison.

One morning the tragedy came full circle. Butheina disappeared. The girls said she ran away with a truck driver who delivered supplies to the nuns' boarding school.

He seduced her, they explained, and she went with him.

She told her mother the news. The silence that fell over her home was the first sign of her victory.

Her father closed the gate leading to boarding school forever.

A different gate opened to her.

The gate to the body.

Her body.

About Sheikha Hlewa

Sheikha Hlewa was born in 1968 in an unrecognized Bedouin village near Haifa. An author, poet, and educator, today she lives in Jaffa. She has an MA in Arabic and Islam from Tel Aviv University and is an instructor and curriculum developer. Her short stories have been translated into many languages and published in journals and websites in the Arab world and Israel. She has published four books (in Arabic): *Outside of the Seasons I Learned How to Fly*, poetry (Jordan, 2015); *Ladies of Darkness*, short stories (Jordan, 2015); *The Windows Are Broken Books*, short stories (Jordan, 2016); *Invitation No. C345*, short stories (Italy, 2018).

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Beshara B. Doumani
Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 370 pp.

Beshara Doumani's book is an in-depth investigation of family history in the Ottoman Middle East. Doumani explores family strategies of property devolution by comparing Islamic pious endowments (sing., waqf) and property litigations registered in the shari'a court records of two supposedly similar provincial Ottoman Arab towns: Tripoli, on the northeastern Mediterranean shore, and Nablus, in the hills of southern Syria. The study spans the period from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Doumani asks how propertied men and women in early modern Ottoman provincial urban societies reconstituted and reproduced their family ties and relations. In this way he aims at historicizing family and kinship relations in Ottoman Arab provincial settings prior to the emergence of the modern interventionist state during the nineteenth-century Ottoman reforms.

Doumani's analysis is based almost exclusively on the court records of Tripoli and Nablus, which he sees as archives of the "communal textual memory" of the inhabitants of the two towns (43). He combines a quantitative examination of pious endowments and property lawsuits among kin registered in the two courts throughout the two centuries under consideration with a microanalysis of the devolution of property and the social relations within a few families. Based on this analytical strategy, he compares the formation of gender and family in Nablus and Tripoli, uncovering major differences between these two urban societies. Doumani explains that the "ingrained differences in the local *political economies* [my emphasis, IA] of Nablus and Tripoli account . . . for the dramatic variations in the relationship between gender, property, and family organization as suggested by divergent patterns in family waqf endowments" (224).

Doumani maintains that despite its remarkable instructive potential, family history has remained an under-studied field of social history when it comes to Middle Eastern societies, owing to Orientalist stereotypes about Islam and its role in defining kinship and gender relations. He further argues that Middle Eastern family history

has fallen victim to working assumptions about a linear evolution of family structures from "traditional" (extended/patriarchal) to "modern" (nuclear/egalitarian). Such historically uninformed depictions explain why the study of Arab/Islamic families in the premodern period has been neglected (18). Doumani shows that by using family endowments for bypassing the rules of the shari'a law of inheritance, people in Tripoli included female family members as equal beneficiaries of the endowed property in question. People in Nablus, by contrast, used family endowments to exclude female members altogether. The punchline here is *not* proving the gender-wise more egalitarian family patterns in Tripoli in order to refute stereotypes of Muslim societies. Rather, it is an argument about the diversity, the actual differences in the gender and family patterns found in the two seemingly similar urban cultures. This leads Doumani to focus on the historical circumstances shaping each town, in search of an interpretive framework to explain the diversity—namely, the distinct political economy of each town and its surrounding regions. Doumani shows how despite their geographical and cultural proximity, the differences in the types of agrarian hinterland and in the religious culture of each town generated different paths in terms of social relations and family constructions in Tripoli and Nablus. This finding is a major achievement of the book, an effective demonstration of the indispensable contribution of family history, and social history as a whole, to our understanding of the history of the Middle East.

The book consists of seven chapters. Though featuring the name of a woman from Tripoli, Maryam 'Anklis, and her unique waqf in its title, the first chapter is in fact the introduction to the book, presenting its conceptual framework, its arguments, methods, questions, and structure. The second chapter focuses on the composition of the court records that survived in the two cities, their treatment as communal archives, and the types of documents analyzed in the book, highlighting the significance of family waqf endowments for understanding the differences between gendered strategies of property devolution in Tripoli and Nablus. These differences become evident through the thorough comparative analysis conducted in the third, fourth, and fifth chapters. Each of these chapters focuses on a certain quality of the various family waqfs, based on their role in reshaping notions of family and gender—namely, being a family charter, a social act, and a boundary marker (respectively). In the sixth chapter Doumani explains the different, sometimes contrasting, patterns of property devolution and notions of gender and family that developed in the two cities, using the interpretive framework of political economy. In the last chapter Doumani presents his conclusions. An appendix that provides a full list of the Tripoli court records closes the book.

Doumani's book is extremely insightful. It is hard to exaggerate its contribution to our understanding of the early modern history of the Ottoman Arab provinces and the history of the Ottoman Middle East as a whole. Nevertheless, there are two caveats that should be noted. In terms of sources, by not using documents from Ottoman archives, the author basically gives up on the perspective of the Ottoman central government concerning the issues explored in the study. This absence is not a minor issue, given the interpretive framework of political economy adopted for explaining the differences between Tripoli and Nablus with regard to the patterns of property devolution and gender in families. Bearing in mind the significance of the relations between the Ottoman government and urban provincial elites in the political economy of the provincial centers, the exclusion of the government's perspective is puzzling. Another drawback of the book concerns certain editing choices. These issues might be a matter of style and taste, but to this reviewer's mind, the book has several repetitions, and some footnotes are too long. As a result the text is at times too long and heavy.

These reservations notwithstanding, Doumani's book constitutes a significant landmark in the family and social histories of the Ottoman Middle East. The contribution of this study is particularly remarkable given the current state of research on the social history of the Middle East. Doumani himself points out that he is doing "social history at a time when the popular and intellectual movements that gave rise to it seem to have dissipated" (46). In addition to his sophisticated insights about the interrelations between strategies of property devolution, gender roles, and family structures, the family stories that Doumani reconstructs, attentively drawing on the intricate legal texts of the court records, represent a major accomplishment. Readers benefit from a rare opportunity to imagine the everyday realities of men and women who lived in the urban societies of the eastern Mediterranean about three centuries ago, to learn about their family relations, their social and economic conditions, their houses, alleys, orchards and fields, their fears and beliefs, their fortunes and agonies. Doumani successfully breathes life into people of the past, thereby making them more familiar and less prone to stereotyping by people of the present.

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