neapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) are standard for "cultural critics," particularly those who follow the postcolonialist theories of Edward Said. The applicability of these theories is convincing in Hever's article on Shammas's *Arabesques*, "Hebrew in an Israeli Arab Hand: Six Miniatures on Anton Shammas's *Arabesques*," *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 47–76, reprinted in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, eds. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 264–93. They become less convincing as he attempts to apply his ideas to the entire corpus of Israeli literature. In a subsequent article, "Lehakot ba'aqevo shel Achilles," in *Alpayim* 1 (June 1989): 186–93, [English version in *Tikkun* 4/5 (Sept./Oct. 1989): 30–33], Hever considers the new openness of Israeli literature to Palestinian writers, usually translated from Arabic, as a major cultural breakthrough, an attack on the "Achilles heel" of the Zionist narrative that has dominated Israeli Hebrew literature. The theories of Deleuze and Guattari, especially "determinatorialization," support Hever's argument only if inverted, only if the features of the minority culture are appropriated—consciously or unconsciously—by the majority literature.


8

Arabic and/or Hebrew: The Languages of Arab Writers in Israel*

Ami Elad-Bouskila

Most literature is written by residents of a particular country or homeland, and its language is usually the native tongue of the writers. Contemporary societies are not homogeneous, however, but made up of those who speak and write in the language of the majority and those who speak and write in other languages. Thus, when a group of writers that is not part of the majority chooses to write in the language of the majority, the question of motivation arises. Why do they do it? One must also distinguish between those who write only in the majority language, which is not their native tongue, and those who write in both languages—their native tongue and the language of the majority. These categories encompass a host of very different cases, and these differences are reflected in the attitudes toward the writer of both the surrounding majority culture and the minority language group.

One of the most fascinating subjects in the study of modern Palestinian literature concerns the language used by Palestinian Arab writers who live in Israel. Palestinian writers who reside in the other two Palestinian locales, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as those who emigrated to the Diaspora in Arab countries and elsewhere, have clearly chosen to write in Arabic. A few writers, such as Jabrī Ibrāhīm Jabrī (1919–94), wrote in both Arabic and English and composed many translations from English to Arabic. Most Palestinian writers who were born
in the various diasporas, especially in North America (like Arab writers in general), no longer write in Arabic but write instead in English. One prominent example is Naomi Shihab Nye (1952-), who has published books of poetry and prose and has also composed translations (mostly of poetry) from Arabic to English.\(^1\) In addition to Arabic or one of the languages of North or South America, Palestinian literature is also written in European languages, especially French and German. One prominent Palestinian writer in France is the prolific writer, playwright, and critic Afnan al-Qasim, who generally writes in Arabic, with some of his criticism also produced in French.\(^4\)

This twentieth-century phenomenon of emigration to another country with some writers continuing to write in their mother tongue, some writers beginning to write bilingually, and the younger generation born in the new community writing only in the new language, is not unique to Arab or Palestinian writers. This phenomenon, which produces bilingual writing, is related to economic, cultural, and social elements that are factors in the immigration process.

There is an additional universal phenomenon in which authors write not only in their native tongue or the local language, but also in an additional language, the language of the conqueror. This takes place, of course, in countries that were under an extended period of foreign rule, such as African and Asian countries controlled at one time by European or American colonial powers. One dramatic example is India, in which, under the impact of British rule, English became the official language. The primary reason for the dominance of English in India has been the competition among the various Dravidian languages, such as Tamil. To avoid granting "cultural imperialism" to Hindi, the use of English has been maintained.

Writers in Arab and North African states have chosen at various times to write in the languages of the colonial powers that ruled them, either English or French. In countries like Algeria, for example, the choice to write in the language of the conqueror has typically progressed through four stages. In the first stage, the local writers composed in the language of the conqueror, which was considered the language of "culture." In the second stage, when the colonial power left, a reaction set in and the local writers began composing in their own language. In the third stage, some writers again began composing in the language of the former conqueror, this time as a deliberate choice in the new circumstances. And in the fourth stage, writers returned to composing in the local language following the increased religious climate and the rise of fundamentalist Islam.

The above examples from both the Arab and the non-Arab world sharpen the uniqueness of the phenomenon to be explored here and also provide context and insight into it. Within the singularity of Palestinian literature in the corpus of modern Arabic literatures, Palestinian literature written in Israel stands out.\(^2\) This literature is unique by definition, since most Arabic literature is written in Arab lands or where a local Arab community demands it. Egyptian literature, for example, is written only in Egypt, while modern Palestinian literature lacks a state and is written in various locations. Modern Palestinian literature from its inception was written not only in historical Palestine, but also outside it, in Arab capitals such as Cairo and Damascus. Palestinian literature written in Arabic in Israel is different from its sisters in that it is written in a Middle Eastern country where Hebrew is the main language and Arabic is only the second official language. Which language will be used for their writing by Arab Palestinians is an open question; while this is one of the fundamental issues related to the literary endeavor, it also belongs to the realm outside literature. The issue of the language of writing is related not only to language, but also to territory, the target audience, the goals of the writer, and the period of writing. No Arab writers in Israel choose to write only in Hebrew, but some write in both Arabic and Hebrew. It is important to examine when and why Arab writers in Israel choose to write in either Arabic or Hebrew or in both languages.

**Israeli Jews Writing in Hebrew and Arabic**

A parallel phenomenon exists among Jewish writers who lived in Arabic-speaking countries and wrote in Arabic. Their contribution to the development of modern Arabic literature in the early twentieth century is well known, especially in Iraq. Some Jews living in Arab states felt that Arab culture was an inseparable part of their own culture. They saw no contradiction between being Jewish and being members of the Arab culture. Therefore these Jews, especially in Iraq and Egypt, were part of the literary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Jewish writers wrote in Arabic for an Arabic-speaking public, without differentiating between Jewish and Arab readers, as they shared the same territory and the same Arab culture.

When most of the Jews in the Arab states immigrated to Israel, the writers among them for a short while continued to write both fiction and nonfiction in Arabic, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Some of
these writers stopped writing in Arabic in response to the conflict between Jews and Arabs and, in addition, out of a desire to contribute to the revitalization of modern Hebrew literature. Others continued to write in Arabic and to contribute to Arab journals and newspapers works of fiction, literary criticism, and writings in other genres.

Shimon Ballas (Adib al-Qaṣṣ), born in Iraq in 1930, and Sami Michael (Samir Mārid), born in Iraq in 1926, are two of the most notable examples of Jewish writers who began writing in Arabic, but in the early 1960s shifted their literary activity to Hebrew. There is no fundamental difference between Ballas and Michael in terms of their Hebrew writing careers. Both underwent the same process, at first writing Arabic fiction and nonfiction in Iraq, then making the move to Israel, while continuing to write primarily in Arabic, and gradually making the transition to both languages, until their decision to use Hebrew as their literary language. Ballas published *Hama 'abarah* (The Transit Camp), his first Hebrew novel, in 1964, and since then has published many Hebrew novels and short stories. He has not, however, completely stopped writing in Arabic. While he uses Hebrew for his literary works, his academic work about modern Arabic literature is in Arabic as well as in Hebrew and European languages. He is the editor of the Arabic journal *al-Karmil*, which is published by Haifa University. Like many of his colleagues, he is also a translator from Arabic to Hebrew, especially of Palestinian writing.

Michael began his career in the Israeli Communist Party and published articles in Arabic in *al-Jadid* and *al-Istiḥād*. His first novel, *Shavim vetshavim yoter* (Equal and More Equal), appeared in 1974, and since then he has published more than half a dozen novels in Hebrew, *Viqtoriyah* (1994), his most recent novel, has won popular acclaim and seems to have installed him in the canon of modern Hebrew literature, while giving legitimacy to his Israeliness. In contrast to Ballas, Michael has chosen, in his works, to cut himself off from writing in Arabic. He has not, however, completely broken his ties to Arabic literature, as evidenced by his translation into Hebrew of the Cairene trilogy of Najib Mahfūz (1911–), as well as by the fact that he continues to follow the developments of literature that appears in the Arab world.

In general, Jewish writers who immigrated to Israel in the 1950s from the Arab states and Iraq in particular underwent a process of Israeliization. During the course of this process, the Jewish writers aspired to become part of Israeli Jewish society and hence consciously chose to abandon their mother tongue partially or completely for the sake of the language of their nation.

There are, however, two outstanding exceptions to this process: Yitzhak Bar-Moshe and Samir Naqqāsh. Yitzhak Bar-Moshe was born in Baghdad in 1927 and after immigrating to Israel has held various jobs, primarily in journalism. He has continued to write mainly in Arabic, beginning with his first anthology of stories *Warā’ al-Sār* (Beyond the Wall), published in 1972. Since then Bar-Moshe has published many books in Arabic and is currently the editor of the Arabic-language publication of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Despite Bar-Moshe's many jobs in the service of the government, which ostensibly would indicate his integration and acceptance into Israeli society, he has always preferred to write in Arabic. Interestingly, Bar-Moshe's writing in Arabic commands attention not just in the local Arab press, but also in the foreign Arab press, especially in Egypt.

Samir Naqqāsh represents this phenomenon of continuing to write in Arabic to the extreme. Born in Baghdad in 1936, Naqqāsh immigrated to Israel as an adolescent in 1951. Although he is one of the younger Iraqi Jewish writers, if not the youngest, Naqqāsh insists on writing exclusively in Arabic. Moreover, most of his colleagues, such as Sami Michael and Yitzhak Bar-Moshe, Hebraicized their last names and sometimes their first names as well, while Samir Naqqāsh has rejected this trend and almost never uses his Hebrew first name. Following the appearance of his first collection of short stories *al-Khafa* (The Mistake), in 1971, Naqqāsh has published many short stories, plays, and novels. Like some of his Iraqi Jewish colleagues, Naqqāsh translates from Hebrew to Arabic, which is almost his only professional connection to Hebrew.

Why would someone who immigrated at such a young age choose to create and live in an "Arabic bubble," deliberately cutting himself off from his Israeli Jewish, Hebrew-speaking environment? One would expect that since Naqqāsh moved to Israel at a relatively young age he would have made the transition to Hebrew fairly rapidly, but the opposite has been true. Naqqāsh has felt foreign, exiled, and alienated in the Israeli Jewish environment and has thus continued to cling to his Arabic cultural heritage. Indeed, Samir Naqqāsh has even announced his desire to move to an Arab country, although he has not yet carried this out. Here we are witnesses to a conflict between, on the one hand, the territory and language of the community and, on the other hand, the desires and cultural heritage of the writer. The national barrier is difficult to surmount. As a Jew living in Israel and writing in Arabic, Naqqāsh has not achieved wide popularity, despite his formidable talents and critical acclaim.

Naqqāsh addresses the question of language in his Hebrew article...
"Mah attem rotsim mimenni? ani shomer al ha'otonomyah shelli!" (What Do You Want From Me? I'm Protecting My Autonomy!): Arabic is the first language I grew accustomed to when I learned to speak; it became my second nature, I love it and am devoted to it even after having immigrated to Israel at age twelve, where I filled in my missing vocabulary, and it is my most powerful means of expression derived from an ardent love for it. Besides all that, it is a language known for its perfection and rich heritage; if we compare it to Hebrew, which was dormant for thousands of years, then revived and returned to development a short time ago, we find that it [Arabic] is more beautiful and richer by several fold. 17

Naqqāsh testifies that there are four psychological, social, and economic factors that created a situation in which he writes in Arabic and distances himself from Israeli matters: (1) his uprooting from Iraq, which was a form of holocaust, in his words; (2) the social and economic humiliation to which he and his family were subject when they moved to Israel; (3) the death of his father a short time after their immigration to Israel; and (4) the fact that he still views himself as Iraqi for all intents and purposes. Naqqāsh is aware of the fact that he is expected to become absorbed in Israel and to begin, as part of a natural process, to write in Hebrew. Even the famed Egyptian writer Najīb Mabūsī has expressed his opinion about this complex matter in a letter to Naqqāsh: "The next step that I expect from you is that in the future you will write in Hebrew and be translated into Arabic..." 18 Naqqāsh, however, takes the position that it is not his job to meet the expectations of others.

Israeli Arabs Writing in Hebrew and Arabic
Most of the Arab writers who live in Israel write in Arabic, although a small number write both in Arabic and Hebrew. Why should this be unusual, given the existence of similar examples of bilingual writing not just in the world at large but even in other parts of the Arab world? There is a fundamental difference between the general phenomenon of writing in the language of the other and the phenomenon in Israel of Arab authors writing bilingually. The political situation in the Middle East, which has involved an extended conflict between the Arab and Israeli communities and an ongoing state of war between Israel and some Arab states, gives special significance to the fact that these authors write in Hebrew. These authors are acclaimed by the Hebrew reading community, although some, such as Na‘īm ʿArāydi, are regarded by the Arab world and some Israeli Arabs as traitors to Arab culture and are often condemned.

It is important to note that only a limited number of Arabs began writing in Hebrew, and these writers continued to write in Arabic, for example the veteran writer ʿAllālah Manṣūr (1934–) and the younger writers Na‘īm ʿArāydi (1948–) and Anton Shammas (1950–). Together with the Arab writers who write in Hebrew there is also a group of Israeli Arab writers who use Arabic for their literary work, but Hebrew for their nonfiction articles. This includes, for example, Imīl Habbī (Emīl Habīb) (1921–96) and Samīḥ al-Qāsim (1939–), who have achieved prominence not just in the Arab world, but also in the Hebrew-speaking world and media.

The conscious decision of Imīl Habbī and Samīḥ al-Qāsim to use Arabic for fiction, in the case of Habbī, and for poetry, in the case of al-Qāsim, was presumably based on cultural and political considerations, and not just because they are more fluent in Arabic than in Hebrew. Moreover, Imīl Habbī, who is considered not just one of the major twentieth-century figures in Palestinian literature, but also in Arabic literature as a whole, wrote an autobiographical text in Hebrew. But this fact did not prevent one of the respected publishing houses in the Arab world from publishing it in Arabic and mentioning its linguistic roots. 19 The fact that both these authors write for the Hebrew press, give frequent interviews in Hebrew on Israeli radio and television, and appear in literary evenings and interviews on subjects broader than Arabic literature indicates beyond doubt their involvement in the spiritual, social, and political life of Israel. Moreover, Samīḥ al-Qāsim also translates from Arabic to Hebrew. His choice to edit and translate an anthology of Hebrew poets, as well as to edit an anthology of the Israeli Jewish poet Ronni Somek, demonstrates his significant connection to Hebrew literature. 20

One of the most salient features of Israeli Arab authors who write in Hebrew is the fact that most of them are Christian or Druze, rather than Muslim. This is related to ongoing ethnic tensions between Muslims, on the one hand, and Christians and Druze, on the other, fanned by both the Lebanese War in 1982 and the growth of the Islamic revivalist movement throughout the Middle East.

Of the two groups of Arab authors who write in Hebrew, clearly the Druze, whose foremost writer is Na‘īm ʿArāydi, are more integrated into Israeli society, primarily as a result of their compulsory service in the Israeli army. This group is exposed to the Hebrew language during their
compulsory service in the Israeli army (to which most other Arabs are not subjected), through university education in which the language of instruction is Hebrew, or through the media. The exposure to Hebrew of these writers accelerates the process of their integration into the life of Israeli Jewish culture and can account for the relatively large number of Druze who write in both Arabic and Hebrew.

It is also interesting to note which literary genres Arab writers choose for their writing in Hebrew. Israeli Arab authors use Hebrew to write poetry, novels, and short stories, as well as literary criticism and articles. But indisputably the most popular genre in Hebrew for Israeli Arab writers is poetry. This strikes me as evidence of their internalization of the Hebrew language, as poetry is the most personal medium for a writer. (When Jewish writers lived in Spain during the Golden Age of the medieval period, they used Arabic for all genres except poetry, which was generally written in Hebrew.) A small number of Arab writers write poetry in Hebrew as well as in Arabic. Among these, the two most prominent poets since the 1970s have been Anton Shammas and Na'īm 'Araydī.

Israeli Arabs who write in Hebrew can be divided into two general categories: those who wrote from the birth of the State of Israel until the late 1960s and those who have been writing since then. There is a sharp delineation between these two periods. In the first period, following the recent birth of the State of Israel and the attendant animosities between Jews and Arabs, we know of two Arab writers who wrote in Hebrew, 'Atallah Manṣūr (1934–) and Rāshīd Ḥusayn (1936–77). During the second period there were social, political, demographic, economic, and cultural changes in Israel, including the lifting of Israeli military rule over the Arab sector, that accelerated the process of the Israelization of at least some Israeli Arabs. These changes allowed for the emergence of many Arab writers writing in Hebrew, most prominently Na'īm 'Araydī and Anton Shammas. In the first period mostly prose was written in Hebrew, while in the second period, Arabs wrote both prose and poetry in Hebrew.

The fact that in the first twenty years of the state Arab authors in Israel did not write in Hebrew (with a few exceptions noted above) points to the fact that efforts to relate Arab society to Jewish society in Israel were private rather than collective. The linkage took place primarily in the fields of journalism and fiction, especially in Arabic newspapers and journals that appeared in the 1950s, whether sponsored by the Israeli Jewish establishment, such as al-Mīrṣūd, al-Yāum, Haṣṣīqat al-Amr, or al-Anbā', or by the Israeli Communist Party, including al-İttīḥād and al-Jādīd. In both types of periodicals, Arabs and Jews all wrote in Arabic. In between, attempts were made, some successful and others not, to found independent or quasi-independent newspapers and journals in the 1950s, such as al-Wāṣṣ and al-Majṣūm.

'Atallah Manṣūr was the only Arab writer who published a narrative text in Hebrew during the first period, namely, his novel Be'or 'ādāb (In a New Light), issued in 1966 by a minor publishing house. To understand the background to the Hebrew writing of Manṣūr, a brief sketch of his life would be useful. Manṣūr, born in the village of Jīsh in 1934, completed high school in 1949, and moved to Kibbutz Sha'ar Ha'amakim, where he lived for a year when he was seventeen years old. Manṣūr then worked as a journalist for the anti-establishment weekly Ha'olam hazeh (1954–56) and wrote for the daily Ha'aretz for many years. In 1983, Manṣūr was one of the founders of the Arabic newspaper al-Șimnārā, and is a member of the editorial board to this day.

The very fact that as a young man Manṣūr chose to live in Jewish society reflects his tendency to flaunt conventions of Arab society that not many dared to defy. Manṣūr writes in an article that he was not the first Israeli Arab intellectual to publish in Hebrew, but was preceded by Rāshīd Ḥusayn, who wrote Hebrew poetry and even translated poetry from Hebrew to Arabic, as well as Şābīr Jīrīs, who wrote a book in Hebrew about the Arabs in Israel. Manṣūr, however, is aware of how strange it was for him to choose to write in Hebrew during the early years of the state. He relates this choice to the cultural, social, and political situation of the Arabs in Israel, who found themselves between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, they were called traitors by the Arab states for not abandoning their land and, on the other hand, the Israeli government viewed them as a fifth column. Manṣūr asserts that when he wrote his first novel in Arabic, Wa-Baqiyat Samīrā, published by the Histadrut in 1962, he was harshly condemned by the Hebrew press and accused of hostility toward Israel and the Jews. He then decided to write a novel in Hebrew with only one motivation: vengeance. He wanted to take revenge on the most important Israeli Jewish ideal of the time, the kibbutz. Thus, he wrote in Hebrew out of anger and a desire to humiliate this ideal. To his amazement and bewilderment, the Hebrew novel not only failed to anger the Jewish critics, they generally heaped praise upon it. Manṣūr suggests two possible explanations for the good reviews. The first reason is that while his first book, Wa-Baqiyat Samīrā, written in Arabic, was reviewed by so-called experts on Arab affairs who considered...
their role to be censors of the enemy, the critics who reviewed his Hebrew novel held liberal views that led them to have a positive reaction to it. The second reason was that his Jewish readers were amazed and impressed that a Gentile could use Hebrew as a literary medium.26

The writers of the second period, who have been active since the early 1970s, have contributed to three central spheres of writing: the media, fiction, and translations. They include both veteran authors and poets who wrote and published in the first period, such as Imīl Ĥabībī, Samīḥ al-Qāsim, Sālim Jibrān, and ʿAṭallaḥ Manṣūr, as well as younger writers who began publishing in the second period, such as Nazīh Khayr, Naʿīm ʿArāyḍī, Anton Shammas, Sihām Dāwūd, and Asad ʿAzī. What have been the factors that led Arabs to write in Hebrew during this second period, and do these differ from the external and internal factors in the first twenty years of the State of Israel? The political considerations have remained, but they have markedly changed. There has been a political transformation following the confrontations between Israel and the Arab and Palestinian world in the 1967 and 1973 wars, the Lebanon War of 1982, the Intifāda that erupted in 1987, the Declaration of Principles with the Palestinians in 1993, the peace treaty with the Jordanians in 1994, and the attempts at peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon. All have profoundly influenced the overall relations between Israel and its neighbors, as well as the web of relations between Jews and Arabs within Israel, as Israeli Arabs have taken an increasingly active role in the process, especially in the context of the Palestinian National Authority headed by Yasser ʿArafāt.

There has also been a marked transformation in the media between the first two decades of the state and the most recent twenty-five years. Changes have occurred in all the media, especially newspapers and journals, not only quantitatively, but also in terms of their greater variety and openness. As for the electronic media, television did not even exist during the first era, having been introduced to Israel in 1968. Today there are two TV channels in Israel, as well as the option of tuning in to radio stations. The number of Arab radio listeners in Israel is over 800,000 strong, some living in Arab cities such as Nazareth, Shfāḥʿam (Shfaram in Hebrew), and ʿUmm al-Fāḥim (pronounced ʿUmm al-Fāḥim), as well as the mixed cities of Haifa, Ramle, and Jaffa. In addition, there is no question that education in Israel, both in the Jewish and Arab sectors, has also undergone a metamorphosis since the 1970s. Until then, the number of Arabs who had more than an elementary school education was limited, and among Israeli Arabs there were only a small number of writers and readers of journals and newspapers. The dramatic increase in the education of Israeli citizens, including the Arabs, in the past twenty-five years has brought about changes in the employment patterns and consumption patterns, increased the number of girls in school, raised the level of education of the writers, and improved the quality of periodicals.

In recent years more and more Arab writers have acquired their high school education in Jewish schools conducted in Hebrew, including Sihām Dāwūd and Naʿīm ʿArāyḍī, and some, such as Naʿīm ʿArāyḍī and Anton Shammas, also did their university training in Hebrew. The effect is that Arab writers in Israel have not only a greater command of Hebrew, but also a much more complex understanding of Jewish reality. Thus, we can see more Arab writers translating literary texts from Hebrew into Arabic; striking examples of this phenomenon are Anton Shammas in the 1970s and 1980s and Samīḥ al-Qāsim and Nazīh Khayr in the 1980s.27 Anton Shammas, Naʿīm ʿArāyḍī, and Salmān ʿAzzālī have also translated stories, poems, and novels from modern Arabic into Hebrew, mainly in the late 1980s and early 1990s.28

Other than Naʿīm ʿArāyḍī, the only example, to the best of my knowledge, of an Israeli Arab writer who began writing in Hebrew and then switched to bilingual writing is the poet Sihām Dāwūd. She was born in Ramle (1952–) and moved to Haifa. Dāwūd states that Hebrew and Arabic are both part of her culture, but that she first wrote in Hebrew because she had attended a Jewish school in Ramle.29 In this, Dāwūd differs from her colleagues in the second period, most of whom began their literary careers in Arabic, from which they switched into Hebrew. Common to all is that these writers did not completely abandon Arabic, but rather added Hebrew as a language of writing. Anton Shammas is to some extent an exception as he not only wrote his most recent works in Hebrew, but afterwards he did not return to writing in Arabic. Unlike Shammas, Naʿīm ʿArāyḍī has taken pains to write in Arabic and be involved in the Arab literary world as well.30

This bilingual writing characterizes Arab writers in the second period, primarily those in fiction and translation. For some of these writers, there sometimes appears to be a confusion or a blurring of the differences between writing and translation, especially for ʿArāyḍī, Shammas, Dāwūd, and Nazīh Khayr. The latter writes not just for newspapers and journals,
but also publishes anthologies and translates together with Samih al-Qasim, especially from Hebrew to Arabic. 31

The Arab writers in Israel in the second period were born at about the time of Israeli independence or soon after. The period of the first decades of the state was a decisive one in shaping these writers, including ‘Arâydi, Dâwûd, and Shamas, in their adolescence and young adulthood. These writers were influenced by the political, social, and cultural realities of the Arab world in the mid-1960s. Most Arab states had already achieved independence and were preoccupied with state-building. The glorification of Nasserism was past its prime and the process of urbanization in the Arab world had gathered momentum. As Israeli Arabs, these writers did not remain indifferent to the turning points of the 1960s and 1970s, which included the trauma that gripped the Arab world after the 1967 war and the perception in the Arab world that the 1973 war provided a restoration of Arab pride. 32

In addition, this group of Israeli Arab writers were influenced by developments in Hebrew and Arabic literature as well as world literature during this period. In the 1960s, Hebrew literature abandoned, to some extent, its tendency from before Israeli independence until the late 1950s to recruit for the cause of the collective. Writers such as Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Pinhas Sadeh, Yehoshua Kenaz, and others enriched and varied the literary inventory in the 1960s. 33 As for world literature in the late 1960s, the influence of the major literatures in the United States and Europe diminished, while the literature of South America, until then considered marginal, burst upon the scene, thanks in large measure to the novel One Hundred Years of Solitude, by Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez. 34 Arabic literature flourished in the 1960s, especially in the genres of the novel, novella, and short story. This development was led primarily by such Egyptian writers as Najib Mahfûz (1911–), Faṭḥî Ghânîm (1924–99), and ‘Abd al-Ḥakîm Qâsim (1935–90). In Lebanon, the major writer was Laylâ al-Bala‘abkî (1936–); and in Syria, Zacariyyâ Tâmir (1931–) and Hannû Mînà (1924–) were the outstanding writers. From Iraq, we can cite Fu‘âd al-Takarîlî (1922–) and Muhammad Khudhayyir (1940–). In Sudan, al-Ṭayyib Sâlîh (1929–) and Ibrâhîm Ishâq Ibrâhîm (1946–) tower over the others. The influence of al-Ṭayyib Sâlîh on Arab writers in Israel, such as Zakî Darwish (1944–), Muḥammad ‘Alî Tâhâ (1941–), and Riyâd Baydâs (1960–) was profound from the late 1960s on. Prominent Arab writers since the 1960s from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the Gulf states have included Laylâ al-‘Uthmān (1945–) and Sharîfâ al-Šamîlān (1947–); and writers from the Maghrib have included Muḥammad Zifzâf (1945–), Muḥammad Bârîdî (1938–), and others. 35 In short, the literary and cultural activity of the Arab world in the 1960s was at a zenith, and ripples of it reached Israel as well. We must keep in mind, however, that until 1967, books from Arab countries almost never reached Israel. This situation changed drastically in the wake of the 1967 war, when Israeli Arab writers were exposed to more Arab newspapers, journals, and books and could meet with Arab and especially Palestinian writers.

As for the influence of Hebrew writing on Israeli Arab literature, we cannot make a claim for a significant impact either on the Arabs writing in Arabic or on those writing in both Arabic and Hebrew. 36 Young Arab writers did, however, use literature in Hebrew translation to gain access to writing from around the world. In other words, Hebrew was influential as a bridge to other cultures, although language is never just a mediator, but functions as a cultural world with its own codes and indicators.

Anton Shammas describes well the process in which Arab writers drew sustenance from both Arabic and Hebrew literature:

Today the younger generation of writers and poets is trying to capitalize on the achievements of the generations that preceded it. But while discovering its ties to the culture of the region, it is also leaping beyond the fence, overcoming the barrier of the Hebrew language, and trying to reach other areas. Poets such as Sîhâm Dâwûd and Na’îm ‘Arâydi belong to this generation. The fact that I also belong to this generation seems to liberate me from the obligation of evaluating it and taking a stand. But I believe that the uniqueness of this generation is that it draws from two worlds; knowledge of the Hebrew language brings it into contact, both through Hebrew literature and world literature translated into Hebrew, with unfamiliar mappings of experience, and knowledge of Hebrew confronts it with the latest achievements of modern Arabic literature. 37

In the second period, at least four writers stand out: Na’îm ‘Arâydi, Anton Shammas, Sîhâm Dâwûd, and Nazîh Khayr. Sîhâm Dâwûd is the only Arab woman to write in both languages. Efforts to understand why these authors chose to write also in Hebrew indicate that they did it less out of a desire "to strike the Achilles heel" of Israeli culture and more out of a desire to be integrated in Israeli culture and its emerging identity, each author for his or her own reasons. We will focus on two writers, Na’îm ‘Arâydi and Anton Shammas, because
they are the two most prolific Arab writers in Hebrew and because they have been active in the translation of writing from Hebrew to Arabic, and vice versa.

Nā'īm 'Araydī began his writing career in Arabic at a rather early stage, in poetry and research, then tried his hand at Hebrew writing in 1972, and has ever since continued to publish in Hebrew, especially poetry and fiction, as well as in Arabic. Interestingly, 'Araydī preferred to write his first novel in Hebrew (Tetzilah qatlanit, 1992), while he writes poetry and stories in both Arabic and Hebrew. In general, 'Araydī is more aware of his choice of language, with all his doubts, misgivings, and reservations, than is Anton Shammas. In a response to Shammas, 'Araydī wrote, "I don't know if I, who write in Hebrew, am writing Hebrew literature. But I do know that I am not writing Arab literature in Hebrew. And I believe that this possibility exists, since I do write Hebrew literature in Hebrew." 'Araydī does not attempt to gloss over the difficult dilemma he faces as a bilingual writer. On the contrary, he is fully aware of it and struggles with it in a way that leaves him with both options: two languages and two worlds. 'Araydī is aware that his choice of writing in Hebrew does not relegate Arabic to the background, for Arabic continues to serve him for lectures, poetry, and nonfiction. He consciously chooses this division between Hebrew and Arabic, entering and leaving the world of Hebrew not diminished, but enriched. He understands that the choice of two languages for his fiction and nonfiction is not just a matter of bilingualism, but is a choice that is bicultural, and binational.

Interestingly, both 'Araydī and Shammas, each citing different reasons, reach the same conclusion, that there is no hope of creating a high-quality literature among Israeli Arabs. This is the common opinion among educated Israeli Arabs in general. It is a view that is not shared, however, by many critics from the West and from the Arab states, who sometimes take great interest in Arabic literature written in Israel. Their interest is not just politically motivated, but based also on the high quality of some Arab writing in Israel, in both poetry (Samih al-Qāsim, Sihām Dāwūd, Michel Haddād, Muhammad 'Alī Tāḥā) and prose (Imil Ḥabībī, Zākī Darwīš). I am not trying here to defend Arabic literature written in Israel, but to assert that the statements by 'Araydī and Shammas are fundamentally in error when one considers the Arabic literature written today and the small numbers of Arabs who live in Israel writing it. The best proof of the incorrectness of their view is the fact that both 'Araydī and Shammas translate into Hebrew literary works by such Israeli Arab writers as Zākī Darwīš, Muhammad Naffā', Sihām Dāwūd, and the extraordinary Imil Ḥabībī.60

It was one writer only, Anton Shammas, and indeed, one novel only, his Hebrew work Arabesqot (Arabesques, 1986), that brought about the revolutionary, problematic issue of Arab authors writing in Hebrew and exposed it to criticism and serious debate. Until now, Shammas has published only one book in Arabic, Asīr Yāqqat taw Nawmī (Prisoner of My Wakefulness and My Sleep, 1974), as well as poetry books in Hebrew. He has also translated five books, mainly of poetry, from Hebrew into Arabic and three books from Arabic into Hebrew. This impressive literary output by Shammas is quite different from the literary output of his colleague 'Araydī, although they are similar in quantity. First and most important, more than half the books published by 'Araydī are in Arabic. And, second, 'Araydī has published studies in Arabic and Hebrew about both Arabic and Hebrew literature.43

Both writers are active in the Hebrew literary community, while 'Araydī, in contrast to Shammas, does not neglect his audience of readers in Arabic. And yet the reactions to Shammas in the press and among Hebrew critics have been much more intense, charged, and agitated than the reactions to 'Araydī. Why is this so? Is 'Araydī's literary activity considered more legitimate because he is a Druze who served in the Israeli army or because Hebrew critics feel threatened by the quality of Shammas's writing in Hebrew? Why is Shammas perceived by a wide range of critics and journalists to be a fig leaf for coexistence and cooperation between Arabs and Jews? Whatever the answers, beginning with Shammas's poetry collections Kerikhāb qashāb (1974) and Shetāb hefqer (1979), the reactions to his Hebrew works throughout the entire political and literary spectrum of the Hebrew press were above and beyond what other Arab writers who write in Hebrew had ever received in Israel.44 But this critical assessment of the Shammas oeuvre in poetry was only a preamble to the flood of reactions that met the publication of his novel Arabesqot.

Hebrew criticism, which has drawn the literary map in the 1980s and early 1990s, wrote about the works of Shammas, and specifically his novel Arabesqot, in the context of the total literary output of Hebrew writing by Jewish authors including Yoel Hoffmann, Youval Shimon, Orly Castel-Bloom, and others. For example, the Hebrew critic Avraham Balaban writes:

One of the salient features of modern [Hebrew] literature is the shattering of accepted literary and cultural dichotomies, and the challenging of the princi-
The question of the place of the novel *Arabeqot* in modern Hebrew literature is also addressed by Hannan Hever, who claims that:

"...the Hebrew novel by Shammas that cleverly served to undermine several of the most accepted criteria that define the limits of Hebrew literature. To address this complex issue of cultural identity, Shammas exposed the Israeli duplicity over the vague and loose distinction between Israeli and Jew. These trends were strikingly confirmed by the fact that, for example, some found it hard to accept this as a novel that belongs organically to Hebrew literature."  

Dan Laor treats the novel *Arabeqot* as a "normal" book, barely dealing with the fact that the author is an Arab, and he expresses the view that the novel is a failure from a literary artistic point of view:

"The failure of Anton Shammas in the writing of the novel *Arabeqot* can be attributed, first and foremost, to the fact that the author lacked the determination, artistic maturity, and perseverance for writing a novel that focuses entirely on the unknown world of the Galilean village of his birth, Fassuta. This statement is made recognizing that the encounter between an author like Shammas and materials taken from his nearby childhood surroundings created an extraordinary opportunity for artistic exposure of a unique and unfamiliar geographic, social, and historical reality, that while existing on the periphery of Israeli reality, can singularly illuminate its center."  

Literary critics, in addressing the use of Hebrew by Shammas, saw this novel as a throwing down of the gauntlet to the acceptance of non-Jewish writers in modern Hebrew literature. The author, poet, and translator Aharon Amir, who praises the work profusely, makes the following observation about the language of the writing:

"It is sufficient for me to note that this is a multifaceted work, laden with talent, and from the point of view of language and style, it is a multi-faceted diamond, glittering, polished to perfection. I did not hesitate to tell the author himself that in my opinion, he returns to Hebrew writing the honor that it lost to a great extent in the past decade, as it became permeated with the haphazard, sloppy style of pen-pushers who are poseurs, arrogant, superficial, smart alecks, raucous, show-offs. What Shammas does for Hebrew literature can be compared, in truth, to what was done for English literature in this century by English-writing authors born in India, Poland, the West Indies, or Russia, just as this can be compared to the work of writers from the cultural periphery of France—in northern or equatorial Africa, Egypt, the Antilles, Lebanon, Belgium, or Romania—to contemporary French literature, without which these literatures would be far poorer and more boring than they are."  

While other critics were put off by Shammas's Hebrew, they could not fail to be impressed by the level and quality of the language in the novel. These critics, moreover, refused to include the works of Shammas or of any Arab writer into the Hebrew corpus of modern Israeli literature. Obviously, the considerations of those who take stands on this matter are not purely artistic or literary, but often political, rooted in the relations between the Jewish majority in Israel that writes in Hebrew and the Arab minority that writes in Arabic. Some critics suggest that by writing in Hebrew, Shammas is deliberately defying Israeli linguistic-cultural conventions and mounting a challenge to the dominant Zionist discourse to include Israeli Arab culture within it.

Arab critics have not viewed favorably, to put it mildly, the Hebrew writings of Israeli Arabs, and their attitude has been aggressive and expressed in crass, insulting terms, which have included the charge that these writers have betrayed Arab culture. But the case of Anton Shammas is exceptional in this regard. Criticism in Arabic on the novel *Arabeqot* has been based mostly on readings of its French translation, and we shall present two striking examples. The first, by the Lebanese poet and critic Sharbal Daghir, who lives in Paris, appeared in the Arabic journal *al-Naqiq*, which is published in London. The critic praises the novel from an artistic point of view, but condemns the choice made by Shammas to write in Hebrew:

"Is it possible that Shammas, by using Hebrew, is provoking the rival in his own home with his very own weapons? It is possible, but this provocation seems to take the form of an attack against the other in him. Shammas has the right and the freedom to write in any language he wants, and we have the right and the freedom to raise these sensitivities, especially since language—as we and others have learned—is the fundamental basis in shaping national identity."
The second criticism was written by Yunnī al-Īd, a prominent Arab critic, who analyzes the novel in a long and comprehensive article. In this article, she applies a structuralist approach to Arabesqot, dealing with poetics, thematics, and ideology in a general way. As far as the poetics of the work is concerned, al-Īd praises the structure of the novel, the depiction of the characters, and the treatment of time and place. But she presents incisive criticism in two areas: the Christian dimension, which she feels is all-encompassing at the expense of the Palestinian element, and the writing of the novel in Hebrew. She attacks Shammas on this latter point, claiming:

It's strange, Anton Shammas (is living) in Israel, or so he says, but he wants to learn the language of this country. Hence he is beginning to write in Hebrew. And the Hebrew writing is the writing of a novel that creates its own authority, i.e., from a foreign land, and from its own time, it shapes the biography of the family (or the biography of the relationships among a group of Christians) and makes from the original that it creates an original for the narrator to relate, to write.50

As noted, criticism in Hebrew and Arabic has often dealt at length with the question of why the novel Arabesqot was written in Hebrew and not in Arabic. And, indeed, why was the novel written in Hebrew and not Arabic? And no less important, why was this novel translated into English, French, and Dutch, inter alia, but not into Arabic? Shammas addressed this question by writing:

One needs a lot of chutzpa to write Hebrew prose. And to have perfect chutzpa, one must work hard to hone one's tools. In retrospect, the [Hebrew] poems were my small battles with the language, to command and to grapple with the angel of the Hebrew language. Prose is the true battleground. Here all the possible forms of nakedness are exposed. I came to the language with a particular baggage and I did not forget my language. But when I wrote this book, I did forget my language, or otherwise I would have written it in my language. This forgetting is a kind of salute to the language, homage that I give the Hebrew language. I tried to treat the language with great cautiousness, with respect, like an Arab elephant in a china shop (without breaking anything), trying to preserve inside the new language all the side baggage that I brought from my other culture, from the other side, from a world that doesn't even exist for some Arabs. It's a kind of double redemption of a slice of life that has now vanished. When legend disintegrates and recedes, from beyond the horizon the new language appears, the one my father tried to command,}

knowing inside that he would have to bind the mouth of the Arabic language beast in order to conquer the Hebrew language. Now I return the honor and write in Hebrew.51

To the best of my understanding, the novel Arabesqot was written in Hebrew and not in Arabic because Shammas, who was active in the Hebrew literary world from the 1970s until the mid-1980s, saw it as natural that he would continue to write in the language in which he had published his two previous poetry collections. Moreover, at the time Shammas decided to write in Hebrew, he was not perceived to be writing in the language of the other, unlike the Maghrib writers who wrote in French and lived in France, such as al-Tāhir b. Jallūn, or the Mahjar writers in the American diasporas who wrote in the local language. What is common to these two groups of writers is that they wrote outside their homeland, their country, their land, and that there was a complete split between the writers and their home territory. Shammas, in contrast, wrote his novel in his homeland in Hebrew, a language in which he swims like a fish. He also made wonderful use of the Hebrew language in all its levels and nuances, thus delivering a double message to readers and critics. The first part of the message was: I, Anton Shammas, an Arab, am writing Hebrew that is not only no worse than your Hebrew, but even better. The second part of the message was: Whether you like it or not, I am part of your literature, your culture, and you; and this is my place at this stage of my life, my education, and my literary work.

Although he is one of the top translators from Hebrew into Arabic in Israel, Shammas has rejected the notion of having his novel translated into Arabic or of translating it himself for precisely one of the reasons that led him to write the novel in Hebrew in the first place, which was the greater freedom in Israeli Jewish society, in contrast to Israeli Arab society, to criticize not just the other, but also oneself. In this novel, Shammas offers some rather harsh criticism not only of Jewish society in Israel, but also of Arab society inside and outside Israel, and he was not willing to criticize his society in its own language:

I write in Hebrew about the village. I'm not sure what story would emerge had it been written in Arabic. I would certainly have been more cautious had I written in Arabic about the village. The Hebrew language paradoxically seems to give me security. I would not have had this freedom had I written in Arabic, because what would my aunt and uncle have said? This is a conscious act of camouflage. I use Hebrew as camouflage cover. But all this is in my mind. The
Three years later, when he was in the United States, at some distance of time and space, Shammas related both to the subject of having written *Arabesqot* in Hebrew and to the problem of defining the identity of the Israeli Arabs:

In articles about *Arabesqot*, people didn't always know how to define me. "An Israeli author?" they would ask. Not exactly, I would respond, even though this is what I called myself for years. "An Arab?" Also not. I chose the impossible combination of "an Israeli-Palestinian", and this was an act of defiance against them all, even against myself: de-Judaization and de-Zionization of the Jewish state by bestowing Israeli, national meaning on the word "Israel" and at the same time, emphasis of the Palestinian as an ethnic dimension equivalent to Jewish. And this was somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy in our day: just as Israel exists, so too Palestine will exist. And it held something of the desire to deal with bilingual translation—the identity of the Galilean Arab translated to Israeli-Arabic, and then translated to Palestinian in Hebrew letters, and finally to Israeli-Palestinian, in spite of it all and thanks to the Hebrew. It is not clear whether the identification of some Israeli Arab authors with the Hebrew language and culture of the majority have stamped these authors with the mark of Cain or have brought them honor and pride. Israeli Arabs have certainly felt a sense of pride with regard to *Arabesqot* by Anton Shammas and its successful incorporation into mainstream Hebrew literature. It is possible that Israel's peace agreements with some of the Arab states, the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel's peace contacts with Syria and Lebanon will neutralize some of the accusations flung at Israeli Arab writers who write in Hebrew. It is also possible that these writers and others will not continue to write in Hebrew if peace comes to the region, or perhaps the opposite will be true: peace in the region could relieve the resistance to writing in Hebrew felt by most Arabs inside and outside Israel. This would indicate not only acceptance of Israel in the Middle East, but also acceptance of these Israeli Arab authors who write in Hebrew.

Notes

* This article is part of a larger project entitled Portraits in the Mirror: Studies in Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture (forthcoming).


9. Shimon Ballas, ed. and trans., Sippurim palesinitiyim (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1970). Ballas also served as editor and consultant for Arabic literature of the Mifras publishing house, which has published more Palestinian texts than any other publishing house in Israel.

10. On the life and works of Sami Michael, see Moreh and 'Abbasí, Tarajim wa-Ashtar, 226–27; Moreh, al-Qisa al-Qa'ira, 221–24.


12. The Cairoine trilogy by Na'âib Mahfûz was published in 1956–57. In Hebrew, the trilogy was published by Sifriat Poalim as follows: Bayit be-Qabir (Part 1), 1981; Bayit be-Qabir: Kamal (Part 2), 1984; Bayit be-Qabir: der sheleishit (Part 3), 1987.


17. Samir Naqqâsh, "Ma atem rotsim mimmeni? ani shomer al ha'otonomyah shelli!" Mifgar 7 (Spring 1986): 34.

18. Ibid., 35.

19. Imil Habibi, "Kemo pessa," Politiqah 21 (1988): 6–21. In an anthology that appeared in Arabic called Makkhisrit min al-Qisa al-Qa'ira fi 18 Baladun 'Arabiyyan (Selections of Short Stories From 18 Arab Countries) (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahmâm li l-Tarjama wa l-Nashr, 1993), 239–51, a footnote in Arabic notes, "This chapter was first written by the author [Imil Habibi] in Hebrew in response to a request by the monthly Politiqah and appeared in its special issue 'Arabs in Israel—An Inside Look—Mid-1988"; the Arabic language version was translated by the author himself who also made additions to the text.


21. Anton Shammas, Kerikhal gashah (Tel-Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1974); Shabab befegar: sim'ir (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1979), Na'im 'Arâydi, Eibk esbar le'sheq (Tel-Aviv: Eked, 1972); Hamlul sha'dad (Tel-Aviv: Eked, 1974–75); Hatzarit el bekefegar: sim'ir (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1986). To this list can be added such works as Asad 'Azzi, Len marugdat bagara hamar (Haifa: Renaissance, 1976); Onat halâlqash (Haifa: Renaissance, 1978); Asad 'Azzi and Fâdil 'Ali, Sibrein rehwa (Dalilay al-Karmil: Milim Publishing House, 1979); Fu'ad Husayan, Yom sha'd (Tel-Aviv: Sa'ar, 1990); Siah pesaret (Haifa: Dufas HaVadi, 1995); and Mahmud Zaydân, Ketaot behalal (Tel-Aviv: Eked, 1992). Färuq Mawâsi wrote his poem "Shenayim" in Hebrew. See Ha'susmonim shebho ba'ala: sim'ir, trans. Roger Tavor (Kuf Fura': al-Shafaq, 1989), 79–81.


28. Na'im 'Arâydi edited and translated some of the works in Arabic as well as Hebrew texts that appeared in his anthology Hāyâsalā ibd muṣawir (Tel-Aviv:
156 Ami Elad-Bouskila


30. By Anton Shammas in Hebrew: Hasha'aran bakhsh gadol ha'olam (Jerusalem: Keter, 1982) and Arbitrage (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986). By Na'im 'Araydi in Hebrew: Eileh qofar le'hov (Tel Aviv: Traklin-Eked, 1972); Hanahami hame-magganim beisnut Uri Zvi Greenberg (Tel-Aviv: Eked, 1980); Ulay zo abarah (Tel Aviv: Ma'az, 1983); 'Hassori el hakhasar: shiryon (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986); Behamishah memadim (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Psalim, 1991); and Tovlab qaslatim (Tel Aviv: Biran, 1992). By Na'im 'Araydi in Arabic: Qas'a'id Karmilisa yiqi l-Tishq al-Ba'phi (Sha'at'am: Där al-Masriq li-l-Tariqah wa-l-Tib'a wa-l-Nashr, 1984); Masirat al-Il'dah: Dirasat Nasidya Tehiliyot fi al-Adab al-Fila'antini al-Mu'ajir (Haifa and Sha'at'am: Makrutat Kull Shay, Där al-Masriq li-l-Tariqah wa-l-Tib'a wa-l-Nashr, 1988); and Makashef 'ela Tarbi' al-Il'dah: Dirasat Nasidya fi al-Adab al-Fila'antini al-Mu'ajir (Haifa: Makrutat Kull Shay, 1992).

31. Nazih Khayyat, ed., Miftah us'immat khatayibah ha'asrati seha 'ivriti (Haifa: Bayt al-Karma, 1993). This book has writings in Arabic and Hebrew and also translations from and to both languages, which is not always noted in the text and raises questions about the original language in which it was written. Interestingly, the Arab and Jewish writers who appear in this anthology in the original or in translation also appear in anthologies edited by Nazih Khayyat, Samil al-Qaisim, and others.


33. In this context, it is interesting to note the possible influence of Hebrew poetry in the 1970s, Salman Bashir, 'Vayeha'et be'elha, 57 (Spring 1969-70): 161-70.


35. In this context, it is interesting to note the possible influence of Hebrew poetry in the 1970s, Salman Bashir, 'Vayeha'et be'elha, 57 (Spring 1969-70): 161-70.
Since Mahmūd Darwīsh began publishing his poetry in the early 1960s, his life has undergone many drastic changes. Until 1971, he lived in Israel and, as an active member of Rakah, the Israeli Communist Party, he was in opposition to many aspects of Israeli policy, particularly its treatment of Arabs living in Israel. During this period he was put in prison or under house arrest by the Israeli authorities several times. After a year studying in Moscow, he decided not to return to Israel. He went to Egypt for a brief stay and then settled in Lebanon, where he supported the activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Following the 1982 Israeli invasion of the country, he left for Tunisia with the PLO fighters evacuated under the protection of multinational forces. After a few years of intimate involvement with the PLO in Tunisia, he left for Paris in disagreement with the policies of the Palestinian leadership. After the Oslo accords, he wanted to return to Haifa, where he had originally lived, but was not permitted to do so by Israel.

These changes in his life conditions affected his poetic vision, no doubt. In this chapter, I will focus on their effect on his concept of identity as a young and rising Palestinian poet who gradually became a national figure whose words commanded public attention by their articulate expression of feelings and their aesthetic sophistication. In one of his earliest poems entitled "Identity Card," in his collection Awraq al-Zaytun (1964), Darwīsh puts forth a forceful and very direct expression.