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Volume 75

Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies. Investigations in homage
to Gideon Toury

Edited by Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlesinger and Daniel Simeoni

Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies

Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury

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Preface

I started being more and more interested in methodology, not in theory.
I was never interested in theory *per se*. My question was always:
How are we going to justify the way we do research? (Toury 2005)

To go “beyond” the work of a leading intellectual is rarely an unambiguous tribute. In the case of Gideon Toury, however, there is substantial justification for extending our collective vision beyond the discipline known as Descriptive Translation Studies. Our endeavor most superficially responds to the invitation written into the very title of Toury’s major book, *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* (1995). That text, and that title, offer us at once a common base, an open and multidirectional ambition, and many good reasons for unambiguous tribute.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Gideon Toury has been concerned with the development of Translation Studies as a research-based academic discipline. That concern was certainly born of the historical convergence of several similar visions, the nature of which is analyzed in several places in this volume. The work of Toury was in part to bring various insights together, to defend the virtues of a discipline based on programmed empirical discovery rather than quick opinions, and to do that with an originality and rigor that deservedly made him the *enfant terrible* of his day. The success of Toury’s project is certainly reflected in the institutional triumph of Translation Studies, particularly in postindustrial societies that significantly depend on translation for their cultural and political communication (the special weight of western Europe, Canada and Israel is evident in this volume, and is not to be concealed). That very success, however, could come at the price of making Toury a fixed point of reference, a set of stable propositions, a foundation established in the past and to be left in the past. All disciplines need such points of reference, of course, and Translation Studies certainly has a history of them both before and after Toury’s main book. In the case of Toury, however, the foundational work itself has always invited further development, opening a broad empirical frame in which even the most fundamental tenets can be challenged, dialogue and debate can be pursued, and we continue to understand each other, more or less, in terms of a common academic calling. To evince that shared yet dynamic frame is one of the main aims of this volume, forming what we hope is a broad snapshot of our discipline. To associate the work of Gideon Toury with that frame, without ignoring the numerous others who have contributed, is an act of justified collective homage.

Toury himself has encouraged many of us to move into the open spaces of “beyond”. He has long been an indefatigable networker, a relay of information, right from the

early days of the newsheet *TRANSST*, and a tireless editor, both at the helm of the journal *Target* from its inception and, later, as general editor of the Benjamins Translation Library. Many of us know of Toury as the writer of comments on our unpublished texts, orienting the discipline from behind the scenes. Others know him as their teacher and mentor, quick to respond to their hesitant drafts, keeping close tabs on their progress, and spurring them to turn the next corner.

For those of us aware of that hidden labor, the idea of going beyond Toury is part of remaining faithful to his adopted discipline, rather than to a person. For those of us who have been reading Toury's work over the years, the movement is all the more justified to the extent that Toury himself has not remained within fixed borders. For those who had read the early Toury, in Hebrew, was there anything really new in the cultural turn of the 1990s? For the Toury of norms and correlated tendencies, is there anything profoundly different in current glances at sociology? For the Toury who studied pseudotranslations, are there any great surprises when we see the term "translation" being used beyond some kind of translation proper? For the Toury searching for laws of translation, is there anything fundamentally different in corpus-based universals?

The diversity of the contributions in this volume may strike some as going beyond what they would consider legitimate Toury-inspired work. But the fact is that all authors acknowledge their debt, perhaps not so much to the orthodoxy of the descriptive model as to the overall project of giving Translation Studies an independent space for conceptual coherence and creativity. In this sense, we believe that Toury's call has been answered beyond expectations.

Much in this volume is passably new, we hope. And it can be conceptualized and interrelated with reference to Toury.

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Foreword

Gideon Toury. A name well-known at John Benjamins Publishing for twenty years now. And hopefully many more to come.

We know him as a pioneer in Translation Studies, an authority in his field, the dedicated editor of the highly prestigious Translation Studies journal *Target* and the first series editor of the renowned *Benjamins Translation Library*.

We know him as a modest man with a sharp eye, both professionally and personally, and with a very dry sense of humor for which one must always be on the *qui vive*.

A man who is critical in his judgment: sometimes relentless in pursuit of excellence, though never ungentle in manner, always reasonable in collegiality.

Benjamins has a great debt to the man, who was and is one of the keystones in the establishment and academic development of the discipline.

He was one of the people who opened our path to the world of Translation Studies and who helped us build a vast network of knowledgeable experts in the diverse sub-fields. Who helped us produce publications that have a worldwide circulation at the highest scholarly level. Who helped us create a solid basis for the maintenance of quality and continuity.

Here we express our profound gratitude to Gideon Toury, our tower of strength in Translation Studies. May the accomplishments of our collaboration serve many future generations.

John, Claire and Seline Benjamins
Isja Conen

To the memory of Daniel Simeoni

Daniel Simeoni, one of the editors of this volume, died of complications following a heart attack on November 3, 2007, as these texts were being revised.

Daniel believed passionately but quietly in the careful development of Translation Studies as an academic discipline. The work he put into this volume is to some degree representative of his role in the discipline as a whole, where he was perhaps the most intellectually serious of those who have worked beyond the limelight. His best known contribution to Translation Studies is undoubtedly his seminal article “The pivotal role of the translator’s habitus” (1998), cited more than 20 times herein. Similarly serious and provocative texts by him can be found in Translation Studies journals and collective publications, as well as in the recordings of his CETRA lectures delivered in 2005. As is evidenced in his article in this volume, Daniel worked at the highest conceptual level on the deepest intellectual bases of our academic enterprise. He constantly showed awareness of multiple positions; he saw connections between very different traditions; he was always slow to criticize or condemn.

Daniel’s work in Translation Studies was not put together in the book that should have been. His efforts were more readily given to helping students, to orienting research projects, to interviewing, and indeed to editing the work of others.

If anything in this volume is presumptuous or peremptory, it is certainly not to be attributed to Daniel Simeoni. He was the opposite of all that; he was, in the simplest and greatest sense, a good man.

He is much missed by contributors and editors alike.

Acknowledgements

The editors wish to express their sincere thanks to Yves Gambier for his initiative and guidance with this project, and to members of the Intercultural Studies Group in Tarragona who participated in the editing process: Serafima Khalzanova, Cèlia Querol, María Aguilar, Alev Balci, Yoonji Choi, Ana Guerberof, Diane Howard, Kyriaki Kourouni, Hyunjoo Lee, Esmail H. Moghaddam and Volga Yilmaz Gumus.

CHAPTER 1

Popular mass production in the periphery*

Socio-political tendencies in subversive translation

Nitsa Ben-Ari

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Not much is known about the agents of the massive, non-politicized literature of the periphery during pre-State Israel. Yet popular literature played an important role in the formation of Hebrew culture. It created and supplied a readership, introduced new sometimes subversive models and market criteria; and forced the canonic literary establishments to stratify. The agents were mostly either ignored or hidden behind pseudonyms. However, interview-based research helps us identify a common denominator between their activity in popular literature and their socio-political habituses. Insight is sought into the relationship between canonic and non-canonic literary systems, between center and periphery, between different worlds of production and distribution, and between ideologically engaged translation and commercial non-politicized translation, which may sometimes turn out to be as mobilized, yet to an opposing, subversive ideology.

Keywords: center vs. periphery, market demands, popular literature, mobilized literature, mainstream vs. subversive ideology, translators' habituses, pseudonyms

Introduction

My translation research has branched out, over time, to focus on the powers participating in the formation of the New Hebrew. It started with my study of the nineteenth-century historical novel written by German Jews and its role in shaping a New Jew and establishing a new literary system. It went on with the censorious tendency to eliminate or play down Christianity in Hebrew translations, and what followed, almost inevitably was censorship or self-censorship of erotica, mobilized to create the literary image of the pure Sabra (Ben-Ari 1997, 2002, 2008). This led to a re-mapping of the agents (mainly translators–editors–publishers, though also critics, educators and public figures) active in the mainstream and in the periphery of Hebrew literature from the 1930s to the 1980s. The semiotic identity of the mainstream agents, ideologically mobilized to the shaping of the New Hebrew, is clear enough. Very little is known, however, about participants in the non-establishment publications, especially from the

* This essay is dedicated to Gideon Toury, with special feelings, from his home: Tel Aviv University Translation Studies.

point of view of their socio-political affiliation. Of particular interest to me were marginal agents and the vague in-between terrain of commercial ventures.¹ The production these agents participated in was enormous and unappreciated. Many of them remained anonymous, by choice or necessity. I decided I would endeavor to put a face to these anonymous figures. I was especially intent on finding out whether there was any correlation between their non-conformist activity and their otherness.

This was not an easy task, seeing that so many of the participants have passed away or vanished. Many of the publishing houses had sprouted, flourished and closed down in a matter of weeks, often changing hands, names and character to adjust to whims of the market. Many firms were ad hoc inventions, not so much in order to avoid censorship as to evade taxes. Few of them have survived. Some of the agents did not want to be interviewed for academic research. Unlike those in mainstream activity, they still consider their past activity a dark chapter. Written material about them is practically non-existent.

In contrast to this scarcity of personal and sociocultural information, one must note the ample academic theoretical material about certain other aspects. Toury's work on pseudotranslation provides a theoretical framework for one aspect of this marginal mass production. Even-Zohar's work on culture shaping and especially repertoire building is crucial to the understanding of the construction of a culture. Rakefet Sela-Sheffy's work on the mass production of popular novels in German literature of the eighteenth century helps us understand the power of numbers in shaping literary models. Zohar and Yaacov Shavit made a pioneering survey of the beginnings of pulp fiction in Hebrew literature. Zohar Shavit (1998) provided a detailed mapping of the mainstream cultural agents, but also devoted a discussion to non-canonic literature between 1931 and 1947. Yaacov Shavit provided insight into the establishment efforts to impose a mobilized popular culture on the New Hebrew. Some research has recently been dedicated to the history of the main publishing houses in the Diaspora.² My own research on ideological manipulations of translation has supplied me with tools for understanding the processes involved. These, and many more, have provided points of departure for semiotic research. Yet the phenomenon has hardly been described in full, nor have questions been asked about the sociocultural identity of the many participants in the

1. Two academic investigations supervised by Gideon Toury supplied much data: Rachel Weissbrod's Ph.D. (1989) was a source of invaluable information about tendencies of translating English prose from the 1960s to the 1980s; Inbal Sagiv (1999) wrote a pioneering M.A. thesis about translations of the neglected science-fiction genre. Eli Eshed, a journalist who calls himself a "culture detective", compiled data on Hebrew pulp-fiction. At some time he, too, had attended Toury's classes, though sporadically.

2. Bernard Jakobowitz, Ayala Yahav and Dania Amichai-Michlin are some outstanding examples of modern academic research of Diaspora publishers. A more thorough study of Hebrew mainstream publishers has recently been undertaken by Motti Neiger of the Netanya University College.

twilight zone of cheap popular literature. Part of this essay will thus deal with unmasking the anonymous. Yet most of it deals with remapping non-canonic literary activity.

Apart from books about Hebrew culture of the period or research about specific publishers, my information about the people came from three main sources: interviews, some written material (mostly Internet sources) about deceased agents, and the data provided by the catalogue of the Jerusalem National University Library. I should add that written material on the Internet was rather scarce and not always trustworthy. And the library catalogue provided partial information only, for the simple reason that most pulp fiction was not sent to the National Library at all.

The literary field

One could sum up the history of Hebrew publishing in the twentieth century as a shift of centers from Europe to pre-state Israel (and the US). It started with the move from Central Europe to *Eretz Yisrael* (pre-State Israel) of small, private enterprises dedicated to the shaping of a new culture. The shifts occurred mainly because of political and economic constraints, and the move to pre-state Israel was motivated by necessity rather than ideology, since the basic infrastructure for book production had been nonexistent in the Israel of the early twentieth century. With the move of the central-European publishers, private local enterprises sprouted in Israel as well, and the years between the two world wars showed modest prosperity for the book industry. Then, in the face of economic difficulties, political movements became involved, giving financial support to the failing enterprises and demanding some degree of ideological subordination in return.

The establishment of subsidized firms pushed the private firms to the side. Their goal was to supply the literary and cultural basis for the new Zionist ideologies. Basing most of their efforts on translated literature, these publishers absorbed foreign literary models with the aim of using them as infrastructure for a new Israeli culture. Until the 1940s translations were mostly from Russian, German or Polish, and contacts with world literature were established via these literatures. Only from the 1950s did the English-language orientation become more dominant (Even-Zohar 1973: 435).

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the waves of immigration that followed, more private commercial enterprises sprouted in the margins. Whereas the established publishers had ideologically charged names, these new firms are recognizable by private or family names, of the owners or occasionally of their offspring. They supplied the demand for popular reading material shunned by the central organs by publishing romance, mystery or erotic novels, many of them serialized. They did not weigh options for translated works by their literary worth but by commercial value, although some had political goals in mind as well. They prospered to such an extent that the establishment firms could no longer ignore them. Thus, the 1970s saw the solidification of privately owned canonic publishing firms dealing with popular literature, as well

as establishment publishers bowing to demand (Weissbrod 1989: 100, 106–114). Writers, poets, translators and editors of renown began to see no harm in producing popular literature. Some had made their way up from the periphery, others had worked their way down from higher literary genres and institutions. The portraits drawn here will be samples of the many who did not work for the establishment firms.

In the ideological atmosphere of the period, translators who did not identify with the establishment line were obliged to work in the periphery. They were not paid much, but work was regular, even abundant. It was also undemanding, seeing that texts were seldom revised or reviewed. Some worked for establishment publishers as well, using different names; they would sometimes use their real names for the mainstream activity, and pseudonyms for their “lower” production. Those who started in the periphery and made their way to the central firms sometimes changed name in the process.

It is not easy to paint portraits of the many faceless or forgotten translators and writers of the past. Some celebrities, who wrote or “translated” pulp-fiction such as *Tarzan*, *Bill Carter* or *Patrick Kim* in the 1960s, brag about it today, tongue in cheek. Not all of them do, however, particularly not those who wrote/translated erotic pulp fiction: no one seems eager to take responsibility for that, not even as a youthful prank. One of the most active pseudotranslators of the 1960s, Miron Uriel, categorically refused to discuss the good old days with me, saying that for him they were bad days, a blemish in his past. Uri Shalgi, a well-known publisher of pulp fiction, refused all interviews on the pretext that he was too busy with present projects. He was willing to describe his current activities, however: he still publishes romance chapbooks, employing a translator who produces one book a week, for which he pays 10 NIS per English page (a total, he says, of 2000 NIS per book, amounting to a monthly salary of 8000 NIS, or \$ 1777, not bad for a student, he adds). In that respect, things have not changed much from the past.

Mainstream and subversive ideology

Mainstream ideology was shaped by what is now sometimes called the Mapai (roughly translated as Workers Party of Eretz Yisrael, the basis for today’s Labour party) or Ben-Gurionist socialist doctrine. It saw two enemies, one in the right-wing parties, and the other in the extreme left parties. Those who accepted the image of the Sabra or New Hebrew formed by this mainstream found their way into the establishment and were often integrated into the select body of culture shapers. Those who refused to participate, for various reasons, found the path to the mainstream more or less closed. It would only open much later, with the rise of the Likud party after 1977.

Two kinds of popular cultures had emerged in Israel before the establishment of the State: one imposed by ideologues who felt the New Hebrew working classes had to be supplied with cultural activity such as folk dancing, folk songs, theater, newspapers and culture clubs, and another that was authentic popular culture, imported from the immigrants’ countries of origin or developed from within. This was obvious in the theat-

er, where mainstream companies supplied the “right” kind of entertainment in Hebrew, while local groups (often performing in “old-country” languages such as Yiddish or Romanian) supplied the vaudeville that used to be fashionable in the Diaspora. This was also obvious in literature, where ideological mobilization was perhaps the most salient. Three kinds of popular books flowed onto the market: the mainstream distributed recommended classical literature, puritanical in nature, published in cheap formats and sold cheaply for the “working classes”, usually in installments. Commercial publishers offered soft-cover and even hard-cover popular best-sellers, considered by the establishment to be in bad taste. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw the production of popular pocket-books, sold by the thousands, sometimes by the tens of thousands. This third category, chapbooks, was sold in kiosks, that is, through a completely different distribution network. The production concentrated around the commercial area of south Tel Aviv, off Allenby Street and the Central Bus Station.³ In terms of recognition by the critics or the media, the two last categories of books were non-existent. From the point of view of the reading public, the thousands who read them often denied doing so. The books did not win prizes or recognition, and the agents who dealt with them often hid behind pseudonyms, changed addresses, and refrained from providing basic information like place or date of publication. The books were poorly produced, rife with printing errors, and had the cheapest possible covers. The translations, done by amateurs or even professionals, with no revision, were probably a gross disservice to the original.

In my efforts to put faces and names to the unknown publishers, translators and pseudotranslators who worked in the periphery, it gradually became clear to me that they had either felt rejected by the mainstream or refused to be part of it, for political and ideological reasons. In other words they were subversive not only in their literary activity but in their political tendencies as well. The materials they produced could be political, but they could also simply be “other” in relation to material recommended by the mainstream, whether they be termed popular novels or (American) bestsellers with no “literary” or didactic value (Weissbrod 1989: 42–57). In this case the market would be supplying the growing demand of the immigrant readership for entertainment literature.

Popular literature in the periphery

Drawing a portrait of a large group of translators/editors/publishers is not an easy task. This is firstly because Hebrew publishers were not a subject of research until recently. As a result, not much is known about the participants unless they established a name for themselves as poets or writers. Ephemeral publishing houses vanished long ago, or else they changed names and owners. Most of the subversive printing firms used to take up fictitious names daily, evading the law or taxation or both.

3. A similar urban concentration of printing and distribution of pulp fiction (especially erotica) in New York is described in Lefkowitz Horowitz 2002 (242–248).

Secondly, these agents were far from being a homogeneous group. They varied according to their place in the popular culture, and according to an inner hierarchy within the field.

Thirdly, they did not function as a group, although many of them knew each other and even worked together. The various partnerships often dissolved in quarrels, if not scandals. For the purposes of my research it is profitable to see them as a group, retrospectively in opposition to the mainstream, though very few of them actually had this image of themselves.

There is a recurring pattern, however, that reinforces their group identity, having largely to do with their habitus, and it is the main topic of this paper and of my current work. The pattern includes the following features:

1. They represented commercial enterprise. Bigger or smaller in scale, as private individuals or firms, they did not go into business for didactic purposes but for profit. They thus differed from the private enterprises that had started in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1880s, before moving to *Eretz Israel* in the early twentieth century. The European firms were mostly a product of the Revival period and were imbued with Zionist didactic fervor. This does not mean that the private enterprises of the late 1940s and beyond were all utterly devoid of ideological beliefs or motivation, but their aim was first and foremost to make money.
2. They did not share the mainstream notion that popular literature could be dictated to readers or even imposed on them by some culture shapers who knew what was good for the consumer. In fact, most of them did not plan ahead, but just went along with the flux of supply and demand, keeping a close eye on the market. They, too, had to watch their reading public while also playing a role in shaping it, since their readership was constantly changing with incoming waves of immigration. More than the mainstream agents, they had to keep in touch with changing norms and fashions, as they could not afford financial losses. Unlike mainstream agents, they were not covered, backed or supported by any subsidies.
3. They were mostly American-oriented. Far from disdaining cultural goods emanating from American culture, considered cheap and shallow by the mainstream, they favored it. In this, they anticipated mainstream publishing and may have had a part in promoting the Americanization of Hebrew culture.
4. They did not have a high regard of themselves. Some are now basking in the retrospective warmth of nostalgia, with the media occasionally spotlighting them. Recurring waves of nostalgia are responsible for the fact that subversive books or chapbooks of the 1950s–1960s are now in demand in second-hand book stores, and are quite expensive, too, in utter disproportion to their literary value. The teenagers of yore, who had read the books clandestinely, are now willing to pay the price, half-jokingly, knowing that the books are hard to find. There are even some avowed (and some secret) collectors of pulp fiction. This accounts for the fact that some of the entrepreneurs of the past are willing to be interviewed, but it does not completely do away with their low self-esteem. In fact, the ones I interviewed who are still in the

publishing business invariably started by showing me respectable productions they had been involved in or are involved in at present.

5. Large groups are seldom homogeneous, and neither is this one. There are various possible categorizations, which will be discussed later. For now, it is important to draw the line between those who started in the periphery and made their way up, and those who stayed “behind” (in their terms). This shift of status has a lot to do with the sociopolitical background and ideological inclinations of the people involved.
6. Their sociopolitical status was in opposition to that of agents in the mainstream. They did not come from agricultural communities such as kibbutzim or cooperative settlements; they were working-class or bourgeois individuals living and working in the big cities. Neither did they belong to the Mapai or Ben-Gurionist camp. I found out that most had right-wing inclinations, were supporters of Jabotinsky and of what was later to become the Herut party. Some had been active participants in pre-State extreme right underground movements in the struggle against the British Mandatory Rule. The political affiliation came out in the interviews, becoming such an important factor that it practically forced me to look for it in the people I could not interview. The people I interviewed supplied the information voluntarily. It first came as a surprise, since I had not expected this to be a common denominator. Once I had realized this, I still made a point of avoiding any mention of political affiliation until the information was provided by the interviewee.
7. Many of the agents working in the popular book industry worked for newspapers and magazines as well. In accordance with Bourdieu’s theory that newspapers and journalists of the same inclinations tend to find each other (Bourdieu 1984: 161–166), they found a home not in the mainstream — that is Socialist — party organs, but in evening papers such as *Yediot Aharonot*, which backed private enterprise and gave voice to “other” opinions. From there some found their way to bourgeois enterprises like *La’isha*, the first magazine for women, or *Olam Ha’kolnoa*, the first cinema magazine. Not surprisingly, when new right-wing newspapers were founded with the rise of the Likud in 1977 (*Yoman Hashavua*, or the more extreme paper *Nativ*), several of them found their way to these publications. Working in evening papers or in magazines came up in interviews as a form of apprenticeship, or as a means of obtaining funds that could eventually be invested in books.
8. There was a recurring pattern in the interviews. In order to put people at ease, I started by enumerating the merits of the subversive pop literature of the past: going against the mainstream, introducing variation, fighting censorship and especially self-censorship. The reaction was invariably negative: none of the my reasons had been the motive, direct or indirect, for going into the business. My assumption was met with either a shrug or even distrust as to the nature of the undeserved “compliments”.
9. All interviewees mentioned that they had started writing or translating at a very early age. Not having the right connections, they were refused jobs in mainstream firms, but they did not give in; they found their way in the periphery.

10. They had made a lot of money, relatively speaking, in a rather short time, though they usually lost it at some later point. The rise and fall in their career was due partly to tough competition, and partly to market fluctuations. The field obeyed no copyright or ethical rules, and competition was indeed fierce. Their final collapse was mainly due to mainstream firms that had become aware of the potential profits in the popular niche and reached out for their share. This coincided, of course, with the diminishing subsidies for the mainstream firms.
11. Money was not the sole criterion for the hierarchy within the periphery. Publishers like Mizrahi were not likely to be recognized by the producers of hard-cover books, who were much less successful financially. Malka Friedman, daughter of the publisher Shmuel Friedman and co-owner with him of the firm Sh. Friedman, said her father had to intervene for Mizrahi when the publishers' organization did not accept him. Ezra Narqis, on the other hand, regarded Mizrahi as a role model, while he himself became the model for Uri Shalgi.

Before introducing some of the people involved in the popular book industry, I should say something about their names and pseudonyms.

Three main categories are discernible in the names of the agents involved: real names, names of family members (usually sons or daughters), and pseudonyms. Real names were used by small commercial publishers as a means of distinguishing between themselves and the institution-backed firms: M. Mizrahi, Sh. Friedman, Zelikowitz, Carmi and Naor, as opposed to Sifryat Poalim [literally: People's Library], Am Oved [Working People], Ha'kibbutz Ha'meuchad [the United Kibbutz] or Mossad Bialik [the Bialik Institute]. Real names were also used by translators when translating more respectable books. First names could form an acronym for a publishing firm: David, Shimon and Eli were the three partners who formed a small publishing house called Deshe. Since the initials form the Hebrew word for grass, not many know where the name actually derived from. First names of children were used by publishers for various purposes, be it for their firm (Karni publishing), or for their various book series: Ha'dov, the Bear, a name used by Sh. Friedman, after his son's name Dov; Nava — his daughter's second name served for another series. Children's names could be used in portmanteau form as well. When publisher Uri Shalgi sought a name for his enterprise, the name of his children, Ram and Dorit, were combined into Ramdor. The world of pseudonyms was of course much richer: acronyms and anagrams (Eliezer Carmi — as Azriel Macir), original Diaspora names before changing to Hebrew ones (Arieh Hashavia — as Arieh Lev; Ezra Narqis — whose family name was originally Khadria [“vegetables” in Arabic] — as Y. Yarkoni). In fact Narqis had a hard time remembering the many pseudonyms he invented, and said that any hint of vegetable was a helpful clue. The predominant choice, however, was foreign, preferably English-sounding names (Bert Whitford) for a whole line of pulp fiction that would not sell under Hebrew names.

Apart from these, there were literally hundreds of names invented and changed almost overnight, as cover for firms that sought anonymity. Names such as Olympia

or Eros for printing houses would obviously suggest a line of provocative erotica.

One of the peculiarities of the field is that the huge number of pseudonyms caused the line between writing and translating to be somewhat blurred. Thus, when I introduce translators below, I do it both in the specific sense and in a more general one of translator/pseudotranslator/writer/editor. It must not, however, be confused with the general term for participants in the popular literary enterprise, referred to as “agents” for the sake of differentiation.

Translators

Work for the popular book industry started at a very early age, sometimes in high school or while doing military service. It could come about when an acquaintance of the family had a small printing firm or worked in a newspaper. Family members of a publisher would sometimes participate as translators. Some sought work in the pulp fiction industry when they were rejected by mainstream organs. Many young translators were immigrants or children of immigrants. M. Mizrahi told me how he had selected translators and editors from among the young people who constantly swarmed his book stall off Allenby Street, picking the ones who showed interest and understanding. Ezra Narqis had translated a story by Conan Doyle in school, long before he even knew how to pronounce the author’s name. A teacher caught him reading a booklet under the desk, and was placated only when Ezra’s classmates assured him it was the pupil’s own translation. Then Ezra started work in a printing shop of one of his father’s friends. He was 14 or 15 at the time. Eli Kedar described how, after his army service, he had tried to be accepted as a journalist, was rejected, and decided to look for a publisher in the bustling commercial area of south Tel Aviv. He had heard there was a man called Nissim, in the Yemenite neighborhood of Shehunut Machalul, who published chapbooks; he literally went from door to door, looking for this man. Arieh Hashavia started as a young reporter for *Gadna* (monthly publication of the pre-military training program), when still a student. He also started working as a messenger boy and general assistant in *Yediot Aharonot*. He continued as a reporter for the army magazine *Ba’mahaneh*. Arieh Karassik started writing thrillers when he was 16; when he could not find a publisher, he borrowed 25 *lira* from his father and started his own enterprise.

Work was abundant in the periphery. The pay was not high, but it came regularly. G. Ariuch, pen name for Gentilla Broyde, was often reprimanded by her brother for working in the popular literature business. The brother, Ephraim Broyde, translated poetry and Shakespearian drama for respectable publishers such as Sifyrat Poalim, and he often begged her to stop working for the “Turk” (Mizrahi’s derisive nickname). She refused, so Mizrahi told me, since Mizrahi supplied her with a steady flow of bestsellers. Around 50 books are listed under her name in the library catalogue, most of them for central mainstream publishers like Am Oved or Zmora Bitan. Yet at least seven were translated for Mizrahi, among them Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* and books

by Louis Bromfield or Daphne du Maurier. Loyalty to one publisher was rare. Eli Kedar wrote 12 books per month, in the Wild West pseudotranslation series *Buck Jones* that he produced for his first publisher Nissim, earning 50 *lira* per book. Only two a month were published. Ezra Narqis offered to pay him 75 *lira* per book and publish as many as he could write. Kedar accepted the offer. When Narqis discovered Miron Uriel could translate/write more quickly, he soon took him on instead. Apparently, Uriel could produce a booklet in two hours. He never re-read what he had written.

The most interesting common denominator of the group is their anti-establishment political involvement. Many of them had been political activists in their early youth. Their subversive activities varied, diverging either to the extreme left or to the extreme right.

Here are some portraits to illustrate the nature of the translators in the periphery.

The first is that of Maxim Gilan, poet and political dissident under his true name, and diligent translator of erotica under the pseudonym G. Kasim (similar letters). Gilan was born in Spain and came to Israel as a poor refugee from France in 1944. As a young boy he enlisted in LEHI, the extreme anti-British underground movement also known as the Stern Gang, and after the establishment of the State he was a devout anti-Ben-Gurion activist, playing a part in at least three underground sects that planned to overthrow the first Prime Minister and even threatened his life. He was imprisoned twice, for 14 months, then for 59 days for suspected involvement in the Kaestner assassination. When he was co-editor with Shmuel Mor of the porn magazine *Bul*, they were accused of publishing the details of the Mossad involvement in the assassination of Moroccan dissident Mahdi Ben-Barqa, the Mossad allegedly having helped extradite the Moroccan to the French authorities. After the Six Day War, Gilan exiled himself to Paris, where he became editor of *Israel & Palestine*, an English-language pro-Palestinian magazine. As Maxim Gilan he went on publishing poetry books. Under the pseudonym G. Kasim, however, Gilan translated and wrote erotic literature for "Eros", financed by Eli Kedar in the early 1960s. The books came out repeatedly and were re-printed in 1968. He was the translator of *Fanny Hill*, *Scented Garden*, *Arabian Nights*, *Turk's Pleasures* and *The Black Woman's Lust*. Gilan eventually came back to Israel, where he won several literary prizes. He died in 2005.

No less diligent was Eliezer Carmi, translator and writer with more than 300 books to his name (according to the National Library catalogue). He used several pseudonyms: A. Ben-Dan, Azriel Macir. He may have been hiding behind the female-pseudonym Shula Effroni, first translator of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. Carmi has been described by his friends as a big jovial fellow, a womanizer, who was a tireless writer/translator. He was born in Russia in 1918 and came to Israel in 1924, at the age of seven. According to Eli Eshed he did not even finish elementary school. At a very early age he co-founded a small publishing firm called Twentieth Century Publishing. They put out chapbooks: thrillers and detective stories adopted from English literature. When World War II broke out, Carmi joined the Jewish Brigade of the British army (where he first discovered Damon Runyon), then the IDF. When the war was over, he was left with-

out work. He founded Carmi & Naor, and published hard-cover books of good quality. However, the costly production led to financial difficulties, and he had to work for publishers like M. Mizrahi or Uri Shalgi (Eshed 2006).

According to Eshed, Carmi translated at a rate of 12 books a year, about 500 books in all. He was best known for his genial rendition of Damon Runyon, for which he actually invented an “equivalent” Hebrew slang. For his special style, Mizrahi coined the term “Carminization” of translated texts. He translated O. Henry, Edgar Wallace, H. G. Wells, R. L. Stevenson, Jack London and many more. He was especially prolific in translations of erotic literature, fiction and guidebooks. According to Arieh Hashavia, not only did Carmi disdain censorship of erotica, he exaggerated it when he felt the original was not risqué enough. He added abundantly to *Stiletto* by Harold Robbins, for instance.⁴ In his zealous efforts to translate erotic books, Carmi had to look for less “normative” publishers in the periphery. Carmi was less of a political person. However, his weekly column in the Likud magazine *Yoman Ha’shavua*, published in the 1980s, leaves no doubt about his right-wing political affiliation. He died in 1991.

Arieh Hashavia⁵ is an example of a translator, writer and journalist who did not identify with the right wing and who found his way to more central publishing. Hashavia started in the *Gadna* magazine and went on to write the IDF weekly *Ba’machaneh* (literally: In the [Military] Camp). In 1948, as a high school pupil, he was already working as jack-of-all-trades in the *Yediot Aharonot* evening paper. When Aharon Shamir became editor of the paper’s *Weekend Supplement* and of *La’isha* [For Woman], young Hashavia became his close assistant, and remained on the job for ten years (Zvi and Paz 1999: 13). There were many immigrants who could not read Hebrew, it was the “Utility” period, people hardly had money for food, and the conservative paper for women, founded and run by men, provided advice for the working-woman-housewife-mother in matters of fashion, housekeeping and social gossip. The British magazine *Woman* supplied a model. *La’isha* started a letterbox and, seeing that response was meager, initially had to resort to fabricating readers’ letters. Should I allow him to kiss me on the first date? Arieh Hashavia, as the woman-consultant “Ariella Lev”, provided the answers. The editors conducted polls to find out what women wanted to read. What was the “recipe for success”? Hashavia explained it to me: they did not annoy or challenge anybody, they did not write about controversial subjects, they did *not* write about sex.

Early in his career, Hashavia managed M. Mizrahi’s publishing firm for ten years, and throughout that time translated a large number of books. He used the pseudonym Haim Lev (his full name at birth was Haim Leib) when he translated erotica such as Frank Harris’s *My Life and Loves* (and was surprised that I guessed as much, see Ben-Ari 2006: 269–270, 288–281). He also used the pseudonym H. Adini (his wife’s name is Adina) and T. Lavie.

4. My student, Nir Cohen, verified this for me, for which I thank him.

5. Interview 30 Mar. 2006. See also Elgat and Paz, eds. (1999: 13–14).

A colorful figure, a pseudotranslator–publisher, who made a point of staying behind the scenes all these years, is Eli Kedar.⁶ Born 1938 in Givatayim, Kedar was a central figure in the marginal popular literature scene of the 1960s. He used so many pseudonyms for his writing and his ad hoc invented printing firms that he finds it hard to remember them all. Among them: Nam Sun, Mike Baden, A. Zilber, A. Keren, A. Kadar and even a female name — Tali Frank. The publishing firm Great Art & I, for whom G. Kasim translated *Fanny Hill*, was his venture, as were a film company named Sirtey Yoel [Yoel's Films] and a woman's magazine called *Hu ve'Hi* [He and She]. Kedar was an entrepreneur, initiating projects and abandoning them as soon as they came into the public domain. He often lost money by quitting when the project became a hit.

In 1958, after his military service, Kedar wanted to become a journalist. When the major journals rejected him, he decided to try his hand at writing pulp fiction. It was then that he went to look for the publisher who was putting out Westerns. After the success of his first book *Kohenet Ha'yareach Ha'tzahov* [Priestess of the Yellow Moon], Nissim asked for more material, and together they created the *Buck Jones* series. As mentioned above, Nissim could not keep up with Kedar's tempo. Ezra Narqis met Kedar in the Central Bus Station compound and offered him more money for all the books he could write. According to Kedar, he and Narqis published the first pocket-book to be sold in kiosks — Nam Sun's *Rutz ad Ha'sof* [Run Till the End] — which appeared two weeks before M. Mizrahi published the first chapbook in his Agatha Christie series. Leafing through a foreign magazine in Narqis's office, with pictures of voluptuous SS female officers, Kedar conjured up his greatest hit — *Stalag 13* (see Ben-Ari 2006: 163–173). In the tradition of Billy Wilder's *Stalag 17*, the series depicted British and American prisoners being tortured in Nazi prison camps, with a “twist”: the camps were run by sadistic sex-craving female Nazi officers. Kedar did not pursue the success of the *Stalags* in Israel. He translated his book into English and went to Germany to look for a publisher. He came back to find, to his amazement, that the books had been sold by the thousands, which did not deter him from abandoning the sure success of the *Stalags* and looking for new ventures.

Publishers

There was a clearly defined hierarchy among small and medium publishers in the periphery. Though they all looked up to the mainstream for literary language and models and for norms of translation, a clear-cut line existed between those who published hardcover bestsellers and those who published serialized pulp fiction only, in the form of booklets and magazines. The difference was mainly in the fact that the first could be bought in certain bookstores, while the others were sold in kiosks and occasionally in second-hand bookstores. The following are representative of these domains.

6. Interview 14 June 2006.

M. Mizrahi was one of the first commercial publishers and, for a long period, the greatest commercial success of them all.⁷ Meir Mizrahi emigrated from Turkey as a boy, a young tailor in a family of tailors. He had no experience with books but he had a keen business sense. In the *colportage* tradition, he started by lending popular books to his fellow immigrants, then peddling books that he and his wife carried around with them. Around 1958, he opened a bookstall in the busy commercial Lewinsky Market, off Allenby Street. He bought stocks of books from bankrupt printers, eventually realizing he should buy the plates and the rights as well. Later, he moved to an office and storeroom nearby. He identified a niche, so he said, a lacuna, that he could fill, that of popular novels: along with Erle Stanley Gardner and Ellery Queen, he bought the wholesale rights for Agatha Christie, all of them writers he had heard of in Turkey, all of them considered “cheap” by the mainstream. Mizrahi did not limit himself to detective stories. He published A. J. Cronin and Harold Robbins, Enid Blyton and Alistaire McLean; he published titles such as *Casanova* or *Popeye the Sailor Man*, along with *Huckleberry Finn* and *Oliver Twist*. Today, he is still very proud of several popular encyclopedias for youth that he published, or the French *Que sais-je* series of popular information he introduced later on. In fact, the encyclopedias were the first item he pointed out to me in our interview.

Although he certainly reached the top in commercial publishing, Mizrahi (the “Turk”), was looked down upon by mainstream and periphery alike. Although he called his bestselling series *The Good Book Club*, its reputation of cheapness persisted for years.

Throughout his publishing career, Mizrahi followed a golden rule: to consult with “good” people. He did not gamble on new translators; he employed only those who had established a positive reputation; nor did he gamble on unknown writers. He was not aiming at the literary elite. There are *haute couture* clothes made for the best clients, he said, but there are workers’ clothes as well, and they too should be well-made, not from fancy stuff, nor custom-tailored, but from good sturdy material. He recognized literary interest and taste among the people who visited his stall, and soon put them to work as readers, editors and translators. The names he mentions proudly are those of professionals such as Haim Abrabaya, Arie Hashavia, Yitzhak Levanon, Yonatan Ratosh. He paid them less than other publishers, by the book rather than by length or difficulty, but supplied regular work. Arie Hashavia translated, edited, read and consulted. Baruch Krupnik-Karu, a lexicographer and prolific mainstream translator, produced a fuller translation of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (Ben-Ari 2006: 248–255) and stayed on for more work, including an anthology of Hebrew writers. Eliezer Carmi made his reputation at Mizrahi’s and earned Mizrahi a small fortune with his hilarious translation of Damon Runyon. He was a tireless translator of erotic books, but found that Mizrahi drew the line at pornography. Mizrahi did not have to read the “suspicious” books. Like the famous judge who said he could recognize pornography when he saw it, he spied smut and sent Carmi to smaller, less puritanical printers. He gave up the good profit

7. Interview with Mizrahi 13 Feb. 2002.06. See also Eshed 2005.

on Harold Robbins, for instance, when it became too daring for him, sending Carmi to Shalgi, a publisher with no such compunction. Mizrahi drew the line at Christianity, too. He published all of A. J. Cronin's bestsellers, except for one: *The Keys to the Kingdom*, which he vetoed when he heard it was about a priest.

Mizrahi's downfall occurred in the 1980s, when popular literature began to be published by establishment and non-establishment firms alike. He made a come-back and is still in business, though mostly re-printing bestsellers of the past. Today, at the age of 75, he still prides himself on understanding nothing about books, but understanding all about people and business.

Sh. (Shmuel) Friedman was one of Mizrahi's competitors.⁸ He founded his publishing house in 1942. After his death in 1991, it was run by his daughter Malka and his son Dov. It has recently been sold to a relatively new publisher, Opus, which started with computer manuals and expanded into translated literature.

Grandfather Moshe Friedman came from Lithuania in 1918. He was a Revisionist, a keen follower of the right-wing leader Zeev Jabotinsky. He rejected membership in the Histadrut, the socialist workers' union, and wrote essays against the establishment. At a time when Yiddish was fought against by the culture shapers in the famous "language battle", he started a Yiddish paper called *Emeth wagen Eretz Yisrael* [Truth about Eretz Yisrael]. His six sons were all members of *Irgun*, the militant anti-British underground movement. His son Shmuel started by publishing political pamphlets and books, but soon realized popular genres would make more money. Most of the books published by the firm were translations, a small number from French, the rest mostly from English. Shmuel Friedman soon identified another "subversive" niche and formed the magazine *Olam Ha'kolnoa* [The World of Cinema], which was a successful moneymaker. Friedman is also known for publishing a collection of the extreme leftist political satires called "Uzi Ve'shut", and was friendly with Canaanites such as Bin-yamin Tamuz and Yonatan Ratosh, who published their own work and translated for him. The firm published a great number of the despised American "bestsellers": *Peyton Place*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, novels by Ayn Rand, Vicky Baum, Damon Runyon (the first *Guys and Dolls* by Carmi). Both the American bestsellers and *Olam Ha'kolnoa* were "luxury" American-style products, not favored by mainstream ideology.

Malka Friedman insists the firm never received any subsidy from the establishment. Moreover, when Friedman wanted to go into textbooks in the 1950s and 1960s, he was turned down for not belonging to the right party. He had to give up this profitable branch of business.

Ezra Narqis was perhaps the Number One publisher of pulp fiction in the 1950s and 1960s.⁹ Now 75, he was born in Jerusalem to a family that had emigrated from Syria. As a boy he joined the underground *Irgun*, performing various secret missions. This was when he also started translating, his first book being a Conan Doyle (a name, he recalls

8. Interview with daughter-partner Malka Friedman-Shafir, 05.03.06.

9. Interview 20–21 Feb. 2006.

with a smile, that he mispronounced as Devil, due to similar spelling in Hebrew). He was surprised when I told him his much-admired leader, Jabotinsky, had also translated Conan Doyle when in the Turkish prison. He started working in a printing shop and made his way up, taking Meir Mizrahi as his model (although, he says, Mizrahi became too “stuck up” later).

Narqis identified a hunger for pornography, as well as a new reading public. In his words, these were young men who emigrated from “under-developed countries” (a euphemism for Arab countries), for whom the mere thought of a woman’s bare leg was arousing. According to him, he was *not* swimming against the current; he was swimming wherever the current carried him. He saw a vacuum, and he filled it, having recognized the potential of the large number of new immigrants who would read smut. He supervised and copy-edited the books he printed, insisting they were well-written, better than others published in the periphery.

One of his most notorious commercial successes was the *Stalags* — the above-mentioned chapbooks provocatively combining sex and Nazism. As Narqis recalls, a young man named Eli Kedar came to him and offered a book entitled *Stalag 13*, a book every other publisher had rejected. Narqis bought the rights for 200 *lira* and printed it. To Kedar’s astonishment (and dismay), within five months Narqis sold nearly 40,000 books. Narqis published some 25 to 30 *Stalags* and other booklets of the genre, all pseudotranslations. In fact, according to him, 99% of the books he published were pseudotranslations. Some 80% of them, he says, were written by Miron Uriel under various pseudonyms. Miron Uriel wrote books by the hour; no editing or revising was necessary. Narqis invented foreign names of writers, publishers, critics — so many that he cannot remember them today. The covers were done by Asher Dickstein (today an Orthodox Jew, member of the *Habad* Hassidic movement) or copied from British/American magazines.

Narqis was not worried about censorship. In his entire career he spent one night in jail, his wedding night (February 10, 1963), after the publication of *Stalag 13* — because, he explains, his lawyer had neglected to pay his bail. The angry judge scolded the lawyer for his negligence, scolded the police for arresting a man on his wedding night, and dismissed the case. When the notorious *I Was Colonel Schultz’s Bitch* (printed by his competitor Peretz Halperin) was confiscated by the police, Narqis quickly published an almost unnoticeable variation, *Colonel Schultz’s Bitch* (“with absolutely no erotica in it, hardly even a kiss on the cheek”) and immediately sold three editions.

In the 1960s Narqis sold booklets for 1 or 1.50 *lira* at a time when a clerk would earn 40–50 *lira* per month. He is still in business, though he too had his ups and downs, first making much money and then losing it. He is now working on a new edition of the *Stalags*.

The fourth portrait is that of Eliyahu (Eli) Meislish, one of three partners in Deshe Publishing.¹⁰ Meislish, one of the Likud Party founders, was until recently Vice Editor of *Nativ*, a right-wing paper. He was born to a religious family in Netanya. After com-

10. Interview 4 Apr. 2006.

pleting his elementary studies in the religious Tachkemoni school and then in a Yeshiva, he sought secular education and studied Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He made some money working in Kenya, which enabled him to found Deshe Publishing. The company was launched by Eli and his childhood friend David Lifshitz in 1960. The third partner, an auditor who kept the books “with the severe neatness of a *Yekke*”, left them after a short while. Lifshitz, a student of literature and history, was interested in pornography and started a pilot for three pornographic magazines in 1959. An article in *Ha'olam Ha'ze* (1134, 24.6.1959) claims that the pilot pocket books sold 4000 copies, an immense success in terms of the period. He planned a fourth, an illustrated sex guide that, he insisted, would not only sell but would be of pedagogical value. Each booklet had only one edition, since the law did not demand permits for a one-off publication. The jackets often bore the self-defeating title *Hotza'a chad-pe'emit* [literally: one-time publication], No. 2, No. 3 etc..

David Lifshitz's career as publisher of sex books was cut short when the police arrested him after a detailed exposé (complete with photograph) in *Ha'olam Ha'ze*. Obscenity laws were not too clear about pornography, and so he was arrested on technicalities such as not naming the printing house or publishing firm on the cover, as required. His friend Eli got him out on bail. Lifshitz changed his name to Sadan, and Deshe Publishing became more careful about printing pornography. Lifshitz, according to Meislish, was an anarchist who supported the Arab *El-Ard* group, and therefore accepted a book by Lebanese writer Laila Ba'albakki, *Ani Echye* [I Shall Live]. It was meant to appear in an establishment publication of the Histadrut, the Trade Union Organization, but was vetoed for its anti-Zionist tone. Deshe was persuaded by the translator Yehoshua Halamish that the book included no more than one or two provocative anti-Zionist sentences, and published it in 1961.

Eli Meislish was 29 when they started the small firm. Literary celebrities of today worked for them, recommending books, translating or illustrating. Aggressive and quite modern distribution techniques were used. Eli was careful not to let David introduce too much sex. However, Sadan soon published books about Nazis and concentration camps, even a book about Hitler, with swastikas on the covers. The partnership (and friendship) finally broke up when Meislish found out Lifshitz had published a book in the Deshe format calling it Keter Publishing. Meislish then established a small firm on his own, called Golan, which published then-unknown poetry books. He copied old chapbooks, changing key words here and there to be on the safe side. He wrote a pornographic book under the pseudonym Eli Ben-Layish, and later worked for Masada Publishing, then for the Likud daily. For six years (1983–1989) he worked as producer for *Olam Ha'isha* (Woman's World, *La'isha's* competitor), and later moved to *Nativ*, the extreme-right settlers' magazine, where he remained for 17 years. David Sadan, who remained in the book industry, established Sadan Publishing, where he specialized in law books.

Similar tendencies could be described in a long list of private commercial publishers, known for their right-wing affiliation. For lack of space I will mention only a few

more names my research covers: Uri Eliyahu Amikam, owner of Idit Publishing, Shmuel Katz of Karni Publishing, Binyamin Gepner of Ledori Publishing, Yaacov (Yoel) Amrami of Hadar Publishing, as well as many more writers/translators working on the periphery of popular literature.

Mainstream and periphery — a word in conclusion

There could be several conclusions to this presentation. Hypothesis A: writers, translators and publishers of popular literature were rejected by the mainstream and found their way to the subversive margins. Hypothesis B: writers, translators and publishers of popular literature rejected the mainstream, sought an outlet where they could publish anti-establishment material, and formed their own publication facilities on the periphery. Hypothesis C: both of the above are true. Some cases are not clear-cut, with people blundering into marginal production for financial reasons, and staying in it or drifting away for the same financial reasons. Being less mobilized for a cause, however, does not make them less dissident, and they were often driven by a strong sense of rejection.

The combination of non-canonic or even subversive writing, translating or publishing with right-wing political tendencies is complex and somewhat perplexing. Most of the participants were not aware of this common denominator. They would not have characterized their habitus as such. After all, they had gone into the business for profit, not ideology. However, profit was a bourgeois notion, defying true socialist, Zionist, anti-Diaspora values. The keywords business, profit, bestsellers and market would only later be adopted by mainstream publishing.

Notwithstanding, very early in my research it became clear that the *texts* all looked for models in the “high” literary norms. This was confirmed when I became acquainted with the *people* involved. It was a one-sided dependency, of course, since the mainstream did its best to ignore pulp fiction. But almost all the people involved in the popular field had a real interest in literature, and they thus had a notion of what was “right”, even if they did not always adhere to it. This changed for the worse in the 1970s when a new generation entered the pulp literature scene devoid of any literary aspirations, and for the better when, at the same time, more respectable central publishers took an interest in the commercial success of popular literature.

One thing stands out: the mainstream could not ignore indefinitely the bustling activity in the periphery. The periphery introduced what the system needed more than anything else: healthy stratification. Translation thus became, again, a vehicle for change.

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CHAPTER 2

Arabic plays translated for the Israeli Hebrew stage

A descriptive–analytical case study

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The following article offers a descriptive–analytical study of a corpus of 47 plays translated from Arabic into Hebrew (1945–2006), viewed here as a cultural subsystem, in terms of Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory. Their respective positions in the Arabic and Hebrew literary and theatrical systems are explained against the background of the Israeli–Arab conflict that has both prevented and encouraged their venue into Israeli Hebrew culture. Frameworks where the plays have been published or performed and the people responsible for their translation / adaptation and dissemination are enumerated and their motivation is explained and demonstrated.

Keywords: Arabic plays, Israeli Hebrew stage, Jewish–Arab cooperation, polysystem theory, written drama translation, stage translation

Preface

While advocating descriptive translation studies, Toury (1995) has also warned against mere descriptions that are not explanatory as well (ibid. 4). He has recommended “carefully performed studies into well-defined corpuses” (ibid. 1) and that research be carried out with regard to “(observable or reconstructable) facts of real life” (ibid.). Toury has further recommended that “[a]ny aspiration to supply valid explanations would [...] involve an extension of the corpus according to some principle [...] period, text type [...] which could be given a justification” (ibid. 38) and “striving for higher-level generalization + explanation for a certain [...] period [and/or] culture [...] depending on the principle(s) underlying the extended corpus” (ibid. 39). The present article is an attempt to follow these guidelines.

The corpus studied here is genre-dependent rather than chronologically delimited due to the small number of the texts it comprises. It includes all of the Arabic plays translated so far into Hebrew or adapted for performance on the Hebrew-speaking stage from translations of other genres, namely poetry and prose. The period covered here comprises over sixty years (1945–2006), from the publication of the first translation of this kind to the present.

Translation Studies has paid growing attention to theater translation, a performance genre actualized in real life. The main scholarly focus has been on the distinction between written and stage translations (Bassnett-McGuire 1985; Bassnett 1990; Aaltonen. 2000 a, b), on page-to-stage transformation (Zuber-Skerritt 1984) and on case studies of particular drama translations (Gilula 1968–1969; Golomb 1981; Shlesinger 1992; Kohlmayer 1995; Amit-Kochavi 2003). Arabic-into-Hebrew drama translation, however, has been but partially studied by the present writer, as an overview of the present repertoire of translated texts for both the literary and theatrical systems (Amit-Kochavi 1999, chapter 5 of a doctoral dissertation supervised by Toury), in brief discussions of certain sub-systems of this target system (Amit-Kochavi 1996: 37–38, 2000: 72–75) and in a comparative analysis of dialect translation in two plays translated from Arabic into Hebrew and performed on the Israeli Hebrew stage (Amit-Kochavi 2003). The present paper wishes to follow a socio-historical direction rather than a linguistic one and, combining Toury's above-mentioned suggestions and warnings with the underlying principles of Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory (Even-Zohar 1990), try and study the production and reception of translations of Arabic drama into Hebrew in the Israeli Hebrew target culture, considered here as a polysystem, within both the literary and theatrical systems.

Source and target culture background

Some background information may be in order here for readers unfamiliar with the Arabic source culture and/or the Israeli Hebrew target culture.

Drama is the youngest, and so far weakest, genre of modern Arabic literature (Landau 1958; Moreh 1992). Most plays are written by poets and prose writers rather than playwrights and are consequently fit for reading rather than performance, since they include long stretches of didactic oratory, with relatively little theatrical action. While such Arab countries as Egypt, Lebanon and Syria have produced some prominent playwrights and constant theatrical activity since the early 20th century, Arabic literature in Israel has produced few plays and even those few Arab theaters active over relatively longer periods have constantly suffered from a lack of a permanent audience (Amit-Kochavi 1973). Despite recurrent local attempts at organizing Arab theater groups, only two (Beit Hagefen theater in Haifa, since 1963) and The Arab Theatre (later Al-Maydaan, since 1996) have managed to survive. Some prominent Arab actors, actresses and directors have been active in the Hebrew-speaking theatrical and cinematic systems (Horovitz 1993), striving at the same time to remain active within their own culture as well.

In contemporary Hebrew culture, by contrast, drama has occupied a prominent position within both the literary and the theatrical systems. While the earliest Hebrew plays were written in Eastern Europe during the 19th century (Shaked 1970), Hebrew

plays for stage performance have been written since the 1940s and 1950s. Hebrew target culture voids in this genre have been filled with abundant translations from such languages as English, Russian, German, French and Yiddish in an attempt to create and develop Hebrew culture according to European standards and serve as models for use and imitation (Even-Zohar 1990). Arabic drama, however, has never been used to fill gaps in either the literary or the theatrical Hebrew systems, both due to its own peripherality in world literature and drama and since it has followed Western European models available to Hebrew culture firsthand, while its local themes and concerns are foreign to the Western-oriented Hebrew culture.

Translated Arabic drama then has never been considered an integral part of its parallel subsystems of Hebrew culture, which have never found it necessary to integrate any elements of Arabic culture into their highly variegated activity. No translated Arabic play has ever been printed by those few Hebrew publishing houses that regularly or occasionally publish plays translated from other languages, and only a single Arabic play has so far been performed on the main stage of a mainstream Israeli Jewish theater (*Chatting on the Nile*, the Haifa Municipal Theater, 1982).

This almost total rejection of Arabic drama by Israeli Hebrew culture was further supported by a general denial of the Arabic language, literature and culture by Israeli Hebrew culture due to the ongoing conflict between the Zionist movement and the Arab national revival movement both prior to the establishment of the State of Israel (1948) and since then. Arabs have been viewed through negative stereotypes, as bitter enemies and members of a society considered to be inferior to the Jewish one or, at best, as romanticized oriental figures rather than real-life human beings (Domb 1982; Friedlander 1989; Amit-Kochavi 1999: ch. 1).

This sad situation has been reinforced by the fact that most of those few Israeli scholars who have lectured on Arabic literature at Israeli universities and have translated some of the literary works they taught and studied have very seldom been concerned with Arabic drama. None of them has served as a reader or consultant at Israeli theaters, and an Arab play has yet to figure in the regular annual programme of any Israeli Jewish theater.

Forces and counterforces in Hebrew translations of Arabic drama

Despite these detrimental forces, there have been others which have made the translation, publication and production of the plays included in the corpus of the present paper possible against all odds. Paradoxically enough, these forces were rooted in the self-same political circumstances of the Israeli–Arab conflict. They were, however, brought to bear by people and institutions who took an ideological position that claimed, rather naively, that the translation and publication or production of Arabic plays in Hebrew translation might promote mutual understanding between Israeli Arabs and Jews and

that Israeli Jewish familiarity with Arab culture and society through its depiction in Arabic drama would offset the stereotypical prejudice against Arabs, and possibly even help to solve the political conflict between the two political entities and their respective countries.

In this, drama translators were no different from other translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew, most of whom have expressed similar ideological beliefs (Amit-Kochavi 1999: chapter 4). Thus, whereas Israeli Jewish culture as a whole has found Arabic culture and its products hostile and dispensable, a number of individuals and groups (rather than established cultural institutions) have found it necessary to have Arabic plays translated into Hebrew and performed on the Hebrew-speaking stage. They have belonged to various cultural systems—the academic one, the literary one and the theatrical one, but have rarely belonged to two of these at the same time. Translation for the theater has constituted but a small part of their activity, and in most cases they have acted both separately and in cooperation with one another (as partners or group members). However, no permanent framework has considered it sufficiently important to support them on a regular basis.

Drama translation within the translated subsystem (Even-Zohar 1990) under discussion has two distinctive characteristics where it differs from other subsystems of both Israeli Hebrew translated drama and other literary translations from Arabic into Hebrew. First, in addition to high ideological aspirations, these translation initiators, including translators, producers, directors and actors, have often combined the above-mentioned ideological goals with a personal ambition of improving their positions within the theatrical subsystems they belonged to. Second, the level of Jewish–Arab cooperation in translation and production projects evident here was unusually high and without parallel in any other system of Israeli Hebrew culture. Thus almost half of the 47 translated plays have involved some kind of Jewish–Arab cooperation.

Intrasystemic promotion

Promotion within either the Hebrew literary system or the Israeli academic one has been an unlikely goal, as Arabic theater has occupied a peripheral position in both of these. There was very little prestige attached to either of them, as no translator of Arabic drama into Hebrew has won any of the few prizes allocated to translators into Hebrew in Israel, such as the Tchernikhowski Prize for literary translation or the Ada Ben Nahum Prize for translations of plays for performance on the Hebrew stage. Very few courses on Arabic drama have been taught at Israeli universities, and even those few were taught in the Arabic source language (rather than in Hebrew translation) in the Arabic language departments, rather than in theater or literature departments or at actor training schools.

Rather, personal positions have manifested themselves in attempts to move from one Israeli cultural subsystem into another. Thus, for example, on the 25th anniversary of Beit Hagefen, an Arab–Jewish community center in Haifa and a symbol of coex-

istence, Arab director Antoine Saleh directed the play *A Night in a Lifetime* (1984) as part of his effort to gain acceptance into the mainstream theatrical system. Saleh, who had previously been known only to Arabic-speaking audiences through his work on the Arabic programs of Israeli television, was thereby given the opportunity to make himself known to a mixed Arab–Jewish audience, considered by Israeli culture as more prestigious than an all-Arab one.

On another occasion, Uriel Zohar, Jewish director of an amateur student theatrical troupe at the Technion (the High Institute of Technology in Haifa), directed the play *Season of Migration to the North* (1994) performed at the Acre Fringe Theater Festival, a prestigious annual event in Israeli cultural life.

Actors have also sought personal promotion through acting in translated Arabic plays. In two prominent cases this was done through single-actor plays.

First, Muhammad Bakri, a highly popular theater and cinema actor active in both Israeli Jewish and Arab cultures, has chosen to alternate Arabic and Hebrew in his performances, in an effort to reach both Arab and Jewish audiences. He has practiced this method in two very successful cases — *The Pessoptimist* (1986) and the above-mentioned *Season of Migration* (1994). The former was first performed in a small experimental framework of the Haifa Municipal Theater, and was later staged independently for about ten (!) years, an unparalleled theatrical success, especially in a relatively small country like Israel. As for *Season of Migration*, it was awarded the Acre Fringe Festival Prize for acting. The second instance is that of Yosef Shiloah, a Jewish actor of Kurdish immigrant origin, who had trained for the stage but had become famous as an Israeli cinema actor. Most of the roles he played, however, depicted ridiculous characters in non-canonical burlesque comedies. In an attempt to improve his professional image, Shiloah chose to produce and perform *The Journey* (1987), a collage of Arabic prose and poetry translated and adapted for the stage. It depicted the suffering of the refugee Palestinian people, a political topic seldom seen in the Israeli Hebrew theater before (Urian 1996). He rehearsed and performed in small Tel Aviv theaters and was applauded by the critics for the high artistic quality of his play and for its daring contents. And yet, Shiloah was unable to perform this piece in other parts of the country, since the political nature of the texts deterred Omanut La'am, the government body responsible for the dissemination of Israeli culture in the country's periphery, from supporting this project. So hurt was Shiloah by this rebuff that he chose to leave the country for several years. It may be this experience that has prevented any other Jewish actor from attempting to repeat Shiloah's feat.

Jewish–Arab cooperation in the production and dissemination of Hebrew translations of Arabic plays

About 20% of Israel's citizens are Arab, and Arabic is the country's second official language, next to Hebrew. Direct personal contact between Israeli Arabs and Jews, however, is often limited to unequal occupational encounters where Arabs work for Jews,

e.g. as masons and gardeners. Arab and Jewish students study together at Israeli universities and colleges, Arab doctors and nurses work in the Israeli healthcare system, and Jewish–Arab partnership exists at law offices and dental clinics. In Israeli literature and culture, however, there is an almost total separation between the Arab and Jewish systems. Very few Arab writers and journalists have been successfully integrated into the Israeli Hebrew media and literature (Hever 1992).

The relatively high rate of cooperation in projects involving Hebrew translations of Arabic drama is therefore noteworthy and calls for an explanation. First, Arab and Jewish actors and directors have studied together in predominantly Jewish professional or academic training frameworks, all of which exclusively teach and rehearse in Hebrew. Unlike other educational frameworks, where associating with one's peers is optional, the special nature of theatrical work dictates close personal contact and a high degree of cooperation in workshops and projects. This may later facilitate similar cooperation between graduates of those frameworks. Second, due to the rarity and instability of Arab theatrical frameworks in Israel, numerous Arab actors and actresses have worked successfully in Hebrew-speaking theaters, TV and films (Horovitz 1993). Some of them have sought to give vent to their Arab national and cultural identity through acting in translated Arab plays. On the Arab side, then, initiating the performance of Arab plays on the Hebrew-speaking stage and participation in them has combined job opportunities (extrinsic motivation) with cultural and personal self-expression (intrinsic motivation). Cooperation with (presumably) stronger Jewish partners has meant prospective success within the predominantly Jewish target system.

Models of cooperation have varied, including work in pairs or groups. Pairs have often comprised an Arab actor and a Jewish one or an Arab actor and a Jewish director, and groups have either been exclusively Arab (e.g. al-Karma and al-Maydaan Arab theaters) or, in a single case, during the Lebanon War (1982), a mixed Jewish–Arab theatrical troupe of actors who wrote and performed a documentary play, *Humm-Hem* [= They, in Arabic and Hebrew respectively).

The translated texts

The 47 translated texts (1945–2006) may be subdivided into two different kinds—11 plays translated for publication within the literary system and 36 translated for stage performance. The latter may be further subdivided into 26 translated plays and 10 stage adaptations from other literary genres.

Arabic plays translated as literary texts

Very few Arabic plays have been translated as literary texts. They include eleven items (one of which has been translated twice) published between 1945–1998. Most have been Egyptian plays, written by two older generation writers, Tawfiq el-Hakim (five

items) and Naguib Mahfuz (three items), and by two popular contemporary playwrights — Lenin ar-Ramli (a single item) and 'Ali Salem (single item). They were chosen due to the combination of their source-culture prominence and prestige, equally appreciated by their target-culture translators, and the translators' own academic interests. Three translators — Sasson Somekh, Shimon Ballas and Gavriel Rosenbaum — are professors of Modern Arabic literature who have taught and studied these authors. Since a significant part of all genres of literary translations from Arabic literature has been initiated and carried out by academic experts considered by Israeli Jewish culture as the ultimate authority in the field of Arabic language and culture (Amit-Kochavi 1999), they enjoyed absolute freedom in the choice of texts. Some translations were published in the same literary magazines where those translators had published similar translations from other Arabic literary genres, with no overt intention of having them performed. A single play by an Israeli Arab writer, *Umm ar-Rubabika* by the late Emile Habiby, was published by Somekh to commemorate the first anniversary of Habiby's demise (1997) and published in *Iton 77*, a literary magazine where Somekh has served as member of the editorial board and published translations of modern Arabic since the inauguration of the publication in 1977.

Arabic plays translated for stage performance

Most of the plays have been translated for the stage, either as a regular performance (e.g. *The Night and the Mountain* by Saeed Makkawi, translated for the Jerusalem Khan Theater by Israeli Arab poet Siham Saoud, 1994) or for a reading (e.g. all the plays translated for the first Arabic drama festival at as-Sarayah Theater in Jaffa, 2006). Four plays, performed by Arab actors in Arabic, were simultaneously translated into Hebrew by Jewish and Arab interpreters when there were Hebrew speakers in the audience, and in one case (Tawfiq el-Hakim's *Angels' Prayer*, performed for a mixed audience at al-Karma Arab theater, 1983) a scene out of the play was first played in Arabic by Arab actors and actresses who suddenly switched into Hebrew, continuing the same scene. This was done in order to symbolize Arab–Jewish cooperation as practiced at the binational community center that hosted both the theater and the particular performance, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the center (1963–1983).

Adaptations of prose and poetry for stage performance

Many Arabic plays are written by prose writers rather than playwrights and therefore include long didactic ideological or philosophical monologues that do not conform to Western models of stage performance, where characters are expected to dramatically justify their presence on stage. The scarcity of both supply and demand for translated Arabic drama, on the one hand, and the relative success of certain translated Arabic prose works in the Hebrew literary system, on the other (Amit-Kochavi 1999), have made some writers, actors and directors adapt translations of works of Arabic literature

from other genres (including poetry, novels and short stories), rather than their respective source texts. This strategy has combined adherence to the high-quality principle adhered to in the subsystem of translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew, a possible guarantee of prospective success, with the economic factor of paying less (if at all) for an adaptation of an existing translation rather than paying for a new one.

Thus, for example, the great success enjoyed by the Hebrew translation of Emile Habiby's novel *The Pessoptimist*, translated by Anton Shammas (1984), was probably the main reason why it was chosen for adaptation by actor Muhammad Bakri. The poignant political irony of this work, which depicts a cunning Arab who pretends to be a fool in order to survive in the (then) young state of Israel, must have been another incentive for Bakri, whose media interviews have often focused on pride in his national affiliation. The high literary value of this novel, combined with profound psychological insight with regard to its main hero, helped Bakri perform skillfully, alternating between an Arabic version of the adapted play and a Hebrew one, and reaching different kinds of audience all over the country for about ten years.

Another prominent case of stage adaptation was the above-mentioned *The Journey* (1987), performed by actor Yoseph Shiloah. It made theatrical use of a part of a Palestinian novella, *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafany, published earlier in Hebrew translation (1978), and of newly translated poems by Palestinian poets Mahmoud Darwish and Sameeh el-Kasem, as well as parts of *A Difficult Journey Up the Mountain*, the autobiography of Palestinian poet Fadwah Toukan, fully translated into Hebrew only much later (1993). Here, too, the chosen texts, by prominent Palestinian writers, combined a high literary quality with tense dramatic contents, all of which made for intriguing material suitable for theatrical performance.

The translators

Translators of Arabic drama into Hebrew have included all possible social and ethnic groups found within the subsystem of literary translations from Arabic into Hebrew (for further details see Amit-Kochavi 1999: chapter 4), as well as some people affiliated with the theater system. Translators have included Arabs and Jews, and have belonged to different generations and ethnic origins, mainly translating Arabic literary works from other genres. For example, Menachem Kapeliuk (1901–1975), an immigrant from Russia, the earliest translator of modern Arabic prose into Hebrew, translated a short Egyptian play in 1945. Tuvia Shamoosh (1914–1982), an immigrant from Syria and prose translator, translated a short play in 1970. Sasson Somekh (1933–), an immigrant from Iraq and prolific translator of Arabic poetry, has translated two Egyptian short plays (1971, 1978) followed by an Israeli Arab long one (1992/1997). Siham Daoud (1953–), an Israeli Arab poet and journalist and translator of Hebrew poetry into Arabic, has translated a single long play (1994).

Translators belonging to the academic system

Among the prominent academic experts in Arabic literature in producing and advancing translations from Arabic prose and poetry into Hebrew, only four have been active in drama translations. Two of the four, Sasson Somekh and Shimon Ballas (1933–), have translated four plays (1971, 1978, 1980, 1992/1997) and a single one (1977) respectively, all of which were primarily intended for publication as literary texts rather than for stage performance. Two additional plays, however, were translated at the initiative of two academic figures, including Somekh in one case and Shmuel Moreh, who specialized in modern Arabic poetry and drama, in the other. Both encouraged friends and ex-students to translate more plays (Somekh once and Moreh twice). This is a familiar practice within the rather closed circle of Arabic–Hebrew translators, most of whom are academically trained in Arabic (Amit-Kochavi 1999: chapter 4), where lecturers and ex-students often cooperate in various ways.

The two other academic figures, Gavriel Rosenbaum (1948–) and the present writer (1946–), represent a different option or model of action. They have translated Arabic plays into Hebrew due to their personal interest in Arabic drama. Rosenbaum, who has lectured on this subject in two different Israeli universities, even went so far as to establish a private publishing house (see below) exclusively for this purpose, but had published only two titles before he realized the low demand for such texts in Israeli Hebrew culture. The present writer, by contrast, has acted from a systemic point of view in Even-Zohar's terms (Even-Zohar 1990). In 1972, realizing that only three published translated Arabic plays were available, none of which had been performed on a Hebrew-speaking stage, she decided to try and fill two gaps simultaneously through stage translations, thus adding dramatic works to the repertoire of translations from Arabic into Hebrew within the Israeli Hebrew literary system, on the one hand, and to plays translated from Arabic into the variegated Israeli Hebrew theatrical system, on the other. These efforts were only partly successful: her first translation of an Egyptian play (1972) was not performed until 1978, after being rejected by a number of mainstream theaters. All in all, of the nine plays she translated over an extended period (1972–2006), two were published in *Bamah*, a prominent theatrical magazine at the time (1978, 1991), five were performed in various peripheral theaters (1978, 1983, 1984, 1987, 2006) and one was performed in Arabic with her translation serving for simultaneous translation (1998). The time gaps between drama translations by most translators except for Rosenbaum (1998, 1998) may be attributed to the very minor role of this genre in their professional activity. Notwithstanding their concerted efforts, Israeli attitudes towards Arabic drama rarely changed, except on such special occasions as drama festivals or institutional jubilees for which translations were expressly commissioned. Otherwise another poem or short story was often seen as sufficient, being easier to publish in an Israeli literary magazine than a play.

Translators belonging to the literary system

Very few of the translators were themselves writers or poets, and none of them were playwrights, a fact reflected by their often poor understanding of the special requirements of stage translation compared with drama translation for literary purposes (Bassnett-McGuire 1985; Bassnett 1990; for a detailed case study, see Amit-Kochavi 2003 on Shamma's dialogue translation). A single Jewish translator, Shimon Ballas, also wrote Hebrew prose, including novels depicting Jewish–Arab relations in Israel. Four Arab writers have translated Arabic plays into Hebrew — among them poets Salmaan Masalhah (1993), Siham Daoud (1994) and Anton Shamma (1997), and prose writer and essayist Salmaan Nator (1995). All of them were active in the Israeli Hebrew target cultural system to a greater or lesser extent and their command of Hebrew was excellent. Like most of their Jewish counterparts, however, they each translated a single play (a stage adaptation of a prose translation in the case of Masalhah) and Shamma, an acknowledged poet, essayist and Hebrew–Arabic/ Arabic–Hebrew prose translator, translated a play written by himself as a one-time venture. None of them has made further attempts in this field, and drama translation has remained but a negligible part of their translation activity.

Translators belonging to the theatrical system

Eleven translators have belonged to the theatrical system. Texts of this kind (1981, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1993, 1994, 2006) were translated (in four cases), or adapted for the Hebrew stage (in seven cases), by people directly involved in the theatrical production, who undertook this extra work due to the scarcity of such texts in Hebrew translation and to economic circumstances. Theatrical activity in general, and the production of the kind of plays discussed in the present paper in particular, are a heavy economic burden on the people involved. When a prospective actor translates a play, it stands to reason that the expense will be lower, and the actor will be offered an opportunity to act, whereas the availability of a printed version of translated prose or poetic texts may facilitate their stage adaptation even by actors with no command of Arabic.

Dissemination of the translated texts

The obviously peripheral status of the texts under discussion here may be demonstrated through the review and analysis of their dissemination in two highly active systems of Israeli Jewish culture, the literary one and the theatrical one, as well as in their far less active Israeli Arab counterparts.

Publication

Plays translated for the literary system have been published in Israel in six different venues. First, numerous publishing houses mainly concerned with both Hebrew and translated prose and poetry have published translated plays by a variety of writers in many different European languages (e.g. English, Russian, Polish, French, Italian, German and Norwegian). Second, some publishing houses, e.g. Or Am, have been exclusively dedicated to the publication of original Hebrew and translated plays. Third, some Israeli acting schools have published plays for the exclusive use of their teachers and students. Fourth, some theaters (e.g. Habimah and The Haifa Municipal Theater) have included the full text of some plays in the program notes. Fifth, some literary magazines have published plays as written texts. Sixth and last, theater magazines such as *Bamah* have published translated plays, either immediately related to their stage performance or for other professional purposes, often accompanied by relevant essays and comments prepared by academic and theater experts.

Of these venues, addressed to different professional and general readerships, only the last two have included translated Arabic plays in their printed-play repertoire. Even that much was due to the previous personal involvement of the translators of those texts with the respective magazine editors, who were unable to judge the selection of materials for themselves and had to rely on the translators' choice. Thus Sasson Somekh, a predominant figure in literary translation from Arabic into Hebrew in Israel, has published some translations of Arabic plays in the literary magazines *Keshet* (1971) and *Iton 77* (1977), where he regularly published translations of Arabic poetry and prose. Similarly, the present writer published translations of two plays by Tawfiq al-Hakim (1978, 1991) in the theater magazine *Bamah*, for which she served at that time as an English–Hebrew translator and essayist.

Stage performance: The different venues

While written translation, though published, may or may not be read by those who purchase books and magazines and its actual consumption may remain a matter of speculation, theater audiences guarantee that a translated play is actually watched and that different kinds of people are directly exposed to it. It is therefore imperative to try and find out where translated Arabic plays were performed in Hebrew translation and what kind of audience(s) attended those performances. The following are three different theatrical frameworks where such plays have been performed (1978–2006).

Mainstream theater

Since the Hebrew theatrical system has, by and large, ignored the very existence of Arab theater, it comes as no surprise that only a single play, *Chatting on the Nile*, an adaptation of a novel by Naguib Mahfouz, has been performed in Hebrew translation (1982) in a mainstream theater. Even this would not have taken place but for a combination of

supportive factors. As reported by the Israeli Hebrew press (*Davar*, January 22, 1982), a member of the Haifa Theater's artistic board had watched a television version of the play, broadcast in Egyptian Arabic dialect on Israeli television. At the time, Arab films, conceived as light entertainment, were popular with the general public, including those with no command of Arabic, thanks to Hebrew subtitling provided by the Israeli broadcasting service. *Chatting on the Nile*, a high-brow novel about the futile lives of a group of Egyptian intellectuals who meet regularly on a pleasure boat on the Nile, was adapted into a film and broadcast on Israeli TV. Professor Sasson Somekh, a world authority on the works of Mahfooz, was consulted by the Haifa Theater with regard to this, and suggested that his ex-student Michal Sela translate the novel, which was ultimately later published *after* its stage adaptation rather than before. Mere chance, then, combined here with academic authority at a time when the Haifa Theater regularly employed some prominent Arab actors and supported a special Arabic-language troupe as well. And yet, notwithstanding the relative success of the play, these special circumstances were not repeated, and the case has remained *sui generis*.

Fringe theater and festivals

Fringe theater is an alternative to mainstream theater and hosts plays with more daring and innovative form, content and theatrical expression. It may receive less institutional support by the central government and by local authorities, but the freedom it enjoys is attractive to people who are eager to create fresh and daring theater. In Israel, fringe theatrical activity includes improvised and other comic theater, where Arabs seldom participate, due to the pragmatic fact that humor is language- and culture-dependent. Another framework, active every year since 1980, is the Acre Fringe Festival which takes place in Acre, a city of mixed Arab and Jewish population in the north of Israel.

The organizers have exercised a policy of encouraging Arab participation for theatrical groups and individual actors. Consequently, five translated Arabic plays, four stage adaptations of translated novels (1989, 1992, 1994, 1996) and one proper play by Syrian playwright S'ad Allah Wanoos (1993) have been included in its programs. Unlike other theatrical frameworks, where Arabic plays are never singled out, three of these five performances have been awarded prizes, possibly due to the participation of some superb Arab actors, and perhaps also in an attempt at affirmative action. Another permanent fringe framework, Teatronetto [= net theater], dedicated to small-scale experimental plays, has hosted only two translated Arabic plays (1992, 2006), which may have to do with its venue, Tel Aviv, the very heart of the Israeli Jewish cultural scene.

Last but not least, acting schools are economically free of such considerations as the taste and sensitivities of a paying audience that may deter commercial theaters, and make a point of exposing their students to a great variety of Israeli Hebrew and translated theatrical texts as well as to different acting styles and models. And yet, none of the teachers at these schools has ever made use of the few published translated Arabic plays, or adapted any of the Arabic novels available in translation in bookstores and libraries. Three exceptions were all initiated and carried out by Arab students who tried

to combine their Hebrew-oriented professional training with the expression of their individual and national Arab identity through the performance of translated Arabic texts, all of which were stage adaptations of translated Palestinian prose. In one case (1981) Fu'ad 'Awwad, a student of theater directing, chose *Men in the Sun*, a novella by Ghassan Kanafany depicting the suffering of the Palestinian refugees neglected by their Arab brethren. In two other cases (1981, 1993), Arab acting students chose texts by Tawfiq Fayyad and Mahmoud Darwish respectively depicting the same national plight. It is noteworthy that all three cases took place at the Tel Aviv University theater department, which possibly allows its students greater political and artistic freedom than do other universities and drama schools.

Concluding remarks

The presence of Hebrew translations of Arabic drama on both the Hebrew stage and the Hebrew bookshelf has been marginal despite more than sixty years of activity (1945–2006). In spite of one-off successes (as in the case of *The Pessoptimist*) and awards (e.g. at the Acre Festival), the combined efforts of Arabs and Jews, not typical of the Israeli cultural scene as a whole or of Israeli theater in particular, the availability of translated Arabic literary texts for stage adaptation and of Arabic plays for translation into Hebrew, and the uncontested talent and ambition of actors and directors of both nationalities eager to perform Arabic plays in Hebrew translation, the overall impact of Arabic drama on Israeli culture has had little effect. The main reason for this sorry situation is to be sought outside the scope of literature and theater, and far beyond the Arab literary and theatrical systems described above. The ongoing Israeli–Arab conflict causes many Israeli Jews to see Arabic culture as hostile and inferior. It remains to be seen whether and how the resolution of the conflict will affect translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew in general and Arabic drama translations in particular.

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