

BEN 'EVER LA-'ARAV, X-XI

Contacts between Arabic Literature and Jewish Literature
in the Middle Ages and Modern Times

BEN 'EVER LA-'ARAV

Contacts between Arabic Literature and Jewish Literature
in the Middle Ages and Modern Times

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Edited by
Yosef Yuval Tobi



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On the cover:

A Hebrew-Arabic poem by Shalom Shabazī's in his own handwriting
Yemen, 17th century (Tobi Collection)

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Editor's Comment

The first volume of the journal, *Ben 'Ever La-'Arav*, was published at the University of Haifa in 1998, and is based mainly on articles that were delivered at the university as lectures during a conference organized by the Society for the Study of Medieval Judeo-Arabic Culture. Since that time, additional volumes have been published, and the present double volume (10–11), as in some of the previous volumes, is now published under the auspices of the Center for Comparative Research on Jewish and Arab Culture at the Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education in Baqa al-Gharbiyyah. This fact reflects the growing interest among all sectors in the State of Israel, those that share a common interest in medieval Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic culture and in Arab culture during the Middle Ages, as well as that of our modern age. This is clearly evidenced by the fact that the journal was adopted by a major Arab learning institution in Israel, as also because the authors of the articles belong to the various sectors of the state, and by the fact that from the publication of one volume to the next there has been an increase in the articles submitted for publication in the journal, and which accounts for the current expanded edition.

There can be no doubt that the issues discussed in the journal from the beginning of its inception until now are of utmost importance, not only because of the reality of the existence of two cultures in the State of Israel, one growing alongside the other and even one within the other, but also because many of the Jewish communities formerly lived within the expanses of Arab culture until the middle of the twentieth century. It should be remembered that this culture was an inseparable part of the culture of these communities, especially during the *Golden Age* in medieval Spain, in North Africa and in the Middle East.

It is with great pleasure that I express a sense of profound appreciation for the institutions of Al-Qasemi Academy, and especially unto Dr. Jamal Abu Hussein – Deputy President of the Academy, unto Prof. Yasin Kittane – former Rector of the Academy, unto Dr. Qutaiba Agbaria – head of the research department at the Academy, and unto my friend, Dr. Abdallah Tarabieh, from the Department of Hebrew Language and Literature, for his extensive efforts in promoting the study of the Hebrew language and its literature at the Academy, as well as for his support of the publication of the journal *Ben 'Ever La-'Arav*. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to scholars from the various universities in Israel for agreeing to serve as members of the editorial board.

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Adel Shakour

Arabic Traces in Salmān Maṣālḥa's Language in the Literary Translated Work *The Cactus*

Introduction: The Bilingual Literary Activity of Israeli Arab Authors

Eleven Arab novelists are currently writing in Hebrew in Israel, an apparently growing trend among Arab authors. The choice of these Arab authors to write in Hebrew is a conscious aesthetic choice, a reflection of their natural gift for writing, a mastery of Hebrew and a political choice. The writers are: Salmān Maṣālḥa,¹ Anton Shammās,² Na'im 'Araidi,³ Sayyed Kashū,⁴ 'Aṭallah Maṣour,⁵ Geriēs Ṭannous, Muḥammad Ghanāyim, Osāma Abu-Ghosh, 'Odeh Bishārāt, Ayman Siksek, and Salmān Naṭūr.⁶

I. Use of Arabic in Hebrew Texts

Israeli Jewish society appears to perceive Arab culture as inferior and less modern compared to its own culture than cultures such as Russian

¹ See on him below, chapter III.

² Born in 1950 in the village of Fassuta in Galilee. He is renowned for his translation of Emile Ḥabibi's work from Arabic to Hebrew, for articles in the Israeli press, and especially for his first novel, *Arabesques* (1986), a very significant work of fiction by an Israeli Arab. Not only, it was the original novel not written in Arabic, but was not even translated into Arabic although its author is one of the foremost translators from Arabic to Hebrew (Margolin 1996, p. 18).

³ Born in the Druze village of Maghar, where he still lives with his family. He has a Ph.D. in Hebrew literature about the poetry of Uri Zvi Grinberg. He is a leading poet and the recipient of several prizes. Many of his poems, which are partly in Arabic and partly in Hebrew, have been translated into different languages and appear in poetry anthologies throughout Europe. His first novel was *Fatal Immersion*.

⁴ Born in Ṭīra. He studied philosophy and sociology at the Hebrew University.

⁵ Born in Gush Halav in Lower Galilee. Studied in Lebanon (1946–1950), returned to Israel in 1950, granted Israeli citizenship after ten years. He spent a year in Kibbutz *Sha'ar Ha-'Amaqim* where he studied Hebrew. He was a journalist for *Ha-'Olam Ha-Zeh* (1954–1958) and *Ha'arets* (1958–1991). He writes in Arabic, Hebrew, and English.

⁶ Shakour 2013, p. 1.

and Western European culture, which they see as more sophisticated. Arab writers who translate literary works from Arabic into Hebrew have this issue in mind as they try to show the value of Israel neighboring Arab culture. These translators have always believed that it is extremely important for Arab culture — the culture of the “nearby-stranger” — to be seen in a positive light, more often than not for political and compassionate reasons as opposed to the purely aesthetic goal of making translations of belles letters in Arabic available for others’ esthetic delectation.⁷ One can therefore regard the use of Arabic words in Hebrew works by Arab authors as a deliberate attempt to bridge what these authors see as an intercultural division separating the target culture from their own.

As a component of human civilization, literature is an important vehicle for conveying concepts and terms with and without the presence of physical contact between cultures. It also provides an important channel through which languages can influence one another, especially when works in one language are translated into another, and when nations and individuals share cultural encounters.⁸ The Arab writers not only regard themselves as writers of Hebrew literature or translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew, but also as emissaries and mediators between Arab and Hebrew culture, as well as possible contributors to resolving the Israeli Arab conflict. So, their strategy of including words in Arabic in their Hebrew literary texts is a conscious choice. It is obvious that the Arab authors could easily have found an alternative to the Arabic words they use since their Hebrew is fluent and in some cases their Hebrew writing is more developed than their Arabic.⁹ However, these authors have a reason for using Arabic in their Hebrew writing, as

⁷ ‘Amit-Kochavi 1992 pp. 270–271.

⁸ Basal 2004, p. 34.

⁹ For example, G. Ṭannous has stated (personal message, 15.1.2012), that he can better express himself in Hebrew than in Arabic: “In Hebrew I was able to find several synonyms for each word, I felt freer.”

they wish to present an authentic view of Arab society and make the characters' speech seems real.¹⁰

a. Arabic Words and Phrases

M. Horvitz describes the phenomenon of using Arabic words and phrases in Hebrew writing as *עִבְרָרְבִית* [*Ivrvavit*], noting that other literary works also use words from their heroes' native tongue to create authentic seeming characters.¹¹ When a writer chooses to use *עִבְרָרְבִית* in various linguistic contexts, it is no random choice but rather a deliberate act with both a meaning and a goal, like any other unique language usages. According to O. Schwarzwald, the use of *עִבְרָרְבִית* in certain linguistic contexts indicates – among other things – that the author regards non-Hebrew linguistic expressions, not simply as an artistic component which can help to create an authentic literary linguistic experience in the discourse and conversation of Israeli Jews. They also express the social and ethnic essence of eastern Jews.¹² According to J. Hofman (1970:5-14), the various functional divisions of *עִבְרָרְבִית* and their linguistic elements not only convey the atmosphere of the story and underscore its reliability as a transmitter of a certain reality (poetic function), but also (and perhaps first and foremost) they resonate the “ethnic identity” of Jews from Yemen, Aleppo or Baghdad.¹³

b. Loan Translation

Loan translation involves creating a new lexical value (*lexeme*) in the borrowing language, which has the same lexical meaning of the constituents of the original form in the lending language. Nir defines loan translation as a new form (word or phrase) which imitates the equivalent

¹⁰ On Authentic Language and Authentic Reported Speech in Hebrew and Yiddish, see Even Zohar & Shmeruk 1981, pp. 82-87; Margolin 2003, p. 53-60.

¹¹ Horvitz 1998, pp. 57-59.

¹² Schwarzwald 1994, pp. 39-41.

¹³ Hofman 1970, pp. 5-14.

form in the foreign language.¹⁴ Maman, who dealt with Arabicized Hebrew and types of Arabacizm, describes loan translation as the creation of a completely new Hebrew word or phrase using the pattern of a word or phrase in another language.¹⁵ To hone his definition, he differentiates between loan translation and borrowed meaning. Regarding borrowed meaning, the word or phrase already exists in Hebrew and acquires an additional meaning. However, in loan translation the word or phrase enters Hebrew for the first time through Arabic.¹⁶

When Hebrew was first revived as a language, it lacked vocabulary for expressing everyday matters and Hebrew culture. Words and phrases thus needed to be borrowed from various sources, chiefly Yiddish and spoken Arabic. Yiddish contributed to the expressions of contempt and insult, wit and humor, cuisine, and other areas of life for which language is needed. Spoken Arabic enhanced the language of play and the language of Israel's younger generation social interactions. Arabic also contributed to Hebrew's system of invectives, greetings, exclamations, socializing, language of sex, terms for oriental cuisine, and so on. It can at times be fairly complex, to ascertain the historical source of loan translations.¹⁷

II. Maṣālḥa's Use of Arabic Words and Phrases in His Hebrew Text

Slamān Maṣālḥa was born on November 4, 1953 to a Druze family in Maghar, a village in the Galilee in northern Israel. After graduating from high school, he moved to Jerusalem, where he has been living since 1972. He studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he wrote his PhD. Dissertation in Arabic literature, about the mythological elements of ancient Arabic poetry. He taught Arabic language and

¹⁴ Nir 1978, p. 32.

¹⁵ Maman 1991, pp. 106–115.

¹⁶ Regarding loan translation in the Hebrew writing of Israeli Arab authors see Shakour 2010, pp. 45–76; 2014, pp. 83–94.

¹⁷ Bar-Adon 1967, pp. 252–254.

literature at the Hebrew University and served as co-editor of the Concordance of Early Arabic Poetry. One volume of the concordance, titled *Six Early Arab Poets: New Edition and Concordance* (Jerusalem 1999). Maṣālḥa is the author of eight volumes of poetry. Some of his Arabic and Hebrew poems have been performed to music and recorded by leading Israeli and Palestinian musicians, among them: Kamilya Jubran, Micha Shitrit, Yair Dalal and others. In 2006, Maṣālḥa won the Presidents Prize for his collection of Hebrew poetry *In Place* (Tel Aviv 2004).

The Cactus, a novel of Sahar Khalifeh (born 1941), tells the story of a Palestinian family living in Nablus and suffering from the Israeli occupation, because of its opposition to it. One of Khalifeh's best-known works is the novel *Wild Thorns* (1976). She is the founder of the Women's Affairs Center in Nablus, which now has branches in Gaza and 'Amman (Jordan). Her works include several novels and essays, translated into several languages, including Hebrew, as well as non-fiction. Maṣālḥa translated three literary works from Arabic into Hebrew. One of them is *The Cactus*.

a. Arabic Words and Phrases

When writing in Hebrew, Maṣālḥa sprinkles his literary translated work *The Cactus* with Arabic words and phrases. The use of Arabic seems a distinct feature of his writing in Hebrew, and its purpose is to convey the flavor and atmosphere of the culture described in the text. In the following are brought some of the Arabic words, Maṣālḥa used in his Hebrew translation of the Arabic original:¹⁸

1. ḥamūla(h) [family]

(28) אחרי הצהרים עזבו את ביתם הקטן בשדרות אלסעאדה והלכו לבית החמולה

In the afternoon, they left their small house on al-Sa'āde Avenue and went to the family's house.

¹⁸ The numbers in parenthesis allude to the pages in the printed Hebrew text and the Arabic text.

وَفِي الْعَصْرِ غَاذَرُوا مَنْزِلَهُمَا الصَّغِيرِ فِي جَادَةِ السَّعَادَةِ وَتَوَجَّهَا لِذَارِ الْعَيْلَةِ (31)

2. *fallāh* [farmer]

אביך היה פלאח (איכר) כל חייו (33)

Your father was a farmer all his life.

كَانَ وَالذَّكَ مُزَارِعًا طَيْلَةً غُمْرَهُ (35)

3. *ke'akhim* [bagels]

ומוכר הביצים והכעכים (והעוגות) מכריז על סחורותיו שאין קונה להם (39)

And the seller of eggs and bagels calls out his wares that nobody buys.

وَبَائِعُ الْكُكْكِ وَالْبَيْضِ يُنَادِي عَلَى بَضَاعَتِهِ الَّتِي لَا تَكُونُ رَائِجَةً فِي الْغَالِبِ (43)

4. *'inšalla(h)* [if Allah wills]

ומה שלום אביך, יא שחאדה, שאל עאדל בעדינות. בסדר, אנשאלה (אם ירצה האל) (76)

And how is your father, Shḥade, Adel asked gently. Allright, if Allah wills.

وَمَا أَحْبَابُ الْوَالِدِ يَا شَحَادَهُ لَعَلَّهُ بِخَيْرٍ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ؟ (79)

5. *yā jamā'a(h)* [guys]

אני לא מרגל יא ג'מאעה (106)

I'm not a spy, guys.

أَنَا لَسْتُ جَاسُوسًا يَا جَمَاعَةَ (107)

6. *tfaḍḍalū* [please]

תפדלו (בבקשה), אמרה האישה (68)

Please, said the woman.

قَالَتْ الْمَرْأَةُ تَفَضَّلُوا (70)

7. *yā rabb* [O Lord]

תציל אותנו, יא רב, (אלוהים) מהמצב הזה (84)

Save us, O Lord from this situation

تُبُّ عَلَيْنَا يَا رَبِّ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْحَالِ (87)

8. *marḥaba(h)* [Hello]
 אף אחד לא אמר לי מרחבא (שלום) (110)
 No one said Hello to me
 لَمْ يَقُلْ لِي وَاحِدٌ مِنْكُمْ مَرَحِبَةً (111)
9. *'ahlan wa-sahlan* [welcome]
 אה לן וסה לן. איפה עאדל? (37)
 Welcome. Where is Adel?
 أَهلاً وَسَهْلاً. وَأَيْنَ عَادِلٌ؟ (40)
10. *walla(h)* [Really]
 וא ללה (באמת), מנומס בן טובים! (131)
 Really, a polite boy from a good family!
 لا والله مُؤَدَّب ابن أكابر (132)

b. Loan Arabic Idioms and Proverbs

The idioms and proverbs identified in Maṣālāḥa's Hebrew political discourse seem to indicate that he relates to these forms in two ways: (a) as linguistic material, which faithfully reflects the source culture; (b) as national-cultural elements reflecting the uniqueness of the nation that uses them and that nation's ethnic and historical characteristics. Unlike loan translation, which can be naturally interspersed within the literary text, the use of translated idioms and proverbs is a relatively overt way of introducing a speaker's culture to the target culture.¹⁹ Here are some examples:²⁰

¹⁹ Some of the idioms will possibly be familiar to Jewish readers of Middle East origin. Guri (1994, p. 13) notes that idioms with national-cultural elements reflect the unique character of the nation speaking the language as well as its historical and ethnic characteristics, etc. According to him, a literal translation may suffer from a lack of semantic transparency and will not be comprehensible to the reader, thus making it invalid.

²⁰ The numbers in parenthesis allude to the pages in the printed Hebrew text and the Arabic text.

1. *Ve-hayyad ha' aḥat lo timḥe kappayim*
 (21) והיד האחת לא תמחא כפיים
 And one hand does not join in the applause.
 (24) **وَالْيَدُ الْوَاحِدَةُ لَا تُصَفِّقُ**
 The colloquial Arabic proverb: **إيدٌ وَحِدَةٌ مَا بِنُصَفِّقُ**. Its meaning is 'One hand does not join in the applause'.

2. *Hayyad šebamayim lo kmo hayyad šeba'eš*
 (73) אמרתי לו שהיד שבמים לא כמו היד שבאש
 I said to him that the hand in the water is not like the hand in the fire.
 (76) **قُلْتُ لَهُ الْإِيذُ اللَّيِّ فِي الْمَيَّةِ مِثْلُ الْإِيذِ اللَّيِّ فِي النَّارِ**
 The colloquial Arabic proverb: **الْإِيذُ اللَّيِّ فِي الْمَيَّةِ مِثْلُ الْإِيذِ اللَّيِّ فِي النَّارِ**

3. *Hizzaher mera'ato šel 'adam še'asita 'immo ḥesed*
 (74) היזהר מרעתו של אדם שעשית עמו חסד
 Beware of the evil of someone you do kindness for him.
 (76) **اتَّقِ شَرَّ مَنْ أَحْسَنْتَ إِلَيْهِ**
 The colloquial Arabic proverb: **اتَّقِ شَرَّ مَنْ أَحْسَنْتَ إِلَيْهِ**

4. *'Oznehem 'asuyot tiṭ u-bašeq*
 (152) אוזניהם עשויות טיט ובצק
 Their ears are made of clay and dough.
 (154) **أَدَانُهُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ وَمِنْ عَجِينٍ**
 The colloquial Arabic proverb **دَانٌ مِنْ طِينٍ وَدَانٌ مِنْ عَجِينٍ**. Its meaning is 'they ignore what they hear'.

5. *Ha-yad ha-reka lo ne'veket 'im haeker*
 (61) היד הריקה לא נאבקת עם הדקר, אדון אוסאמה
 The empty hand does not fight the sword, Mr. Osama.
 (65) **الْيَدُ لَا تَبَاطِحُ مَخْرَزُ أَسَاطِدِ**

The proverb הַיָּד הַרִיקָה לֹא נִאֶבְקֶת עִם הַדֶּקֶר is borrowed from the colloquial Arabic proverb *اليد لا تباطح مخرز*. Its meaning is ‘The empty hand does not fight the sword’.

Conclusion

Lexical influences in general and the use of Arabic words in particular, in the translated work *The Cactus*, are not random acts. They are deliberately chosen with the aim of presenting authentic characters and creating reliable pictures of the culture depicted, since in describing reality the author needs to be authentic, and authenticity means being natural, honest, transparent and not fake or artificial when presenting characters. Maşālḥa sees the use of Arabic words as a linguistic tool for conveying cultural objects, since language is an intercultural mediator, not just a tool for communication. His fluency in Hebrew and his high degree of expressiveness in Hebrew makes his style very fluent, and it would be no challenge for him to express the entire text in Hebrew rather than introducing Arabic words/phrases. This indicates that by using Arabic Maşālḥa makes a conscious aesthetic decision to capture the characters’ reality and speech using this linguistic technique.

No doubt, the words and phrases in the translated work *The Cactus* reflect Maşālḥa’s view of Arabic as a linguistic material that can faithfully capture Arab culture, and also contains national-cultural elements that illustrate the special qualities of the nation which speaks this language and its unique historical and ethnicity qualities. For many of the writers, these words provide snapshots of Arab culture and faithfully portray a true sense of its character. Good example of this is the word *fallāḥ* (since in Arab society working the land and devotion to the soil are supreme cultural values).

Maşālḥa views loan translations of idioms and proverbs, especially from colloquial Arabic as linguistic material that accurately reflects his culture of origin and conveys didactic educational messages. He also

perceives the idiom as material, which contains national-cultural elements that reflect the uniqueness of the nation that speaks the language and the ethnic and historical qualities of that nation. In some cases, loan translations and translating idioms feels foreign to the Hebrew reader because the composition of the words in the loan translation is not always obvious and gives rise to a special meaning, which the reader does not always know.

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