

# HEBREW NEOLOGISMS IN THE WRITINGS OF ANTON SHAMMAS\*

Adel Shakour and Abdallah Tarabeih

*Al-Qasemi Academy*

The article examines the impact of Arabic on Hebrew writings of a prominent Arab Israeli author. Specifically, it studies lexical neologisms in Shammas's original Hebrew novel *Arabesques* as well as in his translations of Emile Habibi from Arabic into Hebrew. The distinctive literary language of Shammas that these neologisms help to shape is discussed against the multifaceted background of the complex sociocultural phenomenon of Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew, including the significance of Hebrew for Israeli Arabs, the incidence of Hebrew writing among them, the bilingual literary production of Arab authors, and their reluctant acceptance by Israeli society.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Minorities living under the rule of a majority are influenced by its culture, customs, and language. Examples of such influence are found throughout history, for example, in Spanish society that was dominated for centuries by Muslim Arabs. Spanish was strongly influenced by Arabic, borrowing hundreds of words from it. Similarly, in Arab countries during the Ottoman era, Turkish elements entered Arabic.<sup>1</sup> The same phenomenon is evident today among Israeli Arabs, a minority community living alongside a Hebrew-speaking Jewish majority. Close interaction between the two populations has resulted in clear influences in many areas, particularly in language.

Almost all Israeli Arabs have at least some Hebrew proficiency, and the language is taught in Arab schools. For Israel's Arab citizens, Hebrew is the key to the dominant Jewish majority and most of its social, financial, and educational resources; it is therefore essential in the minority's daily life.<sup>2</sup> The fact that Hebrew is a basic necessity has raised its status in Arab society.

---

\* This article is based on the author's doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Dr. Tsvi Sadan (Tsubuguya Sasaki): A. Shakour, "השפעת הערבית על הכתיבה העברית של סופרים ערבים בישראל" (The influence of Arabic on the Hebrew writing of Arab authors in Israel; Ph.D. diss., Bar Ilan University, 2010).

<sup>1</sup> J. Dana, עברית ערבית על ציר הזמן (A timeline of Arabic Hebrew; Haifa: Institute of Hebrew-Arabic Comparative Research, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> M. Amarah, "העברית בקרב הערבים בישראל: היבטים סוציולינגוויסטיים" (Hebrew among Israeli Arabs: Sociolinguistic aspects), in מדברים עברית (Speaking Hebrew; ed. I. Shlomo; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002), pp. 86–101.

Contact between Hebrew-speaking Arabs and Jews occurs in many different contexts, for example, in government offices, at work, and in recreational settings, such as restaurants. As a result, Arabic has borrowed many Hebrew words and even entire sentences. Israeli Arabs routinely use words like בסדר ‘okay’, ערוץ ‘TV channel’, מבצע ‘sale’, קניון ‘shopping mall’, מציל ‘lifeguard’, and many others.<sup>3</sup>

Still, not all Israeli Arabs speak Hebrew fluently, and fluency is not evenly distributed, depending rather on such factors as gender, age, locality, and frequency of contact with Jewish Israelis.<sup>4</sup> Arab men speak Hebrew better than Arab women since the former are in closer touch with Jewish society, especially through work, and with government bureaucracies. Younger Arabs speak better Hebrew than older ones because they use leisure and entertainment facilities in majority Jewish cities and read Hebrew publications, especially the press. This contact greatly improves their Hebrew fluency and increases adoption of Hebrew words and phrases in Arabic.<sup>5</sup> As for locality, the closer an Arab person lives to Jewish centers, the more strongly he or she will be influenced by Hebrew: thus, the residents of the Negev and the “Triangle” speak more Hebrew than Galilee Arabs. Also, in mixed cities and neighborhoods Arabs and Jews share the same public services, which leads to routine contact between them, something that has improved Israeli Arabs’ regard for Hebrew and elevated its status among them. Another key factor responsible for the use of Hebrew among Israeli Arabs is that many work for Jewish businesses and most are employed by Hebrew-speaking Jews who encourage them to study the language. In the workplace, management and staff all speak Hebrew, most customers speak it as well, tools and equipment have Hebrew names, and manuals are all in Hebrew. Arab employees then have to know the language to integrate at the workplace and succeed.<sup>6</sup> Hebrew

<sup>3</sup> A. Mari, “Influence of Hebrew in the Arabic language,” *Al-Risalah* 11–12 (2002–2003): 143 (in Arabic), and J. Dana, “Spelling Mistakes in Hebrew Compositions by Arabic Speaking Non-Jews in Israel Today,” *Jewish Language Review* 3 (1983): 47–49, discuss the adoption of Hebrew words and sometimes full sentences in spoken Arabic—a known phenomenon among Israeli Arabs. An example is *tavlat liga* ‘soccer league’.

<sup>4</sup> M. Amarah, “The Integration of Hebrew and English Lexical Items into Arabic Spoken in an Arab Village in Israel” (M. A. thesis, Bar Ilan University, 1986), p. 3, points out that Arabic has also borrowed from English, among other things due to the latter being the language of modern science and technology. In addition, Israel’s close relationship with the United States has resulted in Israelis picking up English terms, which were subsequently absorbed into Arabic spoken by Israeli Arabs.

<sup>5</sup> M. Amarah, “Hebrew among Israeli Arabs,” p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> M. Amarah and S. Kabaha, *זהות חצויה: חלוקה פוליטית והשתקפויות חברתיות בכפר חצוי* (Split identity: Political division and social reflections in a split village; Givat Haviva: Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, 1996), pp. 60–62; A. Mari, “Influence of Hebrew in the Arabic Language,” pp. 133–136; A. Kohen, “הוראת אינצקלופדיה חינוכית, “עברית לילדים ערביים בישראל” (Teaching Hebrew to Arab children in Israel), *Encyclopedia of education* 2 (1968): 663–676.

is thus a significant factor in the lives of Arab Israelis, with a failure to master it making it extremely difficult for them to achieve anything in the Israeli society. Furthermore, it is relatively easy for them to learn because Arabic and Hebrew belong to the same linguistic family and have many lexical elements in common, which helps Israeli Arabs to learn Hebrew quickly, sometimes simply by being spoken to.<sup>7</sup>

Although Hebrew is the second most important language for Israeli Arabs, allowing communication with Israeli Jews in all areas of life, and although it acts as an agent of modernization, various sociolinguistic obstacles limit its use. Ben Rafa'el points out that

the dual identity (Palestinian and Israeli) is reflected in the linguistic repertoire of Palestinians in Israel. The tension between the two identities, the Israeli and the Palestinian, has restricted their approach to Hebrew, the language of the dominant Jewish culture. In other words, the Arabs employ a strategy of linguistic integration. On the one hand, they try to connect with the wider social network which is shaped by the majority culture by learning to speak Hebrew well. On the other hand, they maintain their identity by retaining their mother tongue.<sup>8</sup>

Snir offers a detailed analysis of efforts by Israel's majority culture to dominate the Arab minority following the establishment of the state, which for the Palestinians was a traumatic event they call *Nakbah* 'Tragedy'.<sup>9</sup> Israeli establishment attempted to install a system of re-education and reculturalization aimed at distancing local Arabs from their Palestinian heritage and integrating them into the life of the state because nationalist inclinations within the Israeli Arab community were considered dangerous.<sup>10</sup> Before leaving Israel, the poet Mahmud Darwish asserted that the premise of the Israeli establishment and public was that every Arab was both suspect and guilty. Such attempts elicited a strongly negative reaction from the Arab community. For example, Mikhael Asaf, a Jewish Israeli expert on the Middle East who was a key figure in the Arabist arm of the Israeli establishment in the 1950s and the editor-in-chief of establishment journals such as the weekly *Haqiqat*

---

<sup>7</sup> J. Dana, *A Timeline of Arabic Hebrew*, pp. 165–170.

<sup>8</sup> E. Ben Rafa'el, *Language, Identity, and Social Division: The Case of Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> R. Snir, "פצע אחד מפצעיו—הספרות הערבית הפלסטינית בישראל" (One of his wounds: Palestinian Arab literature in Israel), *Alpayim* 2 (1990): 248–253.

<sup>10</sup> The main argument advanced by those responsible for the shape of the Hebrew studies curriculum was that it not only contributes to the financial development of the minority but also encourages integration with the majority and reduces gaps between Israel's Arab and Jewish communities: see B. Spolsky and E. Shohamy, *The Language of Israel: Policy, Ideology and Practice* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999).

*Leamr*, the daily *Alyawm*, and the Arabic journal of the teachers' union *Tsada Tarbiyah*, suggested that more hours of Hebrew study should be added in Arab elementary schools at the expense of Arabic. As a result, he became persona non grata in the Arab community (especially among the Communists) which viewed him as a disseminator of hatred, incitement, and bias against it and as someone with a hostile attitude toward Arabs inside and outside Israel.

In contrast to Snir, who maintains that Israel's majority culture failed to dominate the minds of the Arab minority despite all its best efforts and a strong desire to achieve the goal, Amir argues that this happened because Jewish Israelis did not try hard enough.<sup>11</sup> If they wanted Arabs at all (by force of circumstance, not choice), it was mostly to give the country a picturesque "oriental" flavor, to be hardworking, law-abiding subjects, and, where possible, to serve as pawns in political games. The dominant culture clearly and openly preferred Arabs to be "loyal to their nation and tradition, fighting perhaps for their rights" under the enlightened Israeli rule, but not to be Israelis with all that this status implied.

The efforts of the Israeli establishment to achieve symmetry between political and cultural hegemony and to assimilate the Arab minority have triggered among the latter an intense burst of nationally oriented cultural activity that is unparalleled in other Palestinian communities. This activity is unfolding against the background of somewhat equivocal reciprocity. The Arab-Palestinian minority was the majority before Israel's establishment and it can still maintain that it remains one if the overall balance of power in the Middle East is considered. At the same time, not only is the current Jewish majority a minority in a region which is almost entirely Arab but also the collective consciousness of this majority remains permeated with the memory of having been a minority through most of its history, in both the homeland and the diaspora. No wonder, then, that it continues to fall back on the characteristic patterns of a minority struggling for survival and uses these patterns to mask its personality.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> A. Amir, "נורמה יהודית לספרות עברית" (Jewish norm in Hebrew literature), *Moznayim* 66 (1992): 37–40; R. Snir, "One of His Wounds," pp. 248–253.

<sup>12</sup> See D. Grossman, נוכחים נפקדים (Present absentees; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1992), p. 19; M. Kayyal, התרבות הישראלית בעיניים ערביות: בין סטריאוטיפיזציה לנורמליזציה (How Arabs perceive Israeli culture: Between stereotyping and normalization; Tel Aviv: Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, 2006), pp. 15–16.

## 2. THE BILINGUAL LITERARY ACTIVITY OF ISRAELI ARAB AUTHORS

Today, many esteemed authors write their prose or poetry in a language that is not their mother tongue; in several cases, this has to do with personal experiences of exile or colonialism. Some use one language for private or emotional expression and another for public, formal presentation while others emphasize that the cultural and aesthetic possibilities of a second language offer options they could never have experienced in their first language. Most struggle with maintaining a coherent sense of self. Taken together, these reflections shed a new light on the creative processes and the complex ways in which identities are forged in the contemporary, globalized world.<sup>13</sup>

One example of such an author is Algerian novelist Assia Djebar who made a conscious decision to use French in order to expose the brutality of French colonialism and document the uprising of the Algerian people against the colonial power in the language closely associated with it. She explains that writing in the language of the other makes the other felt and seen.<sup>14</sup> With regard to Israeli Arab authors using Hebrew, Snir provides an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon and the underlying causes, linking it to the broader narrative of majority-minority reciprocity and the impact that the balance of political power has on the literary sphere.<sup>15</sup> In another publication, he emphasizes that linguistic dualism in literature is common in societies where a minority culture crystallizes alongside that of the majority as a consequence of political power relations.<sup>16</sup> In Israel, however, the high status of Arabic—the language of Islamic liturgy and the Quran—in the cultural and religious tradition of the minority, which is predominantly Muslim, has tended to limit creativity in Hebrew to marginal groups, in particular the Christians and Druze.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in the case of the Israeli Arabs, the attitude toward the latter language was negatively affected by the majority's attempts, mentioned in section 1 above, to gain control of the minority culture. As a result, Hebrew

<sup>13</sup> N. Buchweitz, A. Mari, and A. Fragman, eds., *לכתוב בשפת האחר* (Writing in the language of the other; Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> A. Djebar, "Writing in the Language of the Other," in *Lives in Translation: Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity* (ed. I. de Courtivron; London: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 19–27.

<sup>15</sup> R. Snir, "ואני הוזה בשטח ההפקר – יוצרים ערבים פלסטיניים בלשון העברית" (And I am hallucinating in no man's land: Palestinian Arab writers in Hebrew), *Balshanut Ivrit* 41–42 (1997): 141–153.

<sup>16</sup> R. Snir, "בנים חורגים ואוהבים – יוצרים ערבים בלשון העברי" (Loving stepsons: Arab writers in Hebrew), *Moznayim* 76 (1992): 6.

<sup>17</sup> A. Mari, "Influence of Hebrew," p. 130.

attained prominence in the non-Jewish literary sphere only in the 1980s, with the works of Anton Shammas, a Christian, and Naim Araidi, a Druze.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. SHAMMAS AND ARAIDI AS REPRESENTATIVES OF ISRAELI ARAB CULTURAL ELITE

Anton Shammas was born in 1950 in the town of Fassuta in the Galilee. He is renowned for his translation of Emile Habibi's writings from Arabic to Hebrew, for articles in the Israeli press, and especially for his first novel, *Arabesques* (1986), that became a milestone in Israeli Arab literature. On top of not being originally written in Arabic, it was not even translated into this language even though the author had already been recognized as one of the foremost translators from Arabic to Hebrew.<sup>19</sup> The title of the book captures its essence with regard to both content and style. Contentwise, there are shifts in time and place while the thread of memory forming the novel's leitmotif winds through it like a curling, colorful arabesque pattern. Stylistically, the work is richly adorned with neologisms that reflect Arabic influences on the author's Hebrew.

Naim Araidi was born in the Druze village of Mgar where he still lives with his family. He has a Ph.D. in Hebrew literature; the topic of his doctoral dissertation was the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg. Araidi is a prominent poet and the recipient of several prizes. Many of his poems, which are partly in Arabic and partly in Hebrew, have been translated into different languages and appear in poetry anthologies throughout Europe. His first novel was *Fatal Immersion* (2005).

Hever, cited by Snir, maintains that while for the most part local Arabic literature has remained outside the Hebrew literary canon, in the 1970s and 1980s it slowly began to penetrate this canon, moving from the periphery, to which the minority culture is often relegated, into the majority culture's authoritative mainstream.<sup>20</sup> The most important part of this process is the growing tradition of translation from Arabic into Hebrew, topped by the efforts of Arab authors to write in the latter language.<sup>21</sup> Hever characterizes

<sup>18</sup> See A. Shakour, "השפעת הערבית על הכתיבה העברית של אנטון שמאס" (The influence of Arabic on the Hebrew writing of Anton Shammas; M. A. thesis, Bar Ilan University, 2009), pp. 1–81.

<sup>19</sup> B. Margolin, "מיקוד התחבירי כאבן בוחן סגנונית בסיפורת העברית ובסיפורת הפלסטינית בנות זמננו" (Syntactic focus as a stylistic criterion in present-day Hebrew and Palestinian fiction; Ph.D. diss., Bar Ilan University, 1996), p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> H. Hever, "להכות בעקבו של אכילס" (Striking the Achilles heel), *Alpayim* 1 (1989): 193–196; R. Snir, "One of His Wounds," p. 258.

<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy that Arab authors, such as Shammas, Muhammad Ganayim, and Salman Natur, who received their formal education in the Israeli school system, are clearly faithful to the original Hebrew text,

the development in question as a dramatic moment in the cultural confrontation between the minority and the majority marking a shift in the dialectic of power relations. In order to realize the option of breaking through into the canonical center, the minority has identified weaknesses in the majority culture and exploited them in an attempt to force the majority's cultural apparatus to recognize its legitimacy and importance.

Kochavi notes that Shamma and Araidi, along with such writers as Muhammad Ganayim, form the cultural elite of the Israeli Arab community.<sup>22</sup> They also function within the Hebrew-based majority culture, representing an important, prestigious cultural stratum whose members are listened to by the Jewish cultural majority that regards them as authorities on Arab culture. Kochavi believes that if Shamma and Araidi did not occupy a prominent position in *both* cultures it is doubtful whether Israeli institutions or publishers would have invited them to oversee anthologies (Shamma is the editor of *In Two Voices*) and magazines (Ganayim is the editor of *Meeting*, funded by Histadrut, Israel's largest trade union) or even publish anthologies of their own, such as Araidi's *Soldiers of Water* (1988).

Snir stresses that the discussion of Arab authors who write in Hebrew does not focus on Shamma and Araidi for the lack of others but rather because they are the only such authors since Israel's founding to carry any weight and maintain any presence in Hebrew literature.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Atallah Mansur, the first Arab author to publish a novel in Hebrew (*In a New Light*, 1966), proved, unlike them, a fleeting phenomenon.<sup>24</sup> Besides Shamma and Araidi, only a handful of Arab writers who use Hebrew have caught the eye of the Israeli media and public. One of them is Sayed Kashua who was awarded the Prime

---

which can be seen in the mixture of Hebrew used in their translations and the various inconsistencies in linguistic style. This approach, positioning Hebrew culture as hegemonic, served to further distance the translations from the Arab audiences who refused to accept this status. It is no wonder therefore that two leading proponents of translating Hebrew literature into Arabic, Shamma and Ganayim, ceased producing such translations. Apparently, this withdrawal was caused by bitter political censure that their work drew in Arab sources in Israel and other countries and the discomfort that accompanied their efforts to mediate between the two alienated cultures (M. Kayyal, "הספרות העברית החדשה לשפה הערבית" [From Arabic to Hebrew: Interpretation of Hebrew language in translations of modern Hebrew literature into Arabic], *Gag* 11 [2005]: 132; A. Shamma, "על ימין ושמאל" [Right and left in translation], *Iton* 77 [1985]: 18–19).

<sup>22</sup> A. H. Kochavi, "תרגומי ספרות ערבית לעברית: הרקע ההיסטורי תרבותי שלהם, מאפייניהם ומעמדם בתרבות" (Translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew: Historical-cultural background, characteristics, and status in the target culture; Ph.D. diss., Tel-Aviv University, 1999), p. 267.

<sup>23</sup> R. Snir, "And I Am Hallucinating," pp. 142–143.

<sup>24</sup> Born in Gush Halav, a village in Lower Galilee, Mansur studied in Lebanon in 1946–1950. He made his way back to Israel in 1950 as an infiltrator, receiving citizenship only ten years later, and spent a year in kibbutz Shaar Haamakim where he began studying Hebrew. Mansur worked as a youth instructor and then as a journalist for *Haolam Haze* magazine in 1954–1958. From 1958 to 1991, he wrote for the *Haaretz* newspaper. Mansur writes in Arabic, Hebrew, and English.

Minister's prize for Hebrew writers for the novels *Dancing Arabs* (2004) and *Let It Be Morning* (2005).<sup>25</sup> They were translated into several languages and garnered considerable praise. Also noteworthy is Salman Natur's *Walking on the Wind: Conversations at Home*, written in Hebrew and published in 1992.<sup>26</sup> Finally, it is highly important to mention the novel by Geries Tannous, *Under the Jujube Tree: Scenes from My Neighborhood*, self-published in Nazareth in 2007.<sup>27</sup>

The writings of Shamma and Araidi reflect the fact that they belong to two mutually alienated cultures—Arabic, into which they were born and in which they took their first steps in literature, and Hebrew, which they were reluctant to embrace but eventually came to prefer for personal aesthetic reasons. It is no wonder that their main work focuses on the demarcation between the two literatures: among other things, both are recognized as remarkable translators. Their natural talents, sensitive intellect, articulateness, unique linguistic style, and modern techniques allow them to write fluently in Hebrew, sometimes on a higher level than in their native tongue.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Kashua was born in Tira. His father was a bank clerk, his mother a teacher. He was the second child in a family of four. At the age of fifteen, he enrolled in the Jerusalem High School for Science and Arts, a boarding school that has the reputation of being one of Israel's finest. Kashua attended Hebrew University, studying philosophy and sociology, and after graduation began writing for the local newspaper *Kol Hair* before becoming a television critic with his own column. Despite his charming manner, Kashua's insistence that he is not a "pet Arab," characterized by synthetic Israeliness, and various political statements that he made turned him and his editors into targets of militant Israeli nationalists, ironically earning him greater esteem in the journalistic world. *Dancing Arabs* describes Kashua's traumatic meeting with the Jewish street. The book was high on the Israeli bestseller list for eleven weeks and sold many copies abroad; it was translated into Italian, German, French, Dutch, and English. In *Let It Be Morning*, Kashua portrays the experiences of a young family moving back to the village where the parents were born. The move is described as a disaster, the end of all hopes and dreams. The narrator reveals this the moment he arrives in the village and begins describing it in profoundly depressing terms.

<sup>26</sup> Natur was born in Daliyat al-Karmel. He studied philosophy at Haifa University and Hebrew University. An author, journalist, playwright, and lecturer on Arab philosophy and culture, he is director of the Emile Touma Institute for Palestinian and Israeli Studies in Haifa and editor of the journal *Israeli Issues*, published in Ramallah. Natur has written twenty-five books, including novels, short stories, critical articles, and documentary literature about Palestinian memory. He translated from Hebrew into Arabic David Grossman's novel *Yellow Wind* as well as *Conversation on Science and Values* by Yeshayahu Leibowitz.

<sup>27</sup> The parents of Geries Tannous were farmers from Maghar village. Since 1956, he has lived in Acre. For forty-eight years, he was involved in the teaching of Hebrew language and literature in Arab high schools. He graduated from Haifa University after studying Hebrew and Arabic language and literature. Tannous writes poetry and prose in both languages; he is the author of three novels and two dictionaries in Arabic as well as Hebrew-Arabic and Arabic-Hebrew dictionaries. *Under the Jujube Tree* is written from the perspective of a child from a farming family, whose life largely fluctuates between pranks and the punishments that follow. Between stealing figs and catching thrushes and releasing them, the book retains, despite the abundant episodes of violence in the book—kicks from a big brother or a whipping from a teacher—a certain pastoral flavor.

<sup>28</sup> Tannous claims that he expresses himself better in Hebrew than in Arabic: "My Hebrew is far richer than my Arabic.... Hebrew has several synonyms for every word. I felt freer." But for him, writing in Hebrew is not just the product of long years of expertise and a love of the language. It is also ideological. Tannous explains: "It is not just that I like writing in both languages as your esteemed Jewish medieval writers did. I

Snir also notes that whereas in their natural Arab milieu Shammas and Araidi are conspicuous for their conscious aesthetic affinity with Hebrew culture, in Hebrew literary circles they stand out not only as newcomers and foreigners but chiefly as representatives of a minority with access to the sphere of the majority.<sup>29</sup> The main if not the only reason why they are accepted in Hebrew literary circles is that both fit into the slot allocated by the Israeli cultural system for minorities (as is also the case in the political system). The two authors consequently find themselves working inside a majority culture which, to put it mildly, does not see the minority culture as its top priority. Still, as writers working on the fringes of Palestinian literature while trying to penetrate the canonic center of the Jewish culture, Shammas and Araidi mostly address Jewish-Israeli audiences and deal almost exclusively with the question of cultural identity. In addition, the penetration of such authors into Israeli culture is never systematic; it invariably involves isolated individuals with specific cultural preferences, so that it is only in retrospect that it becomes possible to see the commonality between them. When we examine how Shammas and Araidi operate within Israeli culture, two alternative models of a representative of the Palestinian minority active in Israeli culture begin to emerge.

#### 4. ACCEPTANCE OF ARAB AUTHORS WRITING IN HEBREW IN THE ISRAELI SOCIETY

Amir disagrees with Snir and others who have reservations about Arabs being accepted as “Hebrew” authors and see this acceptance as an exceptional and fleeting phenomenon.<sup>30</sup> He dismisses the “alarm” of Snir, Yosef Oren, and others over Shammas’s and Araidi’s recognition as bona fide Hebrew writers and especially Snir’s implication that only Jews can create Hebrew literature as well as Oren’s argument that Hebrew literature must have a “Jewish national” character, which presupposes that only Zionist Jewish vision is appropriate for this literature.<sup>31</sup> Amir quotes Oren to the effect that it

---

would also like to contribute...to sweeten a bitter pill. Many have contributed to this argument, but not to reconciliation.” Online: [www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1418258](http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1418258).

<sup>29</sup> R. Snir, “And I Am Hallucinating,” pp. 142–143.

<sup>30</sup> A. Amir, “Jewish Norm in Hebrew Literature,” p. 40. Poet Mahmud Darwish sees Palestinians writing in Hebrew in a similar way. He considers it a “fashion” and thinks it may be an attempt at cultural assimilation within Hebrew culture or perhaps even a revolt against the Israelis using their own language: M. Darwish, “The Writing of Mahmoud Darwish within a Complete Conversation.” Online: [http://www.jehat.com/jehaat/ar/La7thatAlnas/books/m\\_darweesh.htm](http://www.jehat.com/jehaat/ar/La7thatAlnas/books/m_darweesh.htm) (in Arabic).

<sup>31</sup> Yosef Oren is a veteran Israeli researcher, essayist, literary critic, and lecturer in contemporary Hebrew literature. According to Amir, Oren’s views imply that in Hebrew literature there is no place for non-Jews—

is dangerous to allow the identity of Jewish-Israeli literature, which less than fifty years ago was Jewish Zionist literature, to become indistinct.<sup>32</sup> According to Oren, the problem with writers like Shammas and Araidí is that they contribute to the “inexorable process” of mutual assimilation between “Jewish writers and writers with other national backgrounds,” which, if it persists, will divest Hebrew literature of its national Jewish character. In support of his doom-laden prophecy, Oren offers a grim reading of the current trends, citing the fact that “most Israeli Jewish authors” have already stopped writing about the issues of national cultural continuity and that literature which embraces “authentic” Jewish values, ideals, and experiences has come to be seen as “old-fashioned, redundant, ethnic.”<sup>33</sup>

Amir, by contrast, celebrates the fact that Arab authors write in Hebrew as clearly pointing to the realization of the “Canaanite” vision, in which Arab and Jewish populations of Israel eventually form a single new nation, distinguishable from Jews and Arabs proper.<sup>34</sup> He maintains that rather than making Israel a “melting pot” of ethnicities this indicates its gradual and entirely effortless transformation into a national, territorial, secular, democratic society. Amir goes on to point out that all nations and languages, all national cultures, all cultures of groups with a modicum of territorial and linguistic uniqueness are to some extent open, irrespective of religion and race and with almost no differences associated with ideology, to accepting the “other.” The modern world is no place for a “nation that dwells alone,” and in the end, no cultures will reject “others” because of their religion, race, gender, or ideology.

According to Amir, the present generation witnesses the world over a far-reaching process in which values are being revised and renewed—one having to do, among other things, with the acceptance of foreigners into the literary, artistic, musical, and intellectual circles of even such formerly monolithic cultures as British and French, to say nothing of the United States. In the same way, Muslim Arab culture, whose achievements were widely admired, at least prior to the Ottoman domination, only became what it was because it absorbed the strengths of the cultures it occupied and oppressed. Without the speakers of Aramaic, Persian, Greek, and Coptic, without the various ethnic groups and religions (such as Iranian Zoroastrians, Eastern Christians, and Jews) with

---

especially those born in the country and raised in the Arabic milieu. Not even the “loving stepsons,” as Snir affectionately calls them, will be accepted.

<sup>32</sup> A. Amir, “Jewish Norm in Hebrew Literature,” p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> A. Amir, “Jewish Norm in Hebrew Literature,” p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> A. Amir, “Jewish Norm in Hebrew Literature,” p. 40.

their ancient traditions and various cultural appurtenances, the camel riders who came from the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century under the banner of Islam would have left little if any trace in history.

Shammas and Araidí were both educated in Israeli state schools that tried to teach Arabs to identify with the country's goals, even though its national ideology made them second-class citizens. Shammas, in particular, recalls the humiliation of having to display the occupier's symbols—for example, when the principal of his school ordered the Arab students to fashion a giant Star of David in order to impress a Jewish inspector.<sup>35</sup> Snir maintains that Shammas and Araidí are driven by their sense of mission and by a profound belief that they can influence the Israeli society.<sup>36</sup> Speaking in the 1970s about his younger colleagues trying to clear the Hebrew barrier in order to expand into a new sphere, Shammas noted that they have the benefits of both worlds. Fluency in Hebrew puts them in touch with new experiences through both Hebrew literature and world literature translated into Hebrew; knowledge of Arabic makes it possible to stay abreast of the newest achievements in modern Arabic literature. Kashua likewise addresses this topic:

It is hard for Arabs to write in Hebrew. The problem is not the language but speaking to the Israeli reading public as an equal. Arab authors who write in Hebrew are very aware that they are addressing an Israeli audience. Moreover, it is quite rare to find Arabs who are experts in Israeli culture and know the right language to communicate with Jewish readers. I sincerely hope Israeli Palestinian citizens are not going to be extinct soon, and [if they remain] I am sure there will be a lot of good writers. I believe that repression gives rise to creativity or at least to the need to be creative. The problem is that Arab society tends to push its successful offspring into the professions and does not yet see art and literature as important. This happens in minorities, which concentrate on occupations that can help it survive. I believe the second or third generation of the Palestinian enlightenment in Israel will be creative and it will occupy the Israeli cultural platforms. If we continue to coexist, I feel sure we will play a role similar to that of the American blacks. As for me, I still dream of being the Arab Bill Cosby.<sup>37</sup>

As authors who write in both languages, Shammas and Araidí have been seen more than once as lone wolves—a common destiny of those in whom two cultures and two belief systems intersect. For example, since his earliest days as a writer, Shammas has felt that the path he pursues conceals an

---

<sup>35</sup> A. Shammas, *ערבסקות* (Arabesques; Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986), p. 212.

<sup>36</sup> R. Snir, "Loving Stepsons," p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> S. Kashua, "דו קיום – תגובה" (Coexistence: A response). Online: <http://www.tapuz.co.il/tapuzforum/main/Viewmsg.asp?id=211&msgid=2524778> (in Hebrew).

important message about his Arab-Palestinian identity. He explains that although through lack of choice he decided to treat Hebrew as a stepmother-tongue, he feels that deep down it “is a form of cultural trespass for which [he] might be punished.”<sup>38</sup> Because of such identity crises and emotional schisms, it is easy to understand the desire of the two authors to act as a kind of cultural bridge. This desire is merely latent in the case of the sophisticated Shammas, although it is hinted at in, among other things, *Arabesque* where he depicts the town of his childhood. Araidí, by contrast, misses no opportunity to stress that he represents a crossroads between two cultures; this emphasis is bluntly expressed in his collection of poetry *I Return to the Village* (1986) as well in his dual, critical and scholarly, engagement with both Arabic and Hebrew literatures.

## 5. THE NEOLOGISMS IN SHAMMAS’S WRITINGS

According to Somekh, Shammas can handle extremely difficult translation tasks:

Shammas has attempted the impossible translation task of translating Habibi’s rather complex works, especially the difficult and complex novel *Saraya, the Ogre’s Daughter*. This is a daunting project because Emile Habibi is not the easiest author to translate since he does not use *fusha*, the standard modern literary language of our time, but instead writes in a very idiosyncratic style not found to this degree in many Arabic authors.<sup>39</sup>

Israeli Jewish society appears to perceive Arab culture as inferior, less modern, and less sophisticated, compared to its own as well as to those of Russia and Western European countries. In translating literary works from Arabic into Hebrew, Shammas had this issue in mind as he tried to demonstrate to Jewish Israelis that the culture of their Arab neighbors also has value. He has always believed that it is extremely important for Arab culture—that of the “nearby stranger”—to be seen in a positive light, more often than not for political and compassionate reasons as opposed to the purely aesthetic goal of making translations of belles lettres in Arabic available for others’ esthetic delectation. It is possible therefore to regard his use of Hebrew neologisms directly influenced by Arabic as a deliberate attempt to bridge what he sees as a division separating the target culture from his own.

<sup>38</sup> H. Hesse, *Steppenwolf* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Schocken, 1971), p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> S. Somekh, “אנטון שמאס: התרגום כאתגר – על תרגום יצירות אמיל חביבי לעברית” (Anton Shammas: Translation as a challenge—On Hebrew translations of Emil Habibi’s oeuvre), in *תרגום בצידי הדרך* (Translation on the side of the road; ed. S. Somekh; Tel Aviv: Institute for Arab Studies, 1993), pp. 41–42.

As a component of human civilization, literature is an important vehicle for conveying concepts and terms from one culture to another regardless of whether there is physical contact between them. It also provides an important channel through which languages can influence one another, especially when writings in one tongue are translated into another and when nations and individuals share the same cultural space.<sup>40</sup> Shammas not only regards himself as a Hebrew author or translator of Arabic literature into Hebrew but also as emissary, intermediary, and mediator between Arab and Jewish cultures, as well as a possible contributor to the resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Thus, his strategy of using lexical neologisms in literary works that he wrote in Hebrew is a conscious choice.

Margolin examined in 2003 some of the Hebrew linguistic neologisms in Shammas's *Arabesques* but so far, they have not been studied comprehensively in the broader corpus of his Hebrew writing.<sup>41</sup> The present article closely examines the nature of these neologisms and the role they play in producing the unique language that characterizes Shammas's oeuvre by citing examples not only from *Arabesques* but also from three novels by Emile Habibi that Shammas translated from Arabic into Hebrew.

### 5.1. Hebrew Verbal Forms Derived from Nouns

Shammas creates new verbal forms in Hebrew by deriving them from nouns along the lines of such derivation in Arabic. This "linguistic adventurism" creates difficulties for his readers by adding a dimension that did not exist in the Hebrew and thereby making the text more obscure. Even the context of the translated novels does not always help the audience to grasp the meaning of the new forms. Shammas also adapts the Arabic verb structure to that of Hebrew so that the verbs he uses become Hebrew verbs in every way.<sup>42</sup> This technique, illustrated below, is common in many languages but in Shammas's case, its primary purpose is to create a sense of the Arab culture described in the original work, to give the work a highly authentic flavor.

<sup>40</sup> I. Basal, "יסודות עבריים וארמיים בערבית הדבורה בפי הנוצרים בא"י ובערבית הכתובה בקהילות הנוצריות בא", "סוריה והלבנון (Hebrew and Aramaic elements in the vernacular Christian Arabic in Israel and in the written Christian Arabic in the land of Israel, Syria and Lebanon; Ph.D. diss., University of Haifa, 2004), p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> B. Margolin, "שקיעים ערביים בלשונו של אנטון שמאס ב"ערבסקות" (Traces of Arabic in the language of Anton Shammas in *Arabesques*), *Balshanut Ivrit* 52 (2003): 53–60.

<sup>42</sup> See M. Goshen-Gottstein, U. Melammed, and A. Shraga, "תחבירה ומילונה של הלשון העברית שבתחום" (Syntax and vocabulary of Medieval Hebrew as influenced by Arabic; Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2006), pp. 65–69.

## 5.1.1. שוקספרתי

מיום ששוקספרתי<sup>43</sup> על ידי הסוהרים בכלא

From the day I became Shakespeare to the prison guards.<sup>44</sup>  
Original: *min yawmi mā šaksbaranī ḥurrāsu s-siġni*.<sup>45</sup>

Habibi derived the verb *šaksbaranī* from Shakespeare's name. The wordplay can be smoothly rendered in Hebrew, which is what the translator is trying to achieve. He even adds a personal flourish by coining a passive form of the verb, which is created from Shakespeare's name. Thus, the Arabic verb *šaksbaranī* derived from the noun Shakespeare leads him to use the same derivation in Hebrew.

## 5.1.2. התמנגנו

חדלתי מלבכות את יעאד והתחלתי מבכה את עצמי, בלא כל חשש מהמנגנון, כי  
כולם התמנגנו.

I stopped crying over Yuad and began crying over myself, feeling no fear of the state apparatus, because all of us became part of the Israeli system.<sup>46</sup>  
Original: *lam 'a 'ud 'abkī 'alā yu'āda bal 'alā ḥālī, wa-bidūni 'ayyi xawfīn mina l-ġihāzi li'anna l-ġamī'a taġahhaza*.<sup>47</sup>

The Arabic verb *taġahhaza* does not appear here in its usual sense “to equip oneself, receive equipment.” Instead, Habibi uses it as though it is derived from *alġihāz* ‘system’, in reference to the Israeli state apparatus. Influenced by this innovative derivation in the Arabic original, Shammaš creates the verb התמנגן ‘to become a part of the [Israeli] system’ from the Hebrew noun מנגנון ‘system, apparatus’. The meaning of the newly coined verbal form is equivalent in meaning to that of the Arabic conjugation *tafa* ‘ala.

<sup>43</sup> S. Somekh, “Anton Shammaš,” p. 49, calls words of this type “fabricated.”

<sup>44</sup> E. Habibi, האופטימסט (The opsimist; trans. A. Shammaš; Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1995), p. 150.

<sup>45</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi* (in Arabic; Nazareth: Unpublished), p. 362.

<sup>46</sup> E. Habibi, *The Opsimist*, p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 242.

## 5.1.3. התנמס and התנמסתי

יעקב נזף בי וצרח: התנמס! שבתתי למקומי והתנמסתי

Yaakov rebuked me yelling: "Be polite!" I returned to my seat and became polite.<sup>48</sup>

Original: *fa-zağğanī ya 'qūbu wa-qāla: "ta 'addab!" fa-waqaftu muta 'addiban.*<sup>49</sup>

Shammas derived the verbal forms 'become polite' and 'I became polite' in the Hebrew *hitpa'el* conjugation whose meaning is equivalent to that of the *tafa 'ala* conjugation in Arabic.

## 5.1.4. מתאריים

ואותו אריה ששאג סופו שנחצה לשניים והיה לשני אריות, האחד ישכון לגדות הפרת ומשנהו לגדות הנילוס, ושניהם מתאריים עכשיו ושואגים ומלעיזים זה על זה.

And what happened in the end to that lion that roared, it split in two and became two lions; and one lived on the banks of the Euphrates and the other lived on the banks of the Nile. Now they are both roaring, and roaring, and slandering each other.<sup>50</sup>

Original: *fa-nqasama l-'āna 'lā hizabrayni ṭnayni: hizabrin 'alā l-furāti wa-hizabrin 'alā n-nīli, hādā yuhazbiru 'alā dāka wa-dāka yuhazbiru 'alā hādā.*<sup>51</sup>

The Arabic verb *yuhazbiru* 'to roar' comes from the noun *hizabr* 'lion'. Habibi derived the verb *yuhazbiru* (*fa'lala* conjugation) from the noun *hizabr*. The translator followed the pattern by coining the verb 'they [masc.] are roaring' (*hitpa'el* conjugation) from the Hebrew term for lion, אריה, and using it alongside its standard Hebrew synonym, שאג.

<sup>48</sup> E. Habibi, *The Opsimist*, p. 56.

<sup>49</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 255.

<sup>50</sup> E. Habibi, סראיא בת השד הרע (Saraya, the ogre's daughter; trans. A. Shammas; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1993), p. 20.

<sup>51</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 726.

## 5.1.5. מחמרים

אלא שלא היינו חמורים ולא עזבנו את שכונות פלסטין, ולימים אפילו למדנו איך מחמרים את האחרים.

But we weren't donkeys, and we didn't abandon the neighborhoods of Palestine, and later we even learned how to treat other people like donkeys.<sup>52</sup>  
Original: *wa-lam nabqā ḥamīran 'ilā waqtin ṭawīlin, bali ntaqalnā min tilka l-ḥālātī 'ilā ḥālātī s-tiḥmāri ḡayrinā.*<sup>53</sup>

The Arabic verb *'istahmara* 'to treat someone like an idiot' is derived from *ḥimār* 'donkey' in the *'istaf'ala* conjugation. The form *'istiḥmār* is a gerund derived from the noun *ḥimār* 'donkey'. Influenced by Arabic, Shammas rendered it by the neologism מחמרים derived from חמור 'donkey'.

## 5.1.6. לשבק

כך, מספרים על אחד מראשוני היועצים לראש הממשלה בענייני המיעוטים... שביקש לשבק אותנו ונכשל.

Thus, they tell about one of the early prime minister's advisors on minority affairs...who tried to recruit us for the General Security Service but failed.<sup>54</sup>  
Original: *wa-yurwā 'annā 'anna 'aḥada 'awā'ili mustašārī ra'īsi l-ḥukūmati li-šū'ūni l-'aqalliyyāti...ḥāwala 'an yašbikha baynanā fa-'aḡiza.*<sup>55</sup>

The verbal form *yašbiku* 'to enlist us for the [Israeli] General Security Service' is an intermediate form derived from the noun *šabāk*—a phonetic calque of Hebrew שב"כ, an acronym for שרות בטחון כללי 'General Security Service'. This verbal form is in the *fa'ala* conjugation, corresponding to *qal* in Hebrew. The past form of *yašbiku* is *šabaka*, which occurs in spoken Arabic with the meaning "to complicate." Following the Arabic pattern, Shammas phonetically derived from שב"כ the verb form לשבק.

<sup>52</sup> E. Habibi, אה'טיה (Ochtayyeh; trans. A. Shammas; Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1988), p. 64.

<sup>53</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 614.

<sup>54</sup> E. Habibi, *Ochtayyeh*, p. 62.

<sup>55</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 612.

## 5.2. New Verbal Forms Filling Lacunae in Hebrew

### 5.2.1. גולה

בו בלילה שהוריו של מישל אביד, בן העשרים, הודיעו לבנם שהוא נוסע לארצות הברית ביום המחרת, והיא הרגישה שהחוט האחרון הקושר אותה לגלות ניתק ... גולה הלה את אוזנה ...

On the night that the parents of twenty-year-old Michel Abyad told their son he would be leaving for the United States the following day, and she felt that the last thread linking her to the exile was being cut...it was trying to tell her.<sup>56</sup>

The word גולה is the past tense of a Hebrew verb in the *pual* conjugation (which does not exist in Modern Hebrew)—the equivalent of the Arabic *fā'ala*, which denotes an attempt or effort to do something, for example, *sābaqa* 'tried to come early'; *dāfa'a* 'tried to protect'; *qātala* 'attempted to fight'. By using this form, Shammas creates a sophisticated wordplay (which cannot be perfectly rendered in English) on the noun גולה 'exile' and the collocations גלה את אוזנו 'to explain' and גולה את אוזנו בדבר הסוד 'he tried to find out a secret'.

### 5.2.2. רטויים and רטויה

מקומות מסתור חבויים ומוצנעים לרוב בגופו של האב היו עכשיו בהישג ידו, רטויים למגע אצבעותיו.

secret, hidden places on the father's body, concealed most of the time, were now within reach of his hand, exposed to the touch of his fingers.<sup>57</sup>

ועכשיו היא רטויה לעיניו המאוכזבות של אבו שאכר.

and now she was smeared by Abu Shaker's disappointed gaze.<sup>58</sup>

The Hebrew root רטי first appears in the rabbinic literature, for example, רטייה, 'a poultice on a wound' (y. *Shab.* 3:4). In Modern Hebrew, the noun רטייה, originally "poultice," means "patch," that is, "protective covering for an injured eye." To establish the subtle connotation of a gentle but close

<sup>56</sup> A. Shammas, *Arabesques*, pp. 50–51.

<sup>57</sup> A. Shammas, *Arabesques*, p. 78.

<sup>58</sup> A. Shammas, *Arabesques*, p. 107.

contact, for which there are no terms in Hebrew, Shammās created a passive participle from the root in question.

### 5.3. Lexical Choices

The impact of Arabic on Shammās's Hebrew writing becomes especially clear when he coins new verbs based on Arabic forms despite the fact that Hebrew equivalents are readily available.

#### 5.3.1. *טמרו*, *ומטמר*, *וטמור*, and *נטמרו*

ובאו שלטונות המנדט וטמרו אותו לפני שהם עצמם נטמרו

and the Mandatory authorities came and hid him before they were hidden themselves.<sup>59</sup>

Original: *umma ṭamarathu ḥukumatu l-'intidābi 'alā falastīna qabla 'an tanṭamira*.<sup>60</sup>

יוצא שממשלת ישראל קיבלה אותו טמור ומטמר

it happened that Israeli government received him ready.<sup>61</sup>

Original: *fa-warīṭathu ḥukūmatu 'srā'īl maṭmūran*.<sup>62</sup>

#### 5.3.2. *ברטעתי* and *ברטע*

אמר: כשדחף דודי איברהים לפי פלח דודא ואמר לי "ברטע"! ועניתי בקול גדול שכבר ברטעתי, הסה אותי ואמר: "דבר בקול נמוך"!

He said: When my Uncle Ibrahim pushed a slice of mandrake into my mouth and said, "Enjoy!" and I answered loudly I had already enjoyed it, he silenced me, saying, "Keep your voice down!"<sup>63</sup>

Original: *qāla: wa-lammā dassa 'ammī 'ibrāhīmu fī famī ḥizzan minhu wa-qāla: "barti"! 'aḡabtuhu, bi-ṣawtin 'ālin: "barṭa'tu"! fa-ntaharanī hāmisan: "huss. waṭṭī ḥissak"*<sup>64</sup>

Shammās derives the neologism *ברטע* (an imperative form of a quadrilateral verb) from the Arabic imperative *barti* 'enjoy' and the verb *ברטעתי* (a

<sup>59</sup> E. Habibi, *Saraya*, p. 100.

<sup>60</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 834.

<sup>61</sup> E. Habibi, *Saraya*, p. 100.

<sup>62</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 834.

<sup>63</sup> E. Habibi, *Saraya*, p. 83.

<sup>64</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 810.

perfective form in the *piel* conjugation) from the Arabic verb *barṭa* 'tu 'I had already enjoyed'.

### 5.3.3. מקורטלת and קרטל

היא הייתה מסוגלת לעלות למטוס ברגליה השתיים אילמלא "קרטל" אותה מה שנפל במנת חלקה מסוגי ההפשטה והחיפוש.

She could have boarded the plane on her own had not what befell her in terms of undressing and search left her petrified.<sup>65</sup>

Original: *wa-kānat qādiratan 'alā ṣ-ṣu'ūdi 'ilā ṭ-ṭā'irati māšiyatan 'alā qadamayhā li-xnatayni lawlā 'an qarṭalahā mā laqiyathu min ta'riyatin wa-taftīšīn.*<sup>66</sup>

ולימים גם מדודתי נזיהה שהתברכה בבעל נמרץ מבני דודה, שהיה מגיש לה את ארוחות בעודה שרועה במיטתה קוראת בספר התפילות, מקורטלת.

and sometimes also my aunt Nazhahah, blessed with an energetic husband, one of her cousins, who used to serve her meals as she lay in bed reading her prayer book, petrified.<sup>67</sup>

Original: *tumma 'an 'ammatī nazīhata l-latī būrikat bi-zawḡin našīṭin min 'awlādi 'ammihā kāna yaḥmilu 'ilayhā ṭ-ṭa'āma wa-hiya mustalqiyatun 'alā sarīrihā taqra 'u fī kitabi ṣ-ṣalāti wa-hiya "muqarṭalatun".*<sup>68</sup>

ואני נשבע שאמת בפי, ושהדי במרומים, שבמו עיני ראיתי את אשר קרה לדודתי כעבור חמש דקות מעלייתה למטוס, מקורטלת על האלונקה.

And I swear that I am speaking the truth and God is my witness, with my own eyes I saw what happened to my aunt five minutes after she boarded the plane petrified on the stretcher.<sup>69</sup>

Original: *wa-hā 'anā 'uqsimu bi-llāhi l-'aliyyi l-qadīri 'alā ṣidqi šahādātī—šāhidu 'ayānin—'alā mā ḥadaṭa li-'ammatī ba'da xamsi daqā'iqā min duxūlihā 'ilā ṭ-ṭā'irati "muqarṭalaṭan"*<sup>70</sup>

In classical Arabic, the word *qarṭal* means "wicker basket"; it is a cognate of קרטלא in Aramaic. The word *qurṭul* 'wicker basket' is used in Palestinian Arabic.<sup>71</sup> The quadrilateral Arabic verb *qarṭala*, derived from *qarṭal*, means

<sup>65</sup> E. Habibi, *Saraya*, p. 108.

<sup>66</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 843.

<sup>67</sup> E. Habibi, *Saraya*, p. 108.

<sup>68</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 843.

<sup>69</sup> E. Habibi, *Saraya*, p. 108.

<sup>70</sup> E. Habibi, *The Collected Works of Emile Habibi*, p. 843.

<sup>71</sup> I. Basal, *Hebrew and Aramaic Elements*, p. 224.

“to cause someone to curl up in fear [as though squeezed into a basket].” Shammaš employs the perfective form of the quadrilateral verb קרטל and the *pual* passive participle מקורטלת influenced by the Arabic past form *qarṭala* and the passive *muqarṭala(h)*.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The examples cited above clearly demonstrate that neologisms in Hebrew writing of Anton Shammaš were heavily affected by his native tongue, Arabic; for example, his derivation of verbal forms from nouns is common in the latter language but not in the former. The impact of Arabic has even caused Shammaš to create forms that are foreign to Hebrew lexicography and that have been criticized as baffling for readers.<sup>72</sup> Yet, coining of new Hebrew words along Arabic patterns is also pivotal to his purpose of evoking Arab culture for the Jewish Israeli audience because this technique is subtler than that of interspersing a Hebrew text with terms and expressions borrowed from Arabic (which Shammaš also does). As such, neologisms constitute one of the basic aspects of Shammaš’s distinctive literary production in Hebrew.

---

<sup>72</sup> Cognizant of this, Shammaš sometimes places his neologisms in inverted commas. Such is the case with קירטל (5.3.3. above).