

# Translation as a Double-Edged Sword: Copyright, Dialogue and Normalization Under Colonial Conditions

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## Introduction

In early 2018 an announcement was made of the publication of *Huriyya – Stories and Impressions of Women Authors following the Arab Spring*, by Resling, an Israeli publisher specializing in theoretical and critical titles, and to a limited extent, in prose as well. The publisher declares that it upholds “[t]he advancement of a theoretical-critical discourse in the fields of art, culture and society.”<sup>1</sup> The collection comprised the translations into Hebrew of fifty-two texts by forty-five authors from twenty Arab countries, written following the Arab Spring. Some were famous authors such as Ihlam Mustaghanami (Algeria) and Intisar Abd al-Mun’em (Egypt). The book seemed especially promising in light of the general tendency to ignore women in the overall project of translating literature from Arabic to Hebrew. A few months later, the feminist NGO “Woman to Woman” [Isha le-Isha] organized an event to launch the publication in Haifa. The program was meant to include remarks by the translator of the collection, Dr. Alon Fragman, who is a researcher of Arabic Literature at Ben Gurion University, as well as by Khulood Khamis, a Haifa-born Arab author and feminist activist, not one of the authors whose work is included in the collection.

Khamis was suspicious of the large number of Arab women authors included in the anthology. After looking into it further, she discovered that some of those forty-five Arab women authors had not consented to their work being translated to Hebrew. Khamis published her findings on her Facebook page, which led to angered responses from the authors whose work had been translated to Hebrew. It also led to the cancelation of the

launch event and to the book being removed from bookstores as well as from the publisher's website.<sup>2</sup>

The underlying factor in the Resling case is the conflict between Arab and Jewish-Israeli cultures, which shapes the whole project of translation from Arabic to Hebrew. This can be seen, for example, in the refusal of many Arab authors to allow their work to be translated to Hebrew; in the repeated infringement of copyright; and in the absence of cooperation between authors and translators. In recent years, the public has been made aware of a number of cases of works being translated or presented in Israel without permission from the Arab authors.<sup>3</sup> Yet these cases have not attracted widespread public attention in Arab countries. The Resling case, by contrast, caused great anger, mostly among the translated authors and in the general cultural arena in the Arab world. While the translator, Fragman, and the publisher, Idan Tzivoni, stress the need to make the suppressed voices of the women heard, many reacted, as we shall see, by condemning the infringement of copyright and by deeming the act a display of masculine, Israeli violence. This article argues that the colonialism implicit in the affair is two-pronged, emerging both in terms of "the violence of translation" as a national theft and in terms of gender.

The outrage caused by the Resling case both in Israel and in the Arab world is not representative of the whole reality of translation from Arabic to Hebrew, which usually does not receive much attention in Israel. To a great extent, the outrage has to do with the attitude of the translator and the publisher. As I will show, the *Huriyya* translation demonstrated remnants of the Orientalist approach which was typical of the Arabic-to-Hebrew translation enterprise in its early stages, before the creation of the State of Israel and in the State's first two decades. Thus, the case of Riesling provides an example for the continued validity of this Orientalist approach in the field of translation from Arabic to Hebrew. It is not the only model, however. Other models of translation, such as the Maktoob project discussed later in

this essay, are based instead on collaboration with the original author,<sup>4</sup> and as such have been more favorably received by Arab authors and by the Hebrew-reading public.

## **Background**

The Resling case did not take place in a void: it happened within a translation enterprise which was, at its beginning, harnessed to benefit the Zionist project and the creation of the State of Israel. The beginning of the project of translating from Arabic to Hebrew in the modern age can be dated to 1876, close to the emergence of the Zionist movement. In the beginning, the translations exhibited an Orientalist approach<sup>5</sup> towards the Arabic works.<sup>6</sup> The works chosen for translation reinforced stereotypes regarding Arab culture as being backward, thus stressing its otherness and inferiority. Some of these Arabic works show a positive approach towards Western culture, and even an attempt to join it. The first translations were mainly of short and informal works, while longer works (novels and novellas) written by Palestinians were ignored, which amounted to a denial of the very existence of Palestinian culture. On the whole, these early translations contributed to strengthening the control of the representation of Arab culture as seen by the Hebrew reader. This approach continued to dominate in the Arabic-to-Hebrew translation enterprise after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, and up to the 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of the differences between the pre-State period and the first decades of Israel's existence—the most important of which is the fact that the Jews, who had been a dominated minority, became the dominant majority—the attitude exhibited by Jewish culture towards Arab culture was more or less identical in both eras. The era before the creation of the State of Israel was marked by an armed struggle led by the Zionist movement, through its various branches, for the creation of an independent state. Yet the creation of the state in 1948 did not bring about an immediate cessation of the struggle. The establishment of the

military regime over the Arab population that had remained within the state once Israel was created was meant to ensure full control over this population, to prevent the return of refugees, and to ensure control over the land.<sup>8</sup> The military regime continued the same struggle which was now enshrined in the laws of the young state, their legal basis stemming from the Defense Regulations (Emergency – 1945). The cancelation of the military regime in 1966 brought about a decline in the degree of control over the Arab minority and paved the way for the emergence of new tendencies in the project of translation from Arabic to Hebrew.

Since the second half of the 1970s, however, we have seen a change in the nature of this translation enterprise. While the previous phase clearly shows an almost total repression of Palestinian national identity and of Palestinian culture, as well as a total shutting out of lengthy Palestinian literary works,<sup>9</sup> since the 1970s there have been translations of works dealing with the Palestinian question, especially longer works that present the suffering of the Palestinians in the West Bank following the 1967 War and their suffering under Israeli occupation. The 1980s bring a significant presence of translated works expressing the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War, one that undermines the Zionist consensus.

The majority of the translations from Arabic to Hebrew during these periods were published without obtaining copyright. An example of this is the translation by Menachem Kapeliuk of two texts, the autobiography *Days* by the Egyptian author Taha Hussein (translated in 1931), and *Diary of a Country Prosecutor* by the Egyptian author Tawfiq al-Hakim (translated in 1945). In such early instances of translation from Arabic to Hebrew, the Arab players in the arena ignored the issue mainly because of two factors. The first was the lack of diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab countries. The peace accords signed with Israel, the first being the accord between Israel and Egypt in 1979, were perhaps also the beginning of an interaction between the two cultures, one that grew and was strengthened mainly in the last two decades (2000-2019) with the official translation of Arab literary

works to Hebrew. The second factor was that limited media led to a lack of knowledge regarding the presence of such violations. The Resling case discussed here stands in opposition to this lack of knowledge as information was published and widely disseminated mainly on social media networks. The shift in the attitudes of Arab authors regarding the translation of their works to Hebrew brought about cracks in the tendency to ignore copyright but did not put an end to it completely. Many literary pieces in Arabic continue to be published in journals without the author's permission. Nonetheless, the involvement of the Arab authors in resisting and aborting such copyright violations is noticeably evident, as in the case discussed in this paper.

Indeed, since the late 1970s we can see new tendencies in Arabic-to-Hebrew translation. First, three new publishers specializing in the translation of literature and thought from Arabic to Hebrew have appeared: Mifras, Andalus, and Maktoob. Mifras was active between 1978 and 1993 and brought about a revolution by publishing nine titles translated from Arabic, seven of which were by Palestinian authors (among these are *Men in the Sun* and *What was Left to You* by Ghassan Kanafani; *The Secret Life of Saeed: the Pessoptimist* by Emile Habibi; and *The Sunflower* by Sahar Khalifa). This publishing house issued several translations with the oral or written permission of the Arab authors. However, and despite the Mifras editors' respect of the authors' copyrights, two cases raise concerns. The first is the translation of the Palestinian author Kanafani's two novels by an Israeli publishing house in 1978. Kanafani was renowned for his resistance to Israel, and even today some people accuse Israel of assassinating him in 1972; it is hard to believe that his heirs would agree to translate his literary pieces through an Israeli publishing house. The second case is the translation of the novel *War in the Land of Egypt* in 1988 by the Egyptian author Yusuf al-Qa'id. al-Qa'id criticized Mifras for violating copyrights in its publication of his work, and accused it of forced normalization in his essay "The Rape of Normalization."<sup>10</sup>

Andalus was active after Mifras, between 2000 and 2006, and published around twenty titles translated from Arabic, three of which were by Palestinians (*The First Waterhole* by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra; *The Jerusalemite Woman* by Sireen Al Houssaini Shahid; and *Bab A-Shams* by Elias Khoury). This publishing house is known for respecting authors' copyrights. It was founded by Yael Lerer, the left-wing spokesperson for the Arab Knesset Member Azmi Bishara of the "Balad" Party. In a proposal letter requesting copyrights, Lerer addressed Egyptian authors directly, writing, "we don't expect normalization or reciprocity." She added that "all participants in the project, Israelis as well as Palestinians, pledge not to take advantage of your permission by using this cultural activity or recruiting it for the 'peace process.'"<sup>11</sup> This endeavor was rejected by the Egyptian intellectuals, and the publishing house was accused of a normalization attempt, despite Lerer's pronouncements. In contrast, some prominent intellectuals and authors in Andalus supported the endeavor and regarded it as helping to provide a voice to the Palestinian narrative in the Israeli arena.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the Maktoob series was launched in 2014 and has to date published eleven titles, around half of which are by Palestinian authors or deal with the Palestinian exodus: *Walking On the Wind* by Salman Nator; *Children of the Ghetto* and *Stella Maris* by Elias Khoury; *The Time of the White Horses* by Ibrahim Nasrallah; *The Year of the Locust* by Ihsan A-Turjeman; and *With an Amputated Tongue*, a collection of Palestinian fiction consisting of 72 tales written by 57 Palestinian authors from and outside Israel. Maktoob, too, has respected copyrights.

While Resling does not specialize in translations from Arabic like these other publishers, it is well known as a progressive publisher that aspires to promote a multi-cultural discourse in Israel. The translation of the literary pieces in *Huriyya* was certainly carried out with good intentions from the publishing house and the translator. There is no doubt that they tried to elicit a pluralistic discussion. However, the method was heavily influenced by the

same approach guiding the Hebrew translation industry from its beginnings. No attempt was made to change the conventions or norms of historic Hebrew translation practices.

An Orientalist attitude similar to early Arabic-to-Hebrew translations is attested to in two ways. First, ignoring copyright is precisely the practice utilized by Orientalist translations. This violation is indeed an act of cultural and economic violence which reinforces a hierarchy in which Arabic works can be translated without asking for permission, which means they can be dominated and treated as if they belonged to whomever seizes them. Second, choosing works authored by women and adding explanations regarding the authors highlights sympathy with women and a willingness to voice their ideas; at the same time, though, it serves stereotypes prevalent in Jewish society regarding the oppression of women in Arab society. This complexity guiding the translation of *Huriyya* makes the case unique and complex: neither clearly Orientalist nor clearly pluralistic, the case integrates both seemingly incompatible approaches. The discussion below considers the Orientalism that guides the *Huriyya* translation and which is interwoven with the pluralistic considerations taken by the publisher and the translator.

### ***Huriyya* and the Violence of Translation**

The prevalent approach within Translation Studies regarding power relations sees translation as a tool that serves to control representations of the other and of the self. The view of translation as a pure linguistic transposition from one language to another, carried out by an invisible translator, is far from accurate when we examine it in real-life situations.<sup>13</sup> Scholarship about translation between cultures in conflict has shown that the conflict is also reflected in the translated text. It follows that the perception of translation as a bridge between cultures, and specifically cultures exhibiting a colonial relationship, hides the colonial act of violence while also concealing repressive practices which are part of this act.

For example, Maria Tymoczko has shown how British culture worked to erase Irish identity through translation; Tejaswini Niranjana has described how British colonialism dominated Indians by controlling the translation of their literary works; Mahmoud Kayyal has shown how translation to Hebrew was influenced by ideological considerations of the Israeli establishment, meant to present the Arabs in a way that would preserve the idea of their inferiority.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, translation is seen as having the potential to resist, oppose, and undermine the principles of hegemony.<sup>15</sup>

Another aspect of the role of translation in perpetuating existing power relations is the issue of copyright. Lawrence Venuti<sup>16</sup> claims that the translation enterprise between Western languages and other languages enacts colonial relations. The centrality of Western culture is evidenced by the large number of translations from English to other languages, while the number of translations into English is much lower. This, in addition to the relatively small number of translations from non-European languages to English, shows the direction in which capital flows in the field of translation: to Great Britain and the US. These profits are made mainly from selling rights to publishers in other countries and selling rights to the new markets where the works are translated. Moreover, translation continues to be a tool in the hands of the West in order to perpetuate the hierarchical relationship between central versus marginalized languages and between hegemonic versus dominated cultures. The practice of translation contributes to a hierarchy where international corporations and local customers are positioned in unequal terms.

While the translation of the works included in *Huriyya*, as stipulated by Tzivoni, was not meant for profit, since translations from Arabic do not sell much, it nonetheless prevented the flow of capital, even if only symbolic, to the authors defined as the other vis-à-vis Hebrew culture. In addition, the translation ignores the will of the authors, doing so in full awareness that they cannot sue the publisher in the Israeli courts since they belong to enemy

countries. Therefore, an initiative by Resling which was originally meant to bring the two cultures closer together, as both the translator and the publisher explicitly declared, paradoxically underscores the existence of a cultural hierarchy that ignores the very being of the other.

This Orientalist attitude was the basis of the outrage caused by the news that the works included in *Huriyya* had been translated without regard to copyright. The authors expressed their dissatisfaction at not having been asked for their permission to have the stories published. The Egyptian author Sundas Al-Husseini<sup>17</sup> argued for the importance of the collaboration between the translator and the author when the translation has to be authorized. She stressed that a faulty translation might represent the author and her culture in a distorted way, especially when the translation is directed at a totally different culture. Perhaps she is referring to the hostility between the Arab and the Israeli communities, which may fuel such discrepancies. It follows, says Husseini, that copyright is a mainly moral right, and not one necessarily linked to the logic of the market.

A very similar view was expressed by the Yemeni author Intisar A-Seri,<sup>18</sup> who questioned to what extent the text, with its copyright violation, could really contribute to bringing the cultures closer together. She also wondered about the message that the translator wished to convey by choosing specifically works by Arab women. A-Seri suggests a connection between the copyright violation and hidden intentions on the translator's part. Arguably, A-Seri hints at an Orientalist approach that is part of a culture the translator has internalized, a culture that wishes to stress the backwardness of Arab culture by showcasing the oppression of women.

Others drew a parallel between the violation of copyright and the seizure of land. The Egyptian author Intisar Abd al-Mun'em claimed that "taking a story from me is like robbing my land and my country."<sup>19</sup> Her claim directly alludes to the fact that Israel is viewed in the

Arab world as a conquering, occupying entity. A similar position was expressed by the chairman of the Union of Arab Writers, Habib Al-Saeegh, who said that whoever rapes the Palestinians' homeland and their intellectual and literary heritage will not hesitate to rob the copyright of Arab women authors by transposing their work to his language without asking for permission.<sup>20</sup>

The Palestinian author Salwa al-Bana, too, linked the theft of the homeland to the theft of an idea, a word, and a culture when the translator knows the power of the word in preserving the rights of the Palestinian people on its land.<sup>21</sup> The Kuwaiti author Buthayna al-Issa<sup>22</sup> indicated that stealing copyright is an infringement of the law, but that she was not surprised that such an action would be committed by an Israeli publisher since Israel robbed land, houses, trees, and the Palestinian heritage from thousands of victims. Al-Issa deplored the fact that the book's title is *Huriyya*, which means "freedom" in Arabic, while in reality the book is nothing but a violation of the rights of Arab women authors.

The discussion regarding the violent relationship implicit in the translation of *Huriyya* reflected the fear of the normalization as a possible outcome of such a translation. The term "normalization" in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict means the establishment and deepening of normal relations between the political, cultural and economic realms of the Arab states and the State of Israel, which is regarded as an occupying entity with whom no cooperation should exist. Tzivoni, the publisher of *Hurriya*, indicated that Arab authors are slow to settle copyright issues with Israeli publishers, perhaps because they fear accusations of normalization.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the translation of works by Arab women authors--even without their knowledge--in a country seen as the enemy might lead to the authors being accused of normalization.<sup>24</sup>

Al-Bana presented the translation as an Israeli attempt to ensnare the symbols of Arab culture into this trap of normalization.<sup>25</sup> She spoke of translation serving as a channel for

cultural normalization, regarding it as a more sophisticated tool replacing those Israel has used in the past, including the assassination of Palestinian intellectuals in order to void the meaning of resistance. In this sense, translation enables normalization, and therefore the relinquishment of the Palestinians' rights to their land.<sup>26</sup> This, to her, is an affront to her position as an author who has devoted most of her writing to the Palestinian struggle.

Translating her work into Hebrew is, to her, tantamount to her acquiescing to the existence of the State of Israel.

### **The Issue of Gender**

Research in translation indicates the importance of gender in determining the nature of any translation enterprise. Translation research from a feminist perspective, which began in the 1980s, established how translation can contribute to perpetuating sexist gender representations and stereotypes, the exclusion of women from the literary arena,<sup>27</sup> and the establishment of male hegemony.<sup>28</sup> The presence of misogyny and the exclusion of women from the field of translation are evident, among other things, in violent language and the use of vulgar images, such as the trope of "raping" the text in order to master it.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, a dichotomous division has taken hold, identifying men with the source and women with the translation.<sup>30</sup> This dichotomy places men in a position of control and originality and positions women as inferior copies of the source.<sup>31</sup> Feminist researchers have sought to encourage translations that instead offer positive representations of women and amplify women's voices in the translation field.<sup>32</sup> They have also sought to establish practical strategies for creating awareness around gender issues in translation, while using less stereotypical gender representations.<sup>33</sup> Thus, as attested to in the postcolonial reading of translation, translation is not a pure linguistic transfer from one culture to another, but rather entails gendered power relations.

The difference between the status of women in the Arab world and their status in Israel<sup>34</sup> is seen in Israeli culture as one of the most significant differences between the two

societies. The status of women becomes part of an Orientalist discourse that showcases the Orient's inferiority as seen by the West, with women presented as victims struggling for universal values of Freedom, Equality and Dignity. Therefore, translation endeavors like Resling's deconstruct the Orient in order to re-establish it in a way that fits with the West's values. This act includes an attempt to insert the deconstructed Orient into the target culture by making it more acceptable or palatable. As translation scholarship has shown, such insertions of the imagined values of the Orient into Western culture are a feature of Orientalism. The nature of this act – of perpetuating notions of cultural Differences or seeking to undermine the foundations of the values of the target culture – is defined by the translation conventions of the target culture, as well as by the attitudes adopted by translators and publishers. For this reason, it is important to trace the positions of both actors.

In his article “‘I am the one you raped in the squares’: the Egyptian women authors speak up,” published around the time of *Huriyya*, Fragman,<sup>35</sup> a researcher in Arabic education, a translator, lecturer at Ben-Gurion University, and a former fellow at Maktoob, describes gender-based discrimination against women in Egypt since the beginning of the Arab Spring. For him, women's literature becomes a tool to represent the reality in which women live, as well as “a significant catalyst in the social and gender-related processes of change experienced by Egyptian society since the events of the Arab Spring.” According to Fragman, women, through their writing, become partners in the Arab Spring, by making themselves heard on Facebook and other social media outlets.

In the same article, Fragman is well aware of the judgmental Israeli perspective and, on the one hand, ostensibly wishes to refute it by undermining the idea that Arab women do not have a dignified status within Arab society. He thus stresses that these women of the revolution are educated academics, social activists and feminists, who publish articles and take part in cultural activities. On the other hand, he is aware of the way their religious garb

is seen as representing exclusion and discrimination. He seeks to challenge this position by presenting their dress as one which allows them to maneuver within male hegemony while being part of the consensus and acceptable coreligionists, sharing the same religious values. To him, these women's criticism is directed towards male hegemony which interprets religion according to its own interests. This interpretation by Fragman aims at dismantling the common perception among Israeli readers regarding Arab women's inferiority and abject submissiveness by presenting its complexity:

While to the Israeli eye, the way women dress in traditional societies such as Egyptian society is sometimes regarded as evidence of weakness and vulnerability, reality may teach us that it is the precise opposite. Most of them wear the traditional *hijab* which allows them relative freedom in critical writing against male hegemony, since their criticism isn't regarded as an attack on religion itself but on those who claim to represent and interpret it.<sup>36</sup>

This explanation includes two contradictory concepts. On the one hand, it shows a favorable position towards the women as well as an effort to avoid attaching stereotypes to them, but on the other hand it also shows an attempt to force a certain interpretation, ignoring the possibility that the women choose to dress this way due to their own desire and a faith different from that which the Jewish reader accepts. This reveals an attempt to make them more appealing in the eyes of the Jewish reader.

To what extent does this complexity infiltrate the translation of *Huriyya*? True, the collection does allow readers to hear the voices of the women authors and makes them present in the wider context of translated literature. Yet the act of making them present includes violence that forces them to be translated into a language in which they have no desire to be present. Thus, here too, we see the act of ignoring the wishes of the authors. The ideological stance that was the basis for the translation does not allow for the representation

of the authors as equals among equals; instead it belittles them by denying them agency over their texts, thus enacting a colonial sort of appropriation. . Further, it excludes their traditional and local values for so-called “universal” ones to facilitate their acceptance in the Hebrew arena.

The fact that the translator chose Arab women authors promotes their representation in the literary arena, which has suffered from a clear gender bias. Nevertheless, the translation of works by women authors may be seen as an act of violence not only in the national context, as has been described here, but also in the context of gender itself. In the introduction to *Huriyya*, the translator writes: “It is not by chance that in this collection I chose to focus on women’s writing, since their voice has been silenced for so many years.”<sup>37</sup> Yet the choice to make these women’s voice heard without obtaining their permission ironically silences their voices in a different way, since most of them oppose the publication of their works in Hebrew.<sup>38</sup> This fact is made all the more clear since the literary pieces were translated by a male translator who ignores the woman’s copyrights and decides for her.

A position similar to the translator’s was expressed by Resling’s publisher, Idan Tzivoni:

These women are putting a call out to the world. This is literature written in body and blood, for some of them it’s a [sic] SOS signal which reaches us thanks to technology....so that we can use it to save lives. Who will hear the cries of these women? In the past, these women could cry out in their kitchen...or in the field, heard only by god maybe? Now somebody is taking these cries, translates them and voicing them here in Israel... It’s important to us that the voices of these women are heard... We take it as their salvation.<sup>39</sup>

Tzivoni’s response offers an explanation which is in fact identical to the narratives of salvation and deliverance so common in colonialist and white savior discourse: saving the

child from herself, saving the women, and so on. Tzivoni's response was met with anger by women activists, including Khulood Khamis, who saw it as a vain and degrading statement:

These writers are not screaming in their kitchens or in the fields, and they are definitely not waiting for the white male savior to "save" them. These are all strong women — activists, human rights defenders, many of whom hold advanced degrees in various fields. Their creative works have been recognized both nationally and internationally. Taking the writers' words and creations, translating and publishing them into Hebrew — without their knowledge or consent — is the very opposite of "saving" them. They [Resling] have robbed these women of their agency, silenced them, and disregarded their right to make a choice regarding their works.<sup>40</sup>

The attempt to make the women's suppressed voices heard became an arena where different charged feelings and divergent visions of that backward other and its culture, including its religion and its discriminatory attitude toward women, meet. The statements about Arab women break through the context of gender and the patriarchal structure of Arab society and come together to shape the Arab other and its culture.

Was the translation carried out with Orientalist intentions? Or as Richard Jacquemond proposes when discussing translation in the context of asymmetric power, do hegemonic cultures choose to translate from "Third World" cultures works that align with their own stereotypes of the source cultures?<sup>41</sup> In our specific context, did Fragman choose these works presenting various issues regarding the status and life of the woman in a patriarchal community in order to perpetuate certain representations of Arab culture? Even if we claim that, besides the important issue of the violation of copyright, the translation was not done out of Orientalist motivations but rather out of a feeling of identification with the women, the matter is tested according to the end result. In other words, intent and result are not

necessarily aligned. Fragman may have internalized an Orientalist approach so deeply that even when he seeks to work against it, he ends up perpetuating it.

Some of the authors who live in countries defined as enemy countries are unable to appeal to the Israeli courts; others, including those who live in Arab countries which have peace accords with Israel, are unwilling to appeal to these courts due to their fear that such an appeal would be seen as an act of normalization. In the authors' difficult positions, too, the forceful act of the translation of *Huriyya* can be seen in its fullness: it both robs authors of rights and suppresses their very ability to resist the act of robbery.

### **Other approaches in translation from Arabic to Hebrew**

As was detailed previously, since the late 1970s there have been new tendencies in the area of translation from Arabic to Hebrew, with the appearance of three publishers specializing in this domain: Mifras, Andalus, and Maktoob. These three publishers have subscribed to a similar aim: to expose the Jewish reader to Arab culture.<sup>42</sup> As the Andalus website states, "In spite of Israel being in the heart of the Arab world, Hebrew-reading Israelis are hardly exposed to Arab culture [...] The current number of translations is tiny and random, [...] Andalus wishes to work to fill this void with a translation enterprise that will cover wide aspects of Arab culture and creative activity."<sup>43</sup> In addition to this aim, which is shared by the three publishers, in Maktoob in particular we see a desire to install a new model of translation to replace the existing one. This is evidenced mainly in the adoption of rigorous modes of action which are meant "to change the 'normal' balance of power between Israeli society and the Arab world: not to stress what the Israeli commentator thinks about Palestinian society or the Arab world at large, but to promote the possibility of giving voice to the Palestinian poet or the woman author from the Arab world herself, who write through their own eyes about life in their country, with all its sweetness and bitterness."<sup>44</sup>

One of the central principles of Maktoob's translation model is to obtain copyright and maintain a dialogue with the authors while implementing a literary practice aligned with their philosophy. In addition to this dialogue with the authors, Maktoob relies on a binational translation accomplished with a binational and bilingual team of translators. Through these activities, the Maktoob model seeks to expunge any vestiges of the Orientalist approach, explicit or implicit, while giving presence to the Arab culture as an active element in the translation enterprise:

The working model for each book is based on the principles of bilingualism and binationalism. In addition to the translator, each book has an Arabic translation editor and a Hebrew translation editor. Besides improving the quality of the translation, this process facilitates the movement and crossing between the languages. The Arabic translation editor, for example, takes part in editing the Hebrew text, among other reasons, in order to avoid creating a barrier wherein only Jews work in Hebrew and Arabs in Arabic.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, Maktoob published a condemnation of the violation of copyright in *Huriyya*.<sup>46</sup> The announcement indicated that the complexities involved in working with authors from the Arab world does not justify translating their texts without securing copyright. The founder of Maktoob and its editor-in-chief, Professor Yehuda Shenhav-Shaharabani, a sociologist who defines himself as an Arab Jew, deemed the translation of *Huriyya* a colonialist and misogynist act.<sup>47</sup> For his part, Fragman—who was actually a member of a group of translators formed at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem in 2014 who decided to found Maktoob—announced following the affair that he was retiring from the group of Maktoob translators.

To sum up, the *Huriyya* incident is evidence of the continuing presence of an Orientalist approach in translation from Arabic to Hebrew, despite the good intentions on the

part of the translator and the publisher. This incident reflects a colonialist view in terms of both nation and gender. Through it we see that the violation of copyright has not only economic consequences but also mainly political ones. This violation is related to a long tradition of modern translations from Arabic to Hebrew which, in its first phases, upheld a distinctly Orientalist view. In spite of the fact that the Orientalist approach has seen a decline since the late 1970s, it has continued to guide the project of translation from Arabic to Hebrew. All in all, regardless of intentions or declarations, *Huriyya* exemplifies the same ambivalent attitude towards Arab culture that, as in other colonial contexts, reflects the range between attraction and repulsion. On the one hand was the declared desire to make the voices of the women authors heard and to know the neighboring culture better, and on the other hand was the overpowering attitude in the violation of copyright and in the persistence of Orientalist vestiges which perpetuate the otherness of Arab culture in the Hebrew context. This approach to translation led to sharp opposition in the Arab context. Yet, a fundamental change of attitude, as can be seen in the case of Maktoob, has led to more cooperation between the two cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.resling.co.il/about.asp>

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that alongside the condemnation by some of the translated authors, I have found one reaction which deems the translation positive. Najla Saeed, whose story “A Quick Encounter” was included in the collection, indicated that “it is strange that we hurry to jump on this as a BDS issue though actually there is no need to do so. It seems that the person who did this thought he was doing good,” from:

<https://www.maariv.co.il/journalists/Article-661185> [Hebrew]

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<sup>3</sup> Two additional cases connected to the violation of copyrights come to mind. The first case is the translation of *Yaakobian House* by the Egyptian author Alaa Al-Aswany, written in 2002. The novel was illegally translated to Hebrew, without the author's consent, by Moshe Hakham, and was offered as a free download online by the Israeli-Palestine Center for Research and Information, defined as a non-profit organization. The author threatened to sue for copyright violation and the novel was taken off the website. In 2016 the novel was legally translated to Hebrew by Bruria Horowitz. The second case, close to the publication of *Huriyya*, was the exhibition "Stolen Arab Art" held in the Center for Art and Politics in Tel Aviv. As part of the exhibition, video art by well-known Arab artists was shown without the artists' consent, with full knowledge that they would not have agreed to have their work shown in Israel. Omer Krieger, the exhibition's curator, stressed the high artistic value of the works, as well as the political impediment to their exhibition in Israel (Barzilay 2018, in [Hebrew] <https://www.calcalist.co.il/consumer/articles/0,7340,L-3742155,00.html>)

According to Krieger, "we have here a collection of unusual, sophisticated, delicate, conceptual things dealing with History and telling the story of Israel and the area as part of the story. Due to political reasons they were never screened in Israel and probably never will be" (ibid.). The violation of copyright is due to "a political crisis which Israel finds itself in, as well as a crisis in Art. [...] Contemporary Arab art is excellent and has hints of known things of a space we are part of but isolated from" (ibid.). See:

<https://www.calcalist.co.il/consumer/articles/0,7340,L-3742155,00.html>

<sup>4</sup> For example, Elias Khoury describes his relation with Maktoob in a Panel deals with translation issues in Liwan Culture Café (Nazareth): "I consider Maktoob to be an antifascist and antiracist project in Israel and in general. Because I know the translator and am familiar with his political, intellectual and cultural views, I know how he reads literature, and that he considers translation to be an act of resistance, as do I".

<sup>5</sup> The concept is used from the critical perspective that Edward Sa'id famously develops in *Orientalism*. Sa'id argues that Orientalism created a discriminatory and racist discourse about the Orient in the West.

<sup>6</sup> Kayyal, Mahmood, 2013. "*Targumei Ha-Safrut Ha-Aravit Le-Ivrit: Me-Orientalizm le-Hitkablut*", Ha-Ivrit 61(D), pp. 175-192. ["The Translations of Arab literature to Hebrew: From Orientalism to Acceptance"]  
Kayyal, Mahmood, 2018. "*Orientalizm Tzioni Be-Targumav shel Menachem Kapeliuk min Ha-Safrut Ha-Aravit Ha-Modernit*", Omri Greenberg, Hanan Hever and Iftach Ashkenazi (eds), *Pitaron Jolshehu La-Shtika: Al Safrut Aravit Modernit Be-Ivrit*", Tel Aviv, Olam Hadash, 2018, pp. 175-196. ["Zionist Orientalism in Menachem Kapeliuk's Translations from Modern Arab Literature" (Hebrew)].

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<sup>7</sup> Abu Much, forthcoming. “*Al Tafkidei Ha-Tirgum Me-Aravit Le-Ivrit Be-Yitzug Ha-tarbut Ha-Aravit ve-Ha-Palastinit Be-Einey Ha-Koreh Ha-Yehudi ba-Shanim 1931-1993*”, Mehkaret Yerushalayim Ba-Safrut Ha-Ivrit. [“On the Roles of Translation from Arabic to Hebrew in the Representation of Arab and Palestinian Culture in the Eyes of the Jewish Reader, 1931-1993”, Hebrew]

<sup>8</sup> A. Lin, “*Be-Terem Se'ara: Yehudim ve-Aravim be-Israel bein Tikvot le-Akhzavot*”, Tel Aviv 1999, pp. 124-125. [“Before the Storm: Jews and Arabs in Israel between Hopes and Disappointment”]

<sup>9</sup> (Abu Much, forthcoming)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2006/04/06/41782.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.702029>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.alhayat.com/article/1086353/%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%84%25%E2%80%A6>

<http://www.alhayat.com/article/1086352>

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's invisibility: A history of translation*, London: Routledge, 1995; Douglas Robinson, *Translation and empire: Postcolonial theories explained*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1997; Maria Tymoczko, *Translation in a postcolonial context: Early Irish literature in English translation*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1999

<sup>14</sup> Tymoczko, 1999.

Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting translation: History, post-structuralism, and the colonial context*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992.

Kayyal, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> For example: Amar Dahamsheh, “*Biglal Ha-Targum: ‘Akhtiya’ ve Tarhumo Ha-Ivri ke-Mashal le-Tafkidey Shemot Mekomot ve-Dimuyey Ha-Makom ba-Safrut*”, Hanan Hever and Mahmood Kayyal (eds.), *Merhav Safrut Aravi-Ivri*, Tel Aviv, Van Leer, Hakibbutz HaMeuhad, 2016, pp.34-54. [“‘Akhtiya’ and its Hebrew Translation as a Parable of the Roles of Place Names and Images of Place in Literature”, Hebrew]

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The scandals of translation: Towards an ethics of difference*, London : Routledge, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar\\_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a](http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a)

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar\\_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a](http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ha-makom.co.il/post/plotnik-resling-translate>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.aljarida.com/ext/articles/print/1536849591710037400/>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar\\_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a](http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a)

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar\\_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a](http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/literature/.premium-1.6468176>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ha-makom.co.il/post/plotnik-resling-translate>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.arab48.com/فسحة/ورق/أدب/2018/09/10/الحرية-الإسرائيلية-سرقة-نصوص-الكاتبات-العربيات/>

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar\\_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a](http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=12da222ay316285482Y12da222a)

<sup>27</sup> Delisle, Jean, 2002. *Portraits de traductrices*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

Hurtado Albir, Amparo, 2001. *Traducción y Traductología: introducción a la traductología*, España: Cátedra.

<sup>28</sup> Hurtado Albir, Amparo, 2001. *Traducción y Traductología: introducción a la traductología*, España: Cátedra.

<sup>29</sup> Simon, Sherry, 1996. *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, London: Routledge.

<sup>30</sup> Simon, Sherry, 1996. *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, London: Routledge.

Chamberlain, Lori, 1988. "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation", *Signs* 13 (3), pp. 454–472.

<sup>31</sup> Chamberlain, Lori, 1988. "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation", *Signs* 13 (3), pp. 454–472.

<sup>32</sup> For example: Lotbinière-Harwood, Susanne de, 1991. *Re-Belle et Infidèle: La traduction comme pratique de réécriture au féminin / The Body Bilingual: Translation as a Re-Writing in the Feminine*, Toronto: Women's Press.

<sup>33</sup> Kamal, Hala, 2015. "Introduction", Hala Kamal (ed.), *Feminist Literary Criticism*, Egypt: The Women and Memory Forum, pp. 9-55. von Flotow, Luise, 1991. "Feminist Translation: Contexts, practices and Theories," *Traduire la théorie* 4 (2), pp. 69–84.

<sup>34</sup> This conception of the oppression of Muslim and Arab women is a Western phenomenon broadly rather than only an Israeli one. The representation of their status is meant to present them to the Western reader as suppressed and abused women who try to escape their reality, therefore, justifying their need for salvation by the West.

Elaborate discussion of the subject can be found in: Abu-Lughod, Lila, 2013. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Harvard University Press; Hartman, [Michelle](#) (2012). "Gender, Genre, and the (Missing) Gazelle: Arab Women Writers and the Politics of Translation", *Feminist Studies* 38 (1), pp. 17–49; Booth, Marilyn (2010). "The Muslim Woman" as Celebrity Author and the Politics of Translating Arabic: Girls of Riyadh Go on the Road", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 6 (3), pp. 149–182.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5207224,00.html>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Alon Fragman, “Hurriya – Sipurim ve-Reshimot shel Yotzrot be-Ikvot Ha-Aviv Ha-Aravi”, Tel Aviv, Resling, p. 10. [“Huriyya – Stories and Impressions by Arab (f.) Authors Following the Arab Spring”, Hebrew]

<sup>38</sup> See what Tzameret Hershko, from the “Isha le-Isha” (“Woman to Woman”) organization, who was one of the organizers of the eventually cancelled event for the book said: <https://www.ha-makom.co.il/post/plotnik-resling-translate>

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in <https://hyperallergic.com/460068/why-did-an-israeli-publisher-release-a-book-of-translated-arabic-essays-without-consent/> from Roni Felsen’s Facebook post, which recounts a phone conversation she had with Tzvioni: <https://www.facebook.com/roni.felsen/posts/10156317559699500>

<sup>40</sup> <https://hyperallergic.com/460068/why-did-an-israeli-publisher-release-a-book-of-translated-arabic-essays-without-consent/>

<sup>41</sup> Richard Jacquemond, 'Translation and cultural hegemony: The case of French-Arabic translation', Lawrence Venuti (ed.), *Rethinking translation: Discourse, subjectivity, ideology*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 139—158

<sup>42</sup> For an extensive discussion of the Mifras publishing house, see: Hannah Amit-Kokhavi, “*Targumey Safrut Arabvit le-Ivrit: Ha-Reka Ha-Histori-Tarbuti Shelahem, Me’afyeneihem u-Maamadam be-Tarbut Ha-Matara*”, Phd dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1999, pp. 139-145. [“Translations of Arabic Literature to Hebrew: their Historical-Cultural Background, their Characteristics and their Status in the Target Culture”, Hebrew]

For Andalus’ and Maktoob’s declarations, see online:

<http://maktoobooks.com/about/>

[https://www.andalus.co.il/?page\\_id=2](https://www.andalus.co.il/?page_id=2)

<sup>43</sup> [https://www.andalus.co.il/?page\\_id=2](https://www.andalus.co.il/?page_id=2)

<sup>44</sup> <http://maktoobooks.com/about/>

<sup>45</sup> <http://maktoobooks.com/en/about-us/>

<sup>46</sup> The condemnation was published in: <http://maktoobooks.com/מכתוב-זכויות-יוצרים-הן-עיקרון-ברזל-שצר/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://hyperallergic.com/460068/why-did-an-israeli-publisher-release-a-book-of-translated-arabic-essays-without-consent/>