Middle Eastern Literatures, Vol. 11, No. 1, April 2008

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

'Arabs Dancing in a New Light of Arabesques': Minor Hebrew Works of Palestinian Authors in the Eyes of Critics

MAHMOUD KAYYAL

Abstract

The attitudes of Arab intellectuals to texts written in the language of the 'other' have usually been ambivalent; but when Arab writers who were Israeli citizens have written in Hebrew their antagonism and disregard have been particularly pronounced. Apparently, this attitude stemmed from their ignorance of the language, its marginality relative to other languages, and the existence of a great many political, ideological and psychological prejudices resulting from the long-standing violent Arab–Israeli conflict.

This article discusses three novels—Atallah Mansour's *In a New Light*, Anton Shammas's *Arabesques*, and Sayed Kashua's *Dancing Arabs*—which are representative of three generations of Hebrew writing by Arab authors. All three seem to be hybrid works, on the margin between Hebrew and Arabic, combining personal and political elements to express the collective experience of Palestinian Arabs within Israeli society. All of them are novels with some autobiographical elements, but there are artistic, stylistic, linguistic and thematic differences between them, particularly in the way they represent the collective experience and the Palestinian narrative. Arabic criticism, though at first inhibited by the language barrier, related to them in a variety of ways. Shammas's novel was assessed favourably by some well-known Arab critics, not only because of its artistic sophistication, but primarily because it succeeded in presenting the Palestinian narrative clearly and distinctly, whereas the other two writers, whose style was more journalistic and less sophisticated, presented only a vague, equivocal and incomplete Palestinian narrative; as a result, Arab critics ignored them or criticized them severely.

Introduction: 'The Babushka's Guilt'[1]

Writing in the language of the 'other' has been prominent primarily in societies that lived under the cultural hegemony of colonialist states. The colonial power usually imposed its language on the educational system and the civil service, and left the indigenous writers no alternative but to use the language of the colonizers. In the Arab world, most of which was under colonial domination, this phenomenon was most widespread in the countries of the Maghreb. In the postcolonial period, too, Arab authors such as Rafik Shami, Assia Djebbar, Ahdaf Soueif[2] and others continued to write in the hegemonic language,

Mahmoud Kayyal, Tel-Aviv University, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, P.O.B. 39040, Tel-Aviv 69978, Israel. E-mail: kayyalma@post.tau.ac.il

ISSN 1475-262X print/ISSN 1475-2638 online/08/010031-21 © 2008 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/14752620801896297

generally after emigrating to the West. Both writers and critics tried to justify writing in the language of the 'other' in an attempt to make direct contact with public opinion in the colonialist and/or hegemonic countries and to challenge their cultural and linguistic hegemony (Qasim 1996: 8; Alif 2000: 6–7).

In contrast to writings in hegemonic languages, however, which usually won acclaim, most intellectuals in the Arab world considered Hebrew writing by Arab authors to be strange and incomprehensible. The weakness of the Hebrew language within Israel, as a result of the struggle with languages imported by the new immigrants, and its marginality compared with other languages, seemed sufficient reason to deter Arab writers from using it.

Therefore, the historical sociopolitical background of the phenomenon of writing in Hebrew by Arab authors should be taken into account. The Arab citizens of Israel live in an exceedingly complex situation, which seems, in Shammas's words, like nesting dolls (Babushka) (Shammas 1986b: 45). They are part of the Palestinian people, which is engaged in a violent conflict with Israel, and, at the same time, they constitute an ethnic minority which aspires to become integrated into Israeli society—a society which itself is a minority in the hostile Arab region surrounding it. Thus, there exist within it conflicting tendencies, both to alienation and to integration. On the one hand, the tendency to alienation stems from Israeli Arabs' links to the common Palestinian narrative, beginning with the *Nakba*,[3] which is a part of their own experience, and continuing with the point of view of the State that they constitute a military and demographic threat, which was expressed in the Military Government imposed on them from 1948 to 1966, the expropriation of Arab-owned lands, and the limitation of the area of jurisdiction of Arab towns. On the other hand, the tendency to integrate stems from their aspiration to attain economic, educational and cultural standards on a level with those of Jewish society.

This political reality has influenced the culture of Palestinian Arabs living in Israel, as well as its relationship both to the Arabic mother culture and to Hebrew Israeli culture. It underwent a deep crisis in the 1950s and 1960s, as a result of the flight of most of the Palestinian intellectuals in 1948, the almost complete isolation of the Israeli Arabs from the Arab world, and the direct intervention of the Israeli establishment in Arab cultural life. So members of the Israeli establishment raised a number of questions about the future of local Arabic literature—some of them, apparently, the fruit of wishful thinking.

In an article published in 1956 Eliyahu Agassi, one of the pillars of establishment activity among the Israeli Arabs, asked whether original Arabic literature could develop despite the isolation of the local Arab population from the Arab world at large. In his view, such a development was possible, but it would be hard to bring it about. Further, he asked whether Arabic literature in the Hebrew language, or a unique Arabic literature influenced by Hebrew and distinct from the literature of Egypt or Lebanon, could be created. Agassi does not give a clear answer to this question; but he does point out that the influence of modernistic verse in general, and of Hebrew verse in particular, can be discerned in local Arabic verse (Agassi 1956).

However, the crisis in the local Arabic culture in the 1950s did not crush the spirit of the Israeli Arab authors, and they gradually succeeded in recovering, to such an extent that by the end of the 1960s their work was receiving high praise from critics in the Arab world (Somekh 1989: 119). Over the years some of these authors, including Emile Habibi, Mahmoud Darwish and Samih al-Qasim, attained prominence in the world of Arabic literature.

During this period critics who were ideologically nationalist or Marxist rejected not only the viability of the writing of Hebrew by Arab authors, but the very possibility that Hebrew culture could influence Arab culture. In an article published in 1956 Emile Tuma, a veteran Israeli Communist and one of the few literary critics of the 1950s and 60s, took issue with the representatives of the establishment active in the Arab sector, such as Eliyahu Agassi and Benjamin Zakkai. He was convinced that the principal long-term objective of the authorities, and of the circles working on their behalf, was to eliminate national Arab culture in Israel (Tuma 1956: 15). In another article, published in 1963 under the title 'Does Jewish Society Influence Arabic Culture?', he discussed a survey conducted by the periodical *New Outlook*, published by Mapam with the support of the Foreign Office.[4] In this survey some Arab intellectuals were asked about the state of Arabic society and culture, and, among other questions, about the influence of Jewish society on Arabic culture. The replies were not clear-cut (*New Outlook* 1962). But Tuma used the opportunity to raise the question of intercultural relationships between Arabs and Jews, and to make a number of assertions (Tuma 1963: 5–7):

a. Arabic culture in Israel is part of the culture of the Palestinian and Arab world. Despite the crisis from which it suffered after the establishment of the State, and despite the small number of writers and artists, it has succeeded in recovering, and has attained a special character because it has preserved its links with Arabic culture and shown a genuine desire to maintain a dialogue with Jewish society on the basis of equality.
b. Hebrew culture is not homogeneous, since it contains a number of components, as a result of the absorption of Jews of different origins in Israel. But since the political and cultural elite is of European origin, it has marginalized the oriental elements in Jewish culture and thereby limited its points of contact with Arabic culture.
c. Government policy, which is based on fanning hatred and deepening ethnic divisions between the two peoples, and encouraging suspicion and racial discrimination, has lessened the possibilities of contact between the two peoples.

These remarks show that Tuma was very pessimistic with regard to the possibilities of intercultural contact during this period, particularly in view of the Military Government under which the Arab population lived. Clearly, too, he rejected the possibility that Hebrew culture could influence Arabic culture, and certainly did not conceive of the possibility of Arabs writing in Hebrew.

A few years after the appearance of Tuma's article, however, the first Hebrew novel by an Arab writer was published: Atallah Mansour's *Be-Or Ḥadash* (In a New Light), published in 1966. This was followed by dozens of Hebrew works written by Arabs: short stories, novels and verse.[5] Moreover, several Arab intellectuals wrote on current affairs, and were involved in theatrical performances and films, in translation, and in other cultural activities in the Hebrew language.[6] Such phenomena are, certainly, marginal to the cultural scene of Arab society, and constitute no danger to the status of Arabic culture as the national culture, etched in the consciousness of this society; but, nonetheless, the question arises: what brought about this great change in the degree of involvement of Arab intellectuals in Hebrew culture from the 1960s onwards? What prompted Arab authors to write in Hebrew at this particular point, when the Military Government had been abolished, the connection between the Arab population of Israel and the Arab world had been renewed, and local Arabic literature had gained the

attention and commendation of Arab literary critics? This question becomes especially relevant in view of the fact that the writers themselves were aware of the fact that for them to write in Hebrew was, in Shammas's words, 'cultural trespass' (Shammas 1980: 8).

'Hebrew as Camouflage Netting'—Reasons for Writing in Hebrew

The increased access to Arabic mother culture did not prevent the dominance of the Hebrew language in the process of the modernization of Palestinian Arab society in Israel (Amara 1999: 205–215). As a result, the intercultural dialogue with Hebrew culture was complex and intricate. On the one hand, it is possible to discern indications of an antagonistic dialogue stemming from ethnic, social and political tensions, expressed, for instance, in the fact that local Palestinian literature addressed itself to an Arabic target audience outside Israel, and increasingly ignored the figure of the (Jewish) other (Somekh 1989: 123). On the other hand, there are certain indications of mutual influence and a fruitful dialogue between the two sides: for instance, the mutual interference of the two languages, joint theatrical and musical productions, translation projects in both languages, and so forth.

This ambivalent relationship between the dominant majority culture, Western and metropolitan in character, and the subordinate minority culture created a 'third space' or a 'twilight zone' between them. Within this space there has arisen a dynamic of attraction and repulsion, which leads to the blurring of boundaries and of the hierarchical relationships between ruler and ruled, and the creation of hybrid categories. Hybrid linguistic and cultural forms bring together Orient and Occident, Arabism and Judaism, and Palestineness and Israeliness by means of processes of fusion and division that accompany the polar tension between the two sides.[7]

Cultural hybridization can be seen most clearly in the linguistic and literary dualism of certain Jewish and Arab authors who have written in both languages and served as intermediaries between them.[8] The linguistic and literary dualism of writers such as Atallah Mansour (b.1934), Naim Araidi (b.1948), Anton Shammas and Sayed Kashua (b.1975) is well known, since most or all of their works are written in Hebrew.

As has been remarked above, after the establishment of the State the Hebrew language became not only the language of the majority but the dominant tongue in the process of the modernization of Israeli Arabs. This detracted from the status and prestige of the Arabic language—so much so that there began to be heard voices bewailing its woeful fate and condition, and demanding to put a stop to its deterioration in the mouths of the young, who used Hebrew in business, in their studies and in their everyday lives.[9]

Many of these authors—for example, Atallah Mansour, Anton Shammas and Sayed Kashua—studied in Hebrew educational institutions when young, lived in Jewish areas and worked for Hebrew newspapers. Writing in Hebrew was, therefore, a natural continuation of their aspiration to integrate into Israel society.

Some scholars have claimed that the fact that many of these writers belong to minority communities within the Arab population—principally Christian and Druze—stimulated them to use Hebrew, the language of the Jewish majority, rather than Arabic, which is identified primarily with the Islamic religious and cultural legacy, and, in their eyes, constitutes a minority language which cannot help them improve their status as a minority within a minority (Snir 1998: 190–191). It may well be, too, that the outstanding integration of the Druze community in Israeli society, especially since the

application of the conscription law to this community in 1956, contributed to the adoption of Hebrew by some of its members as their main cultural language.[10]

Atallah Mansour maintains that the Arabs in Israel have become bilingual without impairing their Arabic national identity. He considers that his and others' Hebrew writing emphasizes the bi-national and bi-cultural character of Israel, despite the fact that, in his view, many Jewish critics are somewhat proud of the fact that their tongue, which was for hundreds of years considered a dead language, has come to life, and is even used by non-Jewish writers. Mansour emphasizes that Arab writers aspire to present an alternative narrative, and to tell the Israeli public about the special problems of Arab citizens in its own tongue, since most Jews do not know Arabic; in this way the Jews will identify with these problems, or, at least, understand them (Mansour 1992: 63–65).

Shammas claims that the confused situation of the Arabs in Israel was one of the major reasons for his writing in Hebrew. 'As for me, only the language of grace [Hebrew] is capable of expressing my confusion, and of throwing a life-line of grace to my bewilderment. As for my bewilderment, I belong to an Arab minority living in a Jewish majority within the Arab majority in the Middle East.' (Shammas 1985/6: 68). Shammas sees in Hebrew writing by Arabs a way of subverting Zionist ideology, which emphasized the inseparable connection between the Hebrew language, Jewish and Israeli identity, and Zionism. In his view, this type of writing can express the aspiration to de-Judaize and de-Zionize the Jewish state.[11] He says explicitly: 'And what I'm trying to do—mulishly, it seems—is to un-Jew the Hebrew language (to use a Philip Roth verb), to make it more Israeli and less Jewish, thus bringing it back to its Semitic origins, to its place.' (Shammas 1989: 10).

In Shammas's view, the mother tongue imposes clichés and well-worn linguistic structures. Writing in a different language frees the author from this limitation and enables him to use the language more precisely. He believes that writing in Hebrew is an expression of his aspiration to demonstrate his linguistic skill in the language of what is, in his view, one of the most beautiful texts in the history of humankind: the Bible (Siddiq 2000: 163).

Writing in Hebrew has enabled some of these authors to express themselves freely and critically about their own society. In particular, they have felt that this language provides a way of escape from the pressures, accusations and feelings of offence of their fellow Arabs and relatives. Shammas has remarked:

> I write about my village in Hebrew, of course. I'm not quite sure how the story would turn out if I were to write it in Arabic. First of all, I'd certainly be more careful. Paradoxically, the Hebrew language provides me with some sort of apparent security, a kind of freedom which I wouldn't have if I were to write in Arabic, and put all my family into a story . . . And what will my aunt say, and what will my uncle and my cousins and all my extended family say? So this is a conscious act; I use Hebrew as a sort of camouflage net. (Amit 1988: 76)

Sayed Kashua claims that the chief reason why he writes in Hebrew is the woeful state of Arabic culture in Israel. In his view it is subject to many afflictions, such as strict supervision and control by the Israeli establishment, the lack of a suitable infrastructure of publishers, public libraries and bookshops, and the lack of a reading public devoted to

Arabic literature. Under these conditions he prefers to write in Hebrew, especially in view of the great number of Arabs who read Hebrew.[12] Naim Araidi also speaks of the conservatism and traditionalism which characterize Arabic literature, in complete contrast with the openness, freedom and flexibility of Hebrew language and literature (Araidi 1991: 42).

'A New Trend': Writing in the 'Other's' Language and the Limits of the Palestinian Literary Canon

The Hebrew writings of Arab authors are considered to be minor works, as in the expression coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 'minor literature'. This term is used of literature written in a language which is not that of the author's original culture: not, of course, literature in a minor language, but written by a minority in the majority's language. This literature has three main characteristics: it deterritorializes the language; every individual matter with which it deals immediately becomes political; and it is responsible, in a positive sense, for the function of collective expression (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 17–19).

These minor works have been the subject of many discussions about the subjective and objective motives of the authors, the significance of their creation and its implications for Jewish–Arab and majority–minority relations, and their influence on the special nature of Hebrew as a holy tongue and the national revival of the Jewish people.[13] Naturally, most of these discussions have focused on questions of the language and status of these works and whether they are admissible to the canon of Hebrew literature; this article, however, deals primarily with their status and reception as works of Arabic literature.

Some intellectuals in the Arab world see Israel as a modern version of the Crusaders, part of a neocolonial invasion, foreign to the area, which has no possibility of surviving and integrating into the Arab region. They consider that Israeli culture serves Zionist ideology and its interests; it is, therefore, a racist culture, and its attitude to the Arabs is stereotypic and arrogant (al-Bahrawi 1972: 23, 30–31). They define any attempt at cultural exchange with this culture as an attempt at 'cultural invasion' (Somekh 1998: 159). They believe that Hebrew is a moribund language, which is scarcely spoken or written in Israel, since its citizens are a conglomeration of people with little in common.[14] Hebrew writing by Arab authors is, therefore, strange and incomprehensible, and such an act is a denial of the rich Arabic cultural, literary and linguistic heritage, which is an essential component of the national identity. Moreover, such acts constitute sycophancy and treachery in the face of Israeli aggression, and are useless, in view of the weakness and marginality of the Hebrew language.

As a result of the almost complete isolation of the Arab population of Israel from the Arab world, critics in the Arab world displayed no interest in local Palestinian literature. It was only the interest of Palestinian critics such as Yusuf al-Khatib and Ghassan Kanafani in the works of nationalist and Marxist authors from 1964 onwards that gradually raised the prestige of this literature in the eyes of many critics (Mustafa 1986: 191).[15] However, the interest in what is known as 'resistance literature' did not completely counteract the suspicion felt by many circles in the Arab world towards this community, whose national and ideological loyalty is suspect purely as a result of its citizenship in the state of the 'Zionist enemy'.[16] The use of Hebrew may undoubtedly

raise the level of suspicion, add to the accusations of Israelization or Zionization of this community and deter critics from discussing these works.

Even were some critics interested in discussing these works, their lack of knowledge of Hebrew would make it difficult for them. In general, it was the mention in the Western media of translations of these works to hegemonic languages such as English or French which aroused the interest of Arab critics, who read them in translation. Interest in these works was considered justifiable thematically and ideologically in so far as they were close to the Arab or Palestinian narrative. It is not surprising, then, that even works in Arabic published in Israel which were considered to support the Zionist and Israeli narrative were completely ignored by the critics.[17]

As a result of all these factors, critics in the Arab world considered that the Hebrew writing of Arab authors was valueless: a marginal phenomenon, characteristic of a tiny group of writers with no influence on local Palestinian culture. The famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, who was very familiar with Hebrew Israeli culture, expressed the reservations of Arab intellectuals with regard to this phenomenon very well. He emphasized that it was a 'trend' created by a very small number of young Palestinian writers who were Israeli citizens, motivated by conflicting considerations: some of them were interested in integrating into Israeli culture, while others wanted to present an alternative narrative to the Israelis in their own language.[18]

Neither did Arab critics in Israel go out of their way to discuss these works. Generally speaking, they were discussed briefly, hastily and superficially, usually soon after their publication. As far as I know, these critics have not engaged in a single serious discussion of this phenomenon and its implications for local Palestinian literature, or Palestinian literature in general.

It must be remembered that the unique situation of the Palestinian people, spread out between Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and various Arab states, has led to differences of opinion among scholars and critics as to what constitutes Palestinian literature (Jayyusi 1997: 34–35; Elad-Bouskila 1999: 9–13). Two approaches may be discerned: one claims that after 1948 Palestinian culture ceased to exist as a single entity, but was split into separate sections in accordance with the places of residence of the Palestinians, many of whom assimilated into the societies of the Arab host countries; the other tries to prove that the Palestinian cultural heritage is unified and unique, despite the existence of significant differences in the living conditions of the various sectors of the Palestinian people (Snir 1990: 244–245).

The Palestinian critic and scholar Adil al-Usta tried to define Palestinian literature: in other words, what is the canon of this literature. He decided to focus his definition on five criteria: place, theme, language, citizenship and ideology. It appears, however, that he laid particular emphasis on the first two of these. In his view, Palestinian literature is that written by authors who themselves or their parents were born in Palestine and who are committed to the Palestinian narrative, regardless of their citizenship, the language in which their work is written, or their political or ideological affiliations. Al-Usta even said categorically that works written by Palestinians in different languages and committed to the Palestinian narrative were to be considered Palestinian (i.e. canonical) (al-Usta 2000: 10–15).

Be that as it may, in order to study in depth the degree to which Hebrew works have been accepted into the Palestinian literary canon I have chosen to concentrate on three works: Atallah Mansour's *Be-Or Ḥadash* (In a New Light) (1966), Anton Shammas's

'Arabesqot (Arabesques) (1986) and Sayed Kashua's *'Aravim Rokdim* (Dancing Arabs) (2002). The reasons for my choice were as follows:

a. These works, which were published at intervals of about 20 years, represent three generations of Arab writers of Hebrew literature. We can, therefore, learn from them the changes in conceptions, style and subject-matter which characterize them, and the way in which they were accepted (or not) during the periods in which their work appeared.
b. All were translated into English and other languages, and were favourably reviewed throughout the world.[19]
c. Since they belong to the genre of the novel, unlike verse and the short story they can be subjected to thematic analysis and a wide-ranging discussion of their socio-political background.[20]
d. All three contain clearly autobiographical elements. It is, therefore, likely that they are faithful reflections of the authors' ideological predispositions and psychological misgivings.

There follows a brief outline of each author's biography, a short description of the plot of each book, and an account of its thematic and stylistic characteristics. Finally, we shall discuss the Arab reviewers' reactions, the effect of these reactions on the status of these minor works, and their acceptability in Arabic culture and, in particular, in Palestinian literature.

Atallah Mansour*: In a New Light*

Atallah Mansour was born in 1934 in the Arab village of al-Jish (Gush Halav) in Upper Galilee. He attended school in Lebanon from 1946 to 1950. In 1950 he returned illegally to Israel and obtained Israeli citizenship only ten years later. On his return to Israel he spent a year in kibbutz Sha'ar Ha'amakim, where he began to learn Hebrew. For a short time he worked as a youth leader, then became a Hebrew journalist. He worked for the journal *Ha-'Olam Ha-Zeh* from 1954 to 1958, and for the newspaper *Haaretz* from 1958 to 1971. On graduating from Oxford University in 1973 he returned to his work as a correspondent for *Haaretz*. In 1983, together with some colleagues, he founded the Arabic newspaper *al-Ṣinnāra* in Nazareth. He wrote in Arabic, Hebrew and English. His first novel, *Wa-baqiyat Samīra* (Samira Remains) was published in Arabic by the establishment publishing house *Dār al-Nashr al-'Arabī* in 1962, but was received unfavourably by Jewish and Arab critics alike.[21] He also published articles on current affairs in all three languages, as well as theoretical and autobiographical works.

His Hebrew novel *In a New Light* was published in 1966 by a small publishing house by the name of Karni. Its story is told in the first person by the hero, Yoseph (Yossi), whose father, an Arab, was killed before his eyes when he was five years old; but he is unsure whether the killers were Arabs, Jews or British. A Jewish friend of his father, Baruch Mizrahi (whose name hints that he was of Middle Eastern origin) decided to bring him up together with his children in his *moshava*.[22] One of this man's daughters, Ruth, befriends the hero, supports and defends him, and runs off with him to Kibbutz Beit-Or (House of Light).[23] Her father comes to the kibbutz and demands that she—though not Yoseph—should return to the *moshava*. Yoseph continues to live in the

kibbutz, but becomes dissatisfied with life there, and leaves for another kibbutz, Har Or (Mountain of Light). He lives and works in this kibbutz for almost a year, and even falls in love with an American Jewish woman, Rivka, but does not reveal his Arab identity. Even the task of persuading the inhabitants of the neighbouring Arab village Nur-Allah (Light of God) to vote for the party supported by the kibbutz in the general election is given to another member of the kibbutz, and he participates only as an assistant. However, when he applies for membership of the kibbutz the question of his identity arises. The kibbutz members who advocate Jewish – Arab friendship and equality see him 'in a new light', and become suspicious of him. Rivka, his beloved, forsakes him, and the party workers try to persuade him that it would be better for him to move to an Arab village and spread the views of the party in his natural surroundings. But he tells his married friend the complicated story of his life and regains her sympathy, and insists that the vote on his membership of the kibbutz should take place before the elections. The members are torn between their allegiance to the values of fraternity and equality as preached by the party and their religious and ethnic loyalty to Judaism and Zionism. Finally, apparently under the influence of the approaching elections, he is accepted as a kibbutz member, but without mention of whether he is an Arab or a Jew; he has a feeling of emptiness and bursts into tears.

This novel is quasi-autobiographical, particularly in view of the fact that the author had personal knowledge of kibbutz life. The circumstances described are real, even though the author adopts a transparent technique to conceal this by the adoption of fictitious names for the places where the action takes place. The author combines two plot lines: one of Yoseph (Yossi)'s love for Rivka, and one of his application for membership of the kibbutz; but the tension is reduced by the resolution of the differences between the lovers well before the end of the novel. The frequent use of flashbacks and descriptions of landscape cannot conceal the fact that the style of writing is almost journalistic. The characters are described from the point of view of the narrator, so some of them are colourless and formulaic.

The novel criticizes the patronizing attitude of Israeli society towards its Arab citizens most severely. The principal criticism is levelled at the Hashomer Hatzair movement[24] whose ideology was based on socialism, humanitarianism and equality, but which actually pursued an imperialist policy. Kibbutz Har-Or, which belonged to this movement, was built on the ruins of an Arab village, and was close to the Arab village of Nur-Allah, which supplied the kibbutz with cheap unskilled labour. It should be pointed out that Sha'ar Ha'amakim, where the author lived for about a year, was built on the ruins of the Arab village al-Harthiyah, and is situated close to the Bedouin tribe of Zabyadat.[25] Moreover, the patronizing and derogatory attitude of the kibbutz members to the people of the village is clearly expressed in the book. Again, the doubts about whether to accept the narrator as a kibbutz member do nothing to correct the unfavourable image of the kibbutz; and it is not surprising that the narrator reacts cynically to the way in which kibbutz members preach about their ideals. The author is also critical of the Israeli political system, in which the parties try to win the votes of Arab citizens by corrupt means.

Neither does Arab society escape unscathed. It seems as if the author is attempting to play down and obscure the people, the values and the narrative of Arab society. The narrator, who is said to be of Arab origin, seems completely cut off from his own society—he has no relatives or friends, and does not even know a word of Arabic; so he is an Arab purely by dint of his biological descent. It is no wonder that his chief aspiration

is to assimilate into kibbutz society and father a child with Rivka. Most of the other Arab characters seem colourless and self-pitying. Further, the Arabic language, the mother tongue of the author and of several of his characters, is almost completely absent from the Hebrew text. In fact, the author, like the narrator, plays down his identity as an Arab to the point of denial.

The novel was reviewed enthusiastically by some Jewish critics, though most of them emphasized the importance of the fact that an Arab author had written in Hebrew. '*In a New Light* arouses interest and curiosity even before it is read: for this is the first novel written in Hebrew by an Israeli Arab author' (Bachour 1966). But, in addition to praise of the initiative to write in Hebrew and of the thematic treatment of an important social, human and ideological issue,[26] the novel was also severely criticized for its style.

> The book is written in a simple, sometimes superficial, style, with few literary or artistic pretensions. It is written in short, disjointed sentences, which give the impression of an oral transcription rather than of written prose. The style is rough and unpolished, perhaps because of the confessional nature of the book. (Y.P. 1966: 167)

Nonetheless, Mansour himself was pleased with the reactions of the Jewish reviewers, especially in comparison with their criticism of his first novel, *Samira Remains*. He thought that the enthusiasm aroused by *In a New Light* stemmed from the fact that most critics of Hebrew literature held liberal opinions, while those who wrote about his Arabic novel were Jewish scholars of Arabic, who tended to write about Arabic literature from the viewpoint of 'know your enemy' (Mansour 1992: 65).

As for criticism in Arabic, as far as we know it aroused no interest in the Arab world, even though it was translated into English in 1969, and critics who knew no Hebrew could have read it in translation. It may be that dissatisfaction with the artistic level of the work, the way in which it related to the Arab and Palestinian narrative, and the hero's aspiration to integrate into Jewish society, led to its being ignored.

In Israel, on the other hand, several reviews appeared in the Arabic press, which was still mainly controlled by the establishment, soon after the book was published. Generally speaking, the reviewers did not analyse the work in depth, but made do with a synopsis of the plot and a few remarks on its structure, style and language. But they discussed the thematic aspects of the novel, and commented favourably on the fact that it presented the personal and collective experience of the Arab minority to the Hebrew-reading public. The most interesting point, however, is that the reviewers who approved of the two narratives which the novel claimed to present—that of the oppressed Arab minority and that of socialist ideology—expressed doubts as to the author's credibility and his commitment to these two narratives.

Ibrahim Mussa Ibrahim, an Iraqi Jew who wrote in Arabic, wrote a relatively lengthy review of the book, which appeared in two issues of the bi-weekly periodical *al-Mirṣād*, the Arabic-language journal of the Mapam party.[27] In his view, the author's purpose in writing in Hebrew was to demonstrate to the Jewish majority in Israel the frustration of and discrimination against the Arab minority. Ibrahim emphasized the autobiographical elements in the novel, and praised its stylistic and artistic level. But he was disappointed by the delineation of the characters, who seemed to him, with the exception of the narrator, to be 'pale shadows', who contribute little to the development of the plot. The reviewer concluded by expressing doubt as to whether the novel made any contribution

to understanding between the two peoples. Apparently, this last comment was the result of the fact that the review was published in the journal of the party that was so harshly attacked in the book. Not surprisingly, the editorial board published a prominent announcement to the effect that the review was a literary critique, and did not relate to the degree of realism of the novel (Ibrahim 1966).

As against this, a short review by Irina Khamis, a Jewess married to an Arab, appeared in the journal of the Communist Party, *al-Ittiḥād* (founded 1944). Khamis considered it to be of great importance that the question of the Arab minority and its relations with the Jewish majority had been raised. She also emphasized the discrimination and intolerance towards the Arabs described in the novel. In her eyes, however, the character of the hero was weak and characterless, and incapable of raising his voice against oppression and discrimination. She also criticized the artistic, stylistic and linguistic level of the novel; in her view it was an immature work (Khamis 1966).

The inferior status of these two reviewers in Arabic literary criticism, particularly since they were not well-known critics, and their critical remarks about both of the narratives which the author claimed to present, despite the fact that they belonged to rival political groups, were certainly of no help in ensuring that the novel would be accepted as part of local Arabic literature.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, apart from those notices which appeared in the newspapers shortly after its appearance, it is hard to find any mention of this novel in the discussions and research works that deal with Arabic fiction in Israel. Only Mahmoud Abbasi discussed this work, in his doctoral thesis on the development of Arabic fiction in Israel, which was written in Hebrew and, later, translated into Arabic (Abbasi 1998). It must, however, be said that Abbasi did not write much criticism, and that he has been accused of unreliability on the grounds of his close relationship with the Israeli establishment (al-Usta 2000: 15).

Be that as it may, Abbasi claims that the novel was written in Hebrew both because of the need to bring the feelings and opinions of the Arab intellectual to the notice of the Hebrew reader and because of Mansour's frustration at the hostile critical reception of his Arabic novel. He discusses the style of *In a New Light* briefly and speaks primarily of the romantic atmosphere it reflects, its well-rounded characters and the symbolism of their names. He also points out some similarities between this novel and Emile Habibi's *The Pessoptomist* (1974), particularly in the light of the fact that both of these authors describe the complex situation of the Israeli Arabs. In effect, Abbasi treats this work as an Arabic novel written in Hebrew, particularly since it discusses the problems of the Israeli Arabs in terms of 'political rationality and realism'. In his view, the solution to these problems advanced by the novel is the integration of the Semitic peoples, which is expressed in the novel by the hero's desire that his Jewish lover should bear him a son who will be a pioneer of a social revolution and a harbinger of peace (Abbasi 1998: 102–103).

But, despite Abbasi's assertion, *In a New Light* was not only excluded from the Palestinian literary canon, it was not even considered to be Palestinian literature. It was, in effect, caught in the border space between the two cultures. The reasons for this were, apparently, the equivocal way in which the collective expression of the Arab population of Israel was presented, the obsessive pursuit of the question of the acceptability of the young Arab in the kibbutz, which deflected the discussion from the real and most painful problems of that sector, and the low literary and artistic level of the novel.

Anton Shammas*: Arabesques*

Anton Shammas was born in 1950 in the Arab village of Fassuta in Western Galilee. In 1962 his family moved to Haifa, where he studied in a school in which there were both Jewish and Arab pupils, though they learnt in separate classes. He obtained a BA at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He was one of the founders and editors of the Arabic literary journal *al-Sharq*, which was founded in 1970 at the initiative of the official newspaper *al-Anbā'* (1968 – 1985). From 1975 he worked as a television producer and, at the same time, began to build up a career in Hebrew journalism, publishing many articles on current affairs, some of which dealt with Israeli identity and the nature of Israeli democracy and led to vehement controversy. He published a volume of verse in Arabic, *Asīr Yaqẓatī wa-Nawmī* (Walking My Waking and Sleep) (1974), and two in Hebrew: *Kricha Kasha* (Hard Binding) (1974) and *Shetach Hefker* (No Man's Land) (1979). He translated texts from Hebrew to Arabic, from Arabic to Hebrew, and from English to both of these languages. Among his best-known translations are those of three works of Emile Habibi into Hebrew. Since 1987 he has chosen to distance himself physically and mentally from Hebrew culture, and is currently a professor in the University of Michigan, USA.

His most outstanding work is undoubtedly *Arabesques*, which was written in Hebrew and published by the eminent publishing house Am Oved in 1986. It is a pseudo-biographical novel, which combines a family saga with memories of the narrator's (i.e. the author's) journey to the USA in order to take part in the international writers' programme that takes place every year in Iowa City. The plot is complex and convoluted, like an arabesque; so much so, indeed, that sometimes it seems as though the connection between the characters, the incidents and the locations disappears before the reader's eyes. The author's style, which is rich in intertextual connections and allegorical allusions and combines history and fiction with sudden transitions between stories, narrators, and different times and places, also makes this a difficult book to read. It is, therefore, no easy task to describe this novel in brief.

The novel tells the story of the history of the Shammas family and those close to it from the beginning of the 19th century until the 1980s. This family, which settled in the Christian village of Fassuta in Galilee, close to the Lebanese border, experienced migrations, tragedies and reversals. The narrator, named Anton after his dead cousin, discovers that his cousin is not dead, but was adopted by trickery by the rich family Abyad from Beirut who gave him a new name, Michel (or Michael), and sent him, at the age of 20, to the United States in order to prevent the fact of the adoption becoming known. This tragic story troubles the narrator, and he decides to discover what happened to his lost cousin. He has an opportunity to do this when he takes part in the writers' seminar in Iowa City. When they meet, Michael tells the narrator that his real cousin died in infancy, and that his uncle's wife thought of him as a substitute for her dead son. He also gives the narrator the draft of his autobiography, in which he appears in the character of his cousin Anton, and asks him to edit it for him. Thus, the author creates confusion as to the identity of the narrator, particularly when he quotes Borges: 'I don't know which of us two wrote this story' (p. 234).

Many other plots are intermingled with this, the main plot. For instance, there is the story of Laylah Khoury, who falls in love with Michel (Michael), but marries the son of one of the leaders of the Palestinian Revolt in 1936. She converts to Islam, changes her name to Surayyah Sa'id and bears two deaf-and-dumb children. When the narrator

meets her in order to find out what happened to his lost cousin, she tempts him to take the cameo that Michel (Michael) gave her from between her breasts. This cameo, which the narrator does not gain possession of, together with its other half, can open a mysterious cave close to the Shammas family home in which, as the villagers believe, a great treasure from the days of the Crusaders is buried.

In the narrator's journey to the United States, Yehoshua Bar-On's presence is particularly noticeable. Bar-On has been identified by some commentators as the author A. B. Yehoshua, who conducted a vehement controversy with Shammas in the Israeli press on the question of Israeli identity. He is one of the authors who participate in the writing programme in Iowa City. He tries to write a novel in which the narrator (Shammas) is a central character. However, the relationship between them goes sour, since the narrator believes that Bar-On is arrogant, holds stereotypic views of the Arabs, and is not prepared to accept them as citizens of the State of Israel with equal rights; whereas Bar-On believes that the narrator is not an authentic Palestinian and calls him 'my Jew' (p. 72).

The novel ends with the death of the uncle, Yusef, who told arabesque-like tales, before the narrator returns from the United States. Uncle Yusef's grandson, who intends to get married, decides to build a house on the land of the *Dawwāra*, the place where, according to the legend, the treasure cave is situated. To this end he invites a Jewish explosives expert, who blows up the rock that blocks the entrance to the cave: and lo! a purple feather floats down from heaven—the feather which, so the folk-tale tells, the fabled chicken sheds every 70 years, thus enabling the cave to be opened.

This novel gives the impression that Shammas is attempting to assess his divided identity, as a Christian, an Arab, a Palestinian and an Israeli. These components of his personality encompass contradictions and tensions that it is hard to reconcile. The novel also develops various interlocking narratives through which the complex interaction of the narrator with the divided worlds of the different characters is illustrated. Shammas undoubtedly grants his characters living space as real individuals, but it is hard to ignore their symbolic and representative aspects. Thus, for instance, the links between the Palestinian Diaspora and the Palestinians who stayed in Israel is represented by the complex relationships between Laylah Khoury and Michael Abyad, and the relationships between Israeli Arabs and the Jewish citizens of Israel are expressed in the inimical relations between the narrator and Bar-On.

Shortly after its publication the novel became a best-seller in Israel. Many critics praised it effusively. 'This is undoubtedly a literary treasure' wrote Alcalay (1986/7: 74). The book was translated into many languages, including English, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Portuguese, but not into Arabic, apparently because of the author's opposition. After being translated it was highly praised by critics and scholars the world over. The editors of the *New York Times* chose it as one of the best literary works of 1988.

The great success of the book among the Hebrew-reading public led to a fierce controversy among Jewish critics, not only about its content and quality, but, primarily, about the implications of its virtuoso, rich and unique use of the Hebrew language. The critics' opinions were divided. Some believed that Shammas had opened the way to a reconsideration of Israeli identity and of the relationship between Judaism and Hebrew. Thus, for instance, Hanan Hever (1987) claimed that Shammas was trying to remove the 'Jewishness' from the Hebrew language, and was thus engaged in a process of 'deterritorialization', which would be accompanied by a process of 'reterritorialization' of the language. Other critics saw in Shammas's work a passing phase, of no serious import,

which did not constitute a threat to the link between the two components of Israeli identity: Judaism and the Hebrew language. Thus, for example, Reuven Snir (1993: 35) does not see any possibility of redefining the boundaries of Israeli literature. In his view, even though Shammas and his colleagues display astonishing literary aptitude in their use of the Hebrew language, the borderlines that distinguish them from Jewish authors will never be erased.

Critics in the Arab world, who usually ignored Hebrew works written by Arabs, were encouraged by the fact that the novel was translated into English and French, by the excitement in the media, by its artistic sophistication, and by its far-reaching examination of Palestinian identity. Somewhat surprisingly, therefore, important critics and scholars discussed the novel's thematics and style. Most of them expressed high praise for the sophisticated and complex structure of the plot, and for Shammas's modernist and post-modernist techniques of writing. Most, however, were disturbed by two matters, which they considered to be interrelated: the language in which it was written and the issue of Palestinian identity. They considered that the Hebrew language of the novel contradicted the Palestinian narrative that the author claimed to present. On the other hand, some of them thought that the use of Hebrew was a useful tool for expressing the divided and complex identity of Shammas as a Palestinian Arab, a Christian and an Israeli.

The Lebanese poet and critic Sharbal Daghir asked whether Shammas wrote in Hebrew in order to challenge the Israeli 'other' in his own tongue, or, as Daghir suspected, in order to gain the recognition of and legitimation by the 'other'. Daghir rebuked Shammas indirectly: 'Shammas has the right and the liberty to write in any language he pleases, and we have the right and the liberty to ask ''delicate'' questions like these, particularly since language—as we and others have learnt—is the foundation-stone of the formation of national character' (Daghir 1988: 182).

The Syrian Palestinian critic Husam al-Khatib expressed his surprise at the fact that Shammas left the question of identity obscure, especially since he confused the historical truth about the Palestinian problem and emphasized the Christian component of his Palestinian identity. To some extent al-Khatib accepts Shammas's statement that he wrote in Hebrew because Israelis were his primary audience and in order to overcome the barriers between cultures; but he hints that the real reason why Shammas wrote in Hebrew was the identity crisis which he underwent (al-Khatib 1990b: 347–349).

The well-known Lebanese critic Yumna al-Eid saw many traces of the influence of Arabic in the novel—traces that were apparently preserved in the French translation that she used. In her opinion, however, Shammas's use of Hebrew indicates an outlook that is expressed at the end of the novel, when the Jewish explosives expert helps to prepare the ground to build a house for one of the grandchildren of the Shammas family. This conclusion indicates that Shammas's desire for peace with the Jews is based on his acknowledgement of their technical and cultural superiority (al-Eid 1990: 158–160).

The American Palestinian scholar Muhammad Siddiq, who read the novel in the original Hebrew, rejects the criticism of the author based on his use of Hebrew. This criticism, he believes, is primarily political and ignores the fact that poets of the Palestinian resistance such as Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Qasim and Rashed Hussein have, like Shammas, studied classical and modern Hebrew literature and been influenced by it; through it, too, they have become acquainted with the best of world literature. Siddiq expresses admiration for the rich and skilful language of the novel, which springs, in his view, from the author's consciousness that he is 'requisitioning' the

language of the 'other' in order to comprehend himself artistically through it. He thinks that Shammas's contention that he uses Hebrew in order to avoid offending his relatives is unconvincing. In his view, in this novel it is impossible to distinguish between form and content, between meaning and style or between aesthetic experience and the style which represents it; it is, therefore, hard to imagine that it could be written in any other language (Siddiq 2000: 157 – 161).

The willingness of leading Arab authors, critics and scholars to discuss this novel, despite their reservations with regard to writing in Hebrew and Shammas's attitude to the question of Palestinian identity, indicates that it has been accepted into the Palestinian literary canon. Al-Khatib says so explicitly. In a short survey of Palestinian literature he emphasizes the importance of *Arabesques* as an outstanding Palestinian novel. He claims that this novel 'has attained a high standard; it combines experience of life with artistic experience, in order to present us with a convoluted, complex, hesitant and perplexing ideological and artistic outlook, which succeeds in making the Palestinian issue human and mature, and eschews assertiveness and vulgarity' (al-Khatib 1990a: 115).

It may be said, therefore, that, despite the fact that it was written in Hebrew, this work has been included in the canon of Palestinian literature, not only in virtue of its artistic, stylistic and linguistic sophistication, but principally in virtue of its broad presentation of the Palestinian narrative throughout Palestinian history, from the beginning of the struggle between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian national movement at the end of the 19th century up to the war in Lebanon and the massacre in Sabra and Shatila in 1982. In contrast to the novel discussed above, which presents a limited and irresolute Palestinian narrative, intertwined with other narratives that emasculate its content, this novel expresses the Palestinian narrative fully, directly and without bias, while attempting to express the collective and individual experience of every sector of the Palestinian people.

Sayed Kashua*: Dancing Arabs*

Sayed Kashua was born in 1975 in the Arab village of Tira, in the 'Arab triangle' in central Israel. At the age of 15 he began studying in the Jerusalem School of Science and Art, a prestigious Jewish boarding school. After graduating from high school he studied philosophy and sociology at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. On completing his studies he became a correspondent for the Jerusalem newspaper *Kol Ha'ir*, and later, a television critic and a columnist in the Hebrew press. In contrast to Mansour and Shammas, who began their literary careers by writing in Arabic, and continued to do so, Kashua began his career as a writer in Hebrew, and has even confessed openly that he is unable to write in Arabic.[28] His two published novels, *Dancing Arabs* (2002) and *Va-yehi Boker* (And It Was Morning) (2004), are in Hebrew.

His first novel, *Dancing Arabs*, was published by Modan in 2002. It is a sort of autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, as is evidenced by the clear parallels between Kashua's life and the plot of the novel. It is couched in the first person singular. The narrator, whose name we are not told, tells the story of his life from his childhood, through his adolescence and his studies in a Jewish boarding school in Jerusalem, to his marriage and his return to the village of Tira with his wife and daughter. The narrator's childhood was coloured by his close relationship with his grandmother, whose stories, and the secrets she told, revealed the Palestinian narrative of love of the land, the struggle against the

Zionist movement, and the Palestinian *Nakba*. His relationship with his father, who believed devotedly in Nasserism and Arabic nationalism, was unstable. When the narrator enrolled in a Jewish boarding school, he tried to integrate into Jewish society and hide his Arab identity, although this created difficulties and psychological crises. The most serious crisis occurred shortly before the end of his studies in the boarding school, when his Jewish girlfriend, a student at the same school, decided to break away from him as the result of pressure from her mother, who would rather have her daughter become a lesbian than continue her relationship with an Arab. After recovering from this crisis, the narrator completed his studies in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and fell in love with a girl from his village who had just begun her studies at the university. They made love and she lost her virginity, but they were subjected to social pressures, which are described sardonically, as a result of which they went through two marriage ceremonies. The narrator's frequent journeys between Jerusalem and Tira, and his wish to hide his Arab identity from the arrogant and intolerant Jewish society, are described ironically, as is his dissatisfaction with the customs, the sicknesses and the problems of Arab society. At the conclusion of the novel, the narrator returns with his wife and daughter to sleep in his grandmother's house. His grandmother is now old and weak, but her main worry is that she cannot be buried on her own land.

The main theme of the novel is, therefore, the description of the divided world of the narrator, who alienates himself from his mother culture and attempts to assimilate to Jewish society, which is alien to him. The fact that he belongs simultaneously to both societies enables him to examine them minutely as an outside observer, and his criticism is directed equally at both of them. In his eyes, Arab society is conservative, violent, self-enclosed and frustrating, whereas Jewish society is ethnocentric, aggressive, power-worshipping and suspicious, especially of Arabs. The alienation between these two societies in conflict leaves him trapped between two identities between which he finds it hard to discover a common denominator, and he does not feel at home in either.

The novel is divided into five parts, each of which tells of different period in the narrator's life. As a result the plot seems disjointed, discontinuous and uncrystallized. The tone of the narrator is that of a diarist, and his language is spoken Hebrew, direct and personal, humorous and sarcastic. The clearly autobiographical elements of the novel, the political events mentioned in it, and its hackneyed characters, afford it a concreteness that makes it quite realistic and possible.

This novel became a best-seller in Israel. Kashua was granted the Prime Minister's prize for 2004, and a theatrical production of the Haifa Theatre was based on the book. It was also translated into English, French, Italian, German and Dutch. In Italy it was given the Grinzane Cavour prize for a first novel. It is not surprising that the reviews in Israel and the world were most complimentary, both to the author and to his work. Sarah Ozacky-Lazar wrote: 'Kashua gives no discounts. He writes what he feels, says what he thinks, and succeeds in telling deep truths and covering dozens, perhaps hundreds, of subjects connected with the daily life of the Arabs in Israel in short and ostensibly throw-away sentences' (Ozacky-Lazar 2002). Mandu Sen says: 'His comfort with the language, simple style, and use of slang make him fairly indistinguishable from his Jewish-Israeli contemporaries' (Sen 2004: 18).

Kashua himself expressed his satisfaction with the reactions of the critics in Israel and the world, and his deep disappointment with the hostile reviews in the Arabic press in Israel: 'How can it be that all the reviews in Hebrew and abroad say that I cast light on the sufferings of the Arabs, and in the eyes of the Arabs I'm an enemy? But that's the way

it is when they're not used to it. It's a society which isn't so used to examining itself' (Livneh 2004).

Critics in the Arab world ignored this novel. Only short reports of the fact that it received the Italian prize (Mada 2004), or that there was a plan to make it the basis of a film starring the famous Egyptian actor Omar Sharif appeared in the press.[29] Even in these reports it is possible to discern the dissatisfaction of the editors and journalists with the character of the novel 'which describes with mordant irony the efforts of a child to turn himself into a Jew', and with its language, Hebrew, which Kashua considers to be 'a purely technical choice' (Mada 2004).

In point of fact, most of the Arabic language reviews of this book were written by Palestinian citizens of Israel.[30] Almost all of them were severely critical of its derogatory view of Arab society, and its contribution to the perpetuation of a stereotypic view of the Arab in the eyes of Jewish society. Muhammad Hamza Ghanayim emphasizes that 'Kashua jeers at us Arabs, in Hebrew'; he is, therefore, 'a tragically schizophrenic cultural hero', who engages in 'a spiritual examination of himself and of the ''other'' in completely Israeli terms, which completely distort the fragrance of the Arab in this, his first literary production.'[31]

It may be said, therefore, that this work, too, was kept beyond the bounds of Palestinian literature and the Palestinian literary canon. It seems that his demonstrative criticism of Arab society severely damaged the Palestinian narrative which the author claimed to present. The collective experience of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel becomes a nightmare that pursues the narrator, who tries to cast off his identity as an Arab. In this situation, Arabic criticism prefers to free itself of both the literary creation and its creator. If we add to this the low artistic, stylistic and linguistic level of the novel, its chances of being accepted as Palestinian literature are reduced even more.

Conclusion

The attempts of critics and scholars to define the limits of Palestinian literature have always encountered difficulties connected with the dismemberment of the Palestinian people and its dispersal in many countries. It seems, however, that the Hebrew writing of a number of Palestinian authors creates a new challenge for these scholars and critics. This study has shown that the fact that they are written in Hebrew does not automatically exclude such works from the Palestinian canon. They can be included in the canon, but only if, in the eyes of the critics, they present the Palestinian narrative to the Hebrew-reading public fully and faithfully. If these works present the collective Palestinian experience incompletely, hesitantly and unconvincingly, they are kept firmly outside the bounds of Palestinian literature altogether.

In fact it may be said that in general minor literature can be granted sympathetic acceptance into the mother culture only if the critics agree that it succeeds in presenting the collective narrative of this culture to those who speak the major language.

Notes

1. *Babushka* is a Russian word meaning 'grandmother', 'old lady' or 'nesting dolls'. 'Babushka's Guilt' is the name of Shammas's article in which he describes Israel as nesting dolls (Babushka).
2. I use the common English form for Arabic and Hebrew personal names rather than scholarly transliterations.

3. *Nakba*: disaster: the flight of Palestinian Arabs as a result of the 1948 war, and the destruction of their homes.
4. Mapam (acronym of Mifleget Po'alim Me'uhedet—the United Workers' Party): a socialist Zionist party, founded in 1948 by the amalgamation of the Hashomer Hatzair Party and the Ahdut Avoda/Po'alei Zion Party. Was a senior partner in various government coalitions, but underwent a number of changes as a result of internal differences and frequent coalitions with and separations from other parties.
5. In addition to Mansour, Araidi, Shammas and Kashua, who have already been mentioned, other Arab authors who have written in Hebrew, particularly verse, include Nazih Khir, Siham Daoud, Salman Masalha, Asad Azzi, Muhammad Hamza Ghanayim and others.
6. In addition to those already named, mention should be made of actors such as Salim Dau, Makram Khoury and Muhammad Bakri, who have taken part in Hebrew plays and films.
7. Certain postcolonial scholars, primarily Homi Bhabha, have pointed out the ambivalent relationships between the 'I' and the 'other', the importance of the 'other' in constructing the identity of the 'I', and the existence of the 'third space' between them which creates hybrid categories (Bhabha 1996). On linguistic and literary hybridization among Arab authors in general, see the special issue of the Egyptian academic journal *Alif* (2000). On hybridization among Arab authors in Israel see, for instance, Snir 1998.
8. Some Jewish writers, such as Samir Naqqash and Itzhak Bar-Moshe, continued to write their works in Arabic for many years after their migration to Israel from Arab countries.
9. See the far-ranging discussion by Amara (1999), and the words of the writer Muhammad Ali Taha, who warned of 'the danger of the destruction of the Arabic language in Israel' on the Internet site of the newspaper *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 20.7.2005, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=19&issue=9731&article=313024

   See, too, the report of the intention of the Egyptian Cultural Council to strengthen the Arabic language among the Palestinian Arabs of Israel in order to curtail the dominance of the Hebrew language: http://www.balagh.com/thaqafa/101c356z.htm
10. Christian authors writing in Hebrew include Atallah Mansour, Anton Shammas and others. Members of the Druze community writing in Hebrew include Naim Araidi, Salman Masalha and others.
11. For instance, Hanan Hever (1987), when discussing Shammas's political views about the State of Israel, considers that they are reflected in his literary work, and especially in *Arabesques*.
12. See Shirin Haydar's interview with Kashua on the Internet site of the newspaper *al-Nahar*, http://www.annaharonline.com/htd/EDU040714-1.HTM
13. See, in particular, the writings of Hanan Hever (1989), Reuven Snir (1993, 1998) and Ami Elad-Bouskila (1999: 37–57), who deal with the whole gamut of Hebrew writing by Arab authors. In addition, there are dozens of works of research and criticism in Hebrew on specific works.
14. See, for example, the words of two prominent Egyptian writers, Ahmad Abd al-Mu'ti Hijazi (1995) and Sun'allah Ibrahim, who discusses the possibility of translating his works into Hebrew: http://www.albayan.co.ae/albayan/culture/2001/issue71/light/1.htm
15. It should be noticed that extreme localism and regionalism involved in Arabic criticism in the Arab world. So it is not surprising that Palestinian critics were interested in the local Palestinian literature in Israel.
16. See, for instance, the comments of Adil al-Usta (2000: 32–45) on the mutual accusations of cooperation with the Israeli establishment on the part of Palestinian writers and critics.
17. Al-Usta (2000: 12–13) raises doubts as to whether Palestinian writers who do not write in accordance with the 'Palestinian spirit' should be included in Palestinian literature. It should be noticed also that besides the suspicion that these writers encounter, they suffer twice from the problem of book-distribution in the Arab world.
18. Interview of Abdu Wazen with Mahmoud Darwish, *al-Hayat*, 13.12.2005: http://www.daralhayat.com/special/dialogues/12-2005/Item-20051209-10d7b653-c0a8-10ed-0041-2f4b16ac536d/story.html
19. On Mansour's *In a New Light*, see, for instance, Irene L. Gendzier (1970) and Rachel Brenner (2003). On Shammas's *Arabesques*, see, for instance, Hanan Hever (1987, 1989), Yael Feldman (1999) and Rachel Brenner (1993, 2001). On Kashua's *Dancing Arabs*, see, for instance Michal Tannenbaum (2003) and Mandu Sen (2004).
20. See, for example, Lucien Goldmann on the novel (1975: 7): 'The novel form seems to me, in effect, to be the transposition on the literary plane of everyday life in the individualistic society created by

market production. There is a rigorous homology between the literary form of the novel . . . and the everyday relation between man and commodities in general, and by extension between men and other men, in a market society'.

21. See Mansour 1992: 65. He claimed that the Jewish critics considered that the novel was hostile to Jews and Israel. Cf. also Ghanayim 1995:45.
22. *Moshava*: Jewish settlement based on private ownership of land, house and farm, one of the forms of Jewish settlement in Palestine.
23. *Kibbutz* is a form of Jewish settlement based on communal living, communal education, and joint ownership of the means of production and consumption.
24. Hashomer Hatzair is a socialist Zionist movement founded in 1919 in Poland. It advocated Jewish–Arab friendship, and bi-nationalism as the solution to the Arab–Israel conflict. It was one of the main components of the Mapam political party (see note 5, above).
25. al-Dabbagh 1988: 676. See, too, the Internet page of Beit Yig'al Alon: http://www.bet-alon.co.il/info/city_details.php?city_id=439
26. See, for instance, Iza Perlis (1966) on the book's thematics.
27. This bi-weekly publication appeared from 1952 to 1957, and in 1986 and 1987.
28. See Shirin Haydar's interview with Kashua on the Internet site mentioned above.
29. See the Internet site of the newspaper *al-Ṣiḥāfa*: http://www.alsahafa.info/index.php?type=3&id=2147491487
30. See, for instance, Huda Abu Mukh's article (2005).
31. Ghanayim's remarks in the newspaper *al-Mashhad al-Isrā'īlī*, published by the Palestinian Authority, 25.12.2002: http://www.almash-had.org/viewarticle.asp?ArticalID=181

References

Abbasi, Mahmoud (Maḥmūd 'Abbāsī) (1998) *Taṭawwur al-riwāya wa-l-qiṣṣa al-qaṣīra fi l-adab al-'arabī fi Isrā'il 1948–1976* [The Development of the Novel and the Short Story in the Arabic Literature in Israel 1948–1976] Translated from Hebrew by Hussein Hamza, (Haifa: Kull Shay'). [Arabic]

Abu Mukh, H. (Hudā Abū Mukhkh) (2005) 'Al-naṣṣ ka-manhajiyyat iqṣā'—al-adab al-'ibri namūdhajan' [The Text as a Method of Marginalization—the Case of the Hebrew Literature], *Madā Ākhar*, 1, pp. 37–56. [Arabic]

Agassi, E. (1956) 'Ḥevle yetzirah ben 'Arave Yisra'el' [Creating Pangs between Israeli Arabs], *Davar*, 25 May, pp. 5–6. [Hebrew]

Alif (2000) 'The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing Foreign Languages', *Alif, Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 20 [Special issue].

Alcalay, A. (1986/7) 'Biqoret 'al ha-biqoret le-'Arabesqot me'et Anton Shammas' [Criticism on the Criticism of *Arabesques* by Anton Shammas], *Apirion*, 6, pp. 74–75. [Hebrew]

Amara, M. H. (1999) *Politics and Sociolinguistic Reflexes: Palestinian Border Villages* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins).

Amit, D. (1988) 'Anton Shammas: 'Arabesqot' [Anton Shammas: *Arabesques*], *Proza*, 101–102, pp. 73–78. [Hebrew]

Araidi, N. (1991) 'Sifrut 'Ivrit, mah na'amt' [Hebrew Literature, How Agreeable You are], *Moznayim*, 65(4), pp. 41–43. [Hebrew]

al-Bahrawi, I. (Ibrāhīm al-Baḥrāwī) (1972) *Aḍwā' 'alā l-adab al-Ṣihyawnī al-mu'āṣir* [Lights on the Contemporary Zionist Literature] (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl). [Arabic]

Bachour, Y. (1966) 'Snunit' [A First Work], *Ha'aretz*, 18 March, p. 10. [Hebrew]

Bhabha, H. (1996) 'The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism', in: H. A. Baker, M. Diawara & Ruth H. Lindeborg (eds) *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press), pp. 87–106.

Brenner, R. F. (1993) 'In Search of Identity: The Israeli Arab Artist in Anton Shammas' *Arabesques*', *PMLA*, (May), pp. 431–445.

Brenner, R. F. (2001) 'The Search for Identity in Israeli Arab Fiction: Atallah Mansour, Emile Habiby, and Anton Shammas', *Israel Studies*, 91(6:3), pp. 91–113.

Brenner, R. F. (2003) 'Bonds of Confession: A.B. Yehoshua's ''Facing the Forests'' and Atallah Mansour's *In a New Light', Inextricably Bonded: Israeli Arab and Jewish Writers Re-visioning Culture* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press), pp. 173–205.

al-Dabbagh, M. M. (Muṣṭafā Murād al-Dabbāgh) (1988) *Bilādunā Filasṭīn* [Our Country Palestine] Vol. 7, (Kafr Qari‘: Dār al-Shafaq). [Arabic]

Daghir, Sharbal (Sharbal Dāghir) (1988) ‘Arābisk Filasṭīniyya’ [Palestinian *Arabesques*], *Liqā’*, 10–11, pp. 180–182. [Arabic]

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1986) *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, translated from French by Dana Polan, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis).

al-Eid, Yumna (Yumnā al-‘Īd) (1990) ‘Mithāl taḥlīlī li-riwāyat Arābisk’ [An Analytical Example of the novel *Arabesques*], *Taqniyyat al-sard al-riwā’ī fi ḍaw’ al-manhaj al-bunyawī* [The Narrative Technique of the Novel in the Light of the Structuralist Method] (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī), pp. 123–160. [Arabic]

Elad-Bouskila, A. (1999) *Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture* (London & Portland: Frank Cass).

Feldman, Y. (1999) ‘Postcolonial Memory, Postmodern Intertextuality: Anton Shammas’ Arabesques Revisited’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 114(3), pp. 373–389.

Gendzier, I. L. (1970) ‘History and Literature’, *Middle East Journal*, Winter, pp. 100–101.

Ghanayim, M. H. (Muḥammad Ḥamza Ghanāyim) (1995) *Al-madār al-ṣa‘b: riḥlat al-qiṣṣa al-Filasṭīniyya fi Isrā’īl* [The Hard Track: The Journey of the Palestinian Fiction in Israel] (Haifa: Haifa University, Kafr Qari‘: Dār al-Hudā). [Arabic]

Goldmann, L. (1975) *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, translated from French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Tavistock Publications).

Hever, H. (1987) ‘Hebrew in Israeli Arab Hand: Six Miniatures on Anton Shammas’ *Arabesques*, *Cultural Critique*, 7, pp. 47–76.

Hever, H. (1989) ‘Le-hakot be-‘akevo shel Achilles’ [Striking on Achilles’ Heel], *Alpayim*, 1, pp. 186–193. [Hebrew]

Hijazi, Ahmad Abd al-Mu‘ti (Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī Ḥijāzī) (1995) ‘Thaqāfat ummah . . . am thaqāfat afrād?’ [Culture of Nation . . . or Culture of Individuals?], *Ibdā‘*, 12(1), pp. 4–5. [Arabic]

Ibrahim, I. M. (Ibrāhīm Mūsā Ibrāhīm) (1966) ‘Fī ḍaw’ jadīd’ [In a New Light], *al-Mirṣād*, 15 April, p. 3; continued 22 April, p. 3. [Arabic]

Jayyusi, S. Kh. (Salmā Khaḍrā’ Jayyūsī) (1997) ‘Al-adab al-Filasṭīnī fī l-‘aṣr al-ḥadiṭh’ [The Palestinian Literature in the Modern Era], *Mawsū‘at al-adab al-Filasṭīnī al-mu‘āṣir*, Vol. 1, (Beirut: al-Mu’assasa al-‘Arabiyya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr), pp. 31–107. [Arabic]

Kashua, S. (Sayyid Kashū‘a) (2002) *‘Aravim roqdim* [Dancing Arabs] (Ben Shemen: Modan) [Hebrew]; translated from Hebrew by Miriam Shlesinger as *Dancing Arabs*, (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

Khamis, I. (Īrinā Khamīs) (1966) ‘Fī ḍaw’ jadīd’ [In a New Light], *al-Ittiḥād*, 1 April, p. 5. [Arabic]

al-Khatib, H. (Ḥusām al-Khaṭīb) (1990a) Al-riwāya al-Filasṭīniyya: al-ṣawt wal-ṣadā [The Palestinian Novel: the Voice and the Echo], *al-‘Arabī*, 379, pp. 110–115. [Arabic]

al-Khatib, H. (1990b) ‘‘Arābisk wa-l-intimā’ al-ḥā’ir’ [*Arabesques* and the Confused Loyalty], *Ẓilāl Filasṭīniyya fi l-tajriba al-adabiyya* [Palestinian Shadows in the Literary Experience] ([Damascus]: Dā’irat al-Thaqāfa), pp. 335–350. [Arabic]

Livneh, N. (2004) ‘Ha-‘aravi ha-noded’ [The Wandering Arab], *Ha’aretz Online*, 4 January. [Hebrew]

Mada (2004) ‘Ahamm jā’iza ibdā‘iyya Iṭāliyya ilā riwāyat ‘‘Arab yarquṣūn’ li-l-Filasṭīnī Sayyid Kashū‘a’ [The Most Important Italian Literary Prize for the Novel *Dancing Arabs* of the Palestinian Sayed Kashua], *al-Madā*, 164, 28 July, p. 8. [Arabic]

Mansour, A. (‘Aṭallāh Manṣūr) (1966) *Be-‘or ḥadash* [In a New Light] (Tel-Aviv: Karni) [Hebrew]; translated from Hebrew by Abraham Birman as *In a New Light* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1969).

Mansour, A. (1992) ‘‘Arab yaktubūn bi-l-‘ibriyya: al-wuṣūl ilā l-jār’ [Arabs writing in Hebrew: Reaching the neighbour], *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo*, 16, pp. 63–66. [Arabic]

Mustafa, Kh. A. (Kh. A. Muṣṭafā) (1986) *Al-shi‘r al-Filasṭīnī al-ḥadīth* [Modern Palestinian Poetry] (Bagdad: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah). [Arabic]

New Outlook (1962) ‘Arab Intellectuals on Israel: A Questionnaire’, *New Outlook, Middle East Monthly*, 5:9(49), pp. 55–64.

Ozacky-Lazar, S. (2002) ‘‘Aravi meḥapes menuḥah nekhonah’ [An Arab Searching for a Perfect Peace], *Ma‘ariv*, 8 February, p. 27. [Hebrew]

Perlis, I. (1966) ‘Tsa‘ir ‘aravi ba-kibbutz: ‘Be-‘or ḥadash’, roman ‘ivri shel sofer ‘aravi’ [An Arab Young Man in the Kibbutz: *In a New Light*, a Hebrew Novel of an Arab Author], *Ma‘ariv*, 25 March, p. 19. [Hebrew]

Qasim, M. [Maḥmūd Qāsim] (1996) *Al-adab al-‘arabī al-maktūb bi-l-faransiyya* [Arabic Literature Written in French] (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb). [Arabic]

Sen, M. (2004) 'Voices in Conflict: The Language of Israeli-Arab Identity', *Yale Israel Journal*, 4, pp. 15–23.

Shammas, A. (1980) 'Mi-taḥat la-'etz, mi-taḥat le-qorat gag, yoman qeri'ah' [Under a Tree, Under a Roof, a Reading Diary], *'Iton 77*, 20, pp. 8–11. [Hebrew]

Shammas, A. (1985/6) ''Al galut ve-sifrut' [About Exile and Literature], *Agra*, 2, pp. 67–70. [Hebrew]

Shammas, A. (1986a) *'Arabesqot* [Arabesques] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved) [Hebrew]; translated from Hebrew by Vivian Eden as *Arabesques*, (London: Viking 1988), and other editions.

Shammas, A. (1986b) 'Ashmat ha-babushka' [The Babushka's Guilt], *Politika*, 5–6, pp. 44–45. [Hebrew]

Shammas, A. (1989) 'Your Worst Nightmare', *Jewish Frontier*, LVI:4(580), pp. 8–10.

Siddiq, M. (Muḥammad Ṣiddīq) (2000) 'al-Kitāba bi-l-'ibriyya al-fuṣḥā: taqdīm riwāyat 'Arabisk wa-ḥiwār ma'a Anton Shammas' [Writing in Pure Hebrew: Presenting the Novel *Arabesques* and a Dialogue with Anton Shammas], *Alif*, 20, pp. 155–167. [Arabic]

Snir, R. (1990) ''Pets'a eḥad mi-petsa'av': ha-sifrut ha-'aravit ha-palestinit be-Yisra'el' ['A Wound of his Wounds': Arabic Palestinian Literature in Israel], *Alpayim*, 2, pp. 244–268. [Hebrew]

Snir, R. (1993) 'Maqor ve-targum 'al kav ha-tefer' [Source and Translation on the Border Line], in S. Somekh (Ed.) *Targum be-tside ha-derekh: 'iyunim ba-targumim min ha-sifrut ha-'aravit le-'ivrit be-yameno* [Translation at the Road Sides: Studies on the Contemporary Translations of the Arabic Literature into Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University and the Institute for Arabic Studies, Givat Haviva), pp. 21–39. [Hebrew]

Snir, R. (1998) 'Ma'agalim nehtakhim ben ha-sifrut ha-'ivrit le-ven ha-sifrut ha-'aravit' [Intersecting Circles between Hebrew and Arabic Literature], in Y. Tobi (Ed.), *Ben ' ever le-'arav: ha-maga'im ben ha-sifrut ha-'aravit le-ven ha-sifrut ha-yehudit be-yame ha-benayim u-va-zman ha-ḥadash* ['Ever and 'Arav: Contacts between Arabic Literature and Jewish Literature in the Middle Ages and Modern Times] (Tel-Aviv: Afiqim), pp. 177–210. [Hebrew]

Somekh, S. (1989) 'Cold, Tall Buildings: The Jewish Neighbor in the Works of Arab Authors', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 52, pp. 111–125.

Somekh, S. (1998) 'Nirmul 'im mah she-enu normali: tarbutah shel Yisra'el bi-'enayim mitsriyot' [Normalization with Who is not Normal: Israeli Culture in Egyptian Eyes], *Alpayim*, 16, pp. 158–177. [Hebrew]

Tannenbaum, M. (2003) 'The Narrative of Language Choice: Writers from Ethnolinguistic Minorities', *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 60(1), pp. 7–26.

Tuma, E. (Emile Tūmā) (1956) 'Al-thaqāfa al-qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya fī Isrā'īl' [The National Arabic Culture in Israel], *al-Jadīd*, 3(10), pp. 10–17. [Arabic]

Tuma, E. (1963) 'Hal tata'aththar al-thaqāfa al-'Arabiyya bi-l-mujtama' al-Yahūdī' [Does Jewish Society Influence Arabic Culture], *al-Jadīd*, 1–2, pp. 5–7, 32. [Arabic]

al-Usta, Adel ('Ādil al-Usṭā) (2000) *Su'āl al-huwiyya: Filasṭīniyyat al-adab wa-l-adīb* [The Question of Identity: The Palestineness of author and Literature] (Ramallah: Dār al-Shurūq). [Arabic]

Y. P. (1966) 'Be-'or ḥadash' [In a New Light], *Qeshet*, 31(3), pp. 166–168. [Hebrew]