

# **Gendered Temporality and Space: Women in Translation from Arabic**

Huda Abu Much  
The Open University of Israel  
Van Leer Jerusalem Institute  
[huda\\_abo@yahoo.com](mailto:huda_abo@yahoo.com)

## **Abstract:**

This article examines how women translators impacted the enterprise of translation from Arabic into Hebrew in the years 1876–2018. Their involvement is explored along three variables: genre, women’s literature, and Palestinian literature. The findings indicate a significant gender bias expressed by the low rates of women among authors and translators. At the same time, from 1978 onward we see a steady rise in the involvement of women in translation. Closer examination, however, reveals a more nuanced picture. Women’s impact on the enterprise of translation from Arabic into Hebrew does not end with the quantitative aspect; their power is rooted in the attempt to question the hegemonic values of the translation enterprise by questioning the male/gender and Zionist/national exclusivity of that enterprise.

The rise in the presence of women in the field of translation introduces three new trends. First, the preference of women translators for translating long works expresses an effort by women translators to position themselves in a central place in the translation enterprise. Second, the preference of women translators for translating works by Arab women is a conscious choice to raise women’s voices, which are repressed in both cultures. Third, the women translators, along with the Arab translators, contributed both to the placement of the repressed Palestinian narrative at the center of the translation field and to that narrative’s inclusion in the agenda of the translation enterprise.

## **Introduction**

In this article I examine women’s participation in the enterprise of translation of texts from Arabic into Hebrew in the years 1876–2018 and the ways in which that enterprise was gendered.<sup>1</sup> The research literature on translation from Arabic into Hebrew has neglected the gender issue in favor of other aspects, such as those related to politics and style.<sup>2</sup> But research on translation between languages in other cultures 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 the contribution of translation to the perpetuation of gender representations and stereotypes, the exclusion of women from the literary arena, and the establishment of male hegemony.<sup>3</sup> Study of the gender structure of the translation field therefore seeks to reveal the ways in which translation contributed to perpetuating society's patriarchal underpinnings and the ideologies at its basis.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, feminist researchers have sought to encourage translations that offer positive representations of women and that amplify women's voices in the translation field.<sup>5</sup> They have also sought to establish practical strategies for creating gender awareness in translation, while using appropriate gender representations.<sup>6</sup>

The exclusion of women from the field of translation in many languages is also reflected in the low rate of women in the field, both as translators and as authors.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, a dichotomous division has taken hold, identifying men with the source and women with the translation.<sup>8</sup> This dichotomy places men in a position of control and originality and positions women as inferior copies of the source.<sup>9</sup> These figures raise a series of questions: How does women's gender impact their activity in the field of translation? Does their numerical marginality necessarily condemn them to a marginal position, or does the nature of their involvement have the capacity to call into question the masculine nature of the translation enterprise? In other words, does women's activity in the field of translation have a subversive potential, and to what extent and in which ways is that potential realized? Answering these questions requires a critical reading of the translation field: a reading that questions the concept of translation as a pure linguistic transmission from one language and culture to another, and reveals the ideological considerations behind it.<sup>10</sup> The feminist perspective is the optimal way to observe translation enterprises.

These issues have not yet been discussed in the context of translation from Arabic into Hebrew, which grants this article greater importance: it offers a deep observation of the enterprise of translation from Arabic into Hebrew from a gender perspective and examines the impact of the translator's gender on shaping the nature of the translation enterprise.

In the first section of this article I present the methodology used and the three variables that I used to examine the impact of women on the field of translation: genre, women's literature, and Palestinian literature. In the second section I address the

national element of the identity of the translators and examine that element's significance and impact on the Arabic into Hebrew translation enterprise. In that section I also review the historic and political arena in which the translators operate—the social status of Jewish and Palestinian women in Israel, as well as the attitude of Zionism toward women and its impact on the involvement of women in the translation enterprise. In the third section I present and analyze the research findings, which indicate that despite the significant gender bias, reflected by the low rate of women in the translation field under discussion, women have managed to contest the exclusive male and Jewish identity of the translation enterprise and have taken part in establishing and engendering important changes therein. The last section contains a summary of the discussion and conclusions.

## **Methodology**

The figures related to the patterns of women's participation that appear in this article are taken from Maktoob's *Index tirgumei ha-sifrut me-Aravit le-Ivrit* (The literature translation index from Arabic into Hebrew), composed by translation researcher and translator Hannah Amit-Kochavi, based on her doctoral thesis.<sup>11</sup> The index includes data about most of the translations from Arabic into Hebrew from 1876 to the present, the time period examined in this article. The index continues to be updated regularly, and at the time of the writing of this article includes 5,332 entries, most of which are works written by Arab authors. The vast majority of these works were written in Arabic and translated into Hebrew from the Arabic; less than 1% of these works were translated into Hebrew from other languages into which they had been translated, and a handful of other works were written by Arab writers in languages other than Arabic.<sup>12</sup> The index provides a series of figures about each work: the name of the work in Hebrew, the author's name, gender, and origin, the name of the publisher of the translation, translations by year of publication, the name and gender of the translator, and the genre of the work.

## **Research Variables and Instruments**

To extract the translation field from the binary structure through which it is exclusively ruled by men, I refined the instruments of analysis and observed different hybrids that portray a more complex picture. To do so I examined the impact of women on the

translation enterprise through three categories: genre, women's literature, and Palestinian literature. As we shall see, the number of translations (the nominal rate) varies from one category to another because some of the data in the database are incomplete. For example, out of a total of 5,332 items in the database, only 4,888 items include information on the category of genre. In addition the discussion of the changes that occurred in three variables over the dimension of time is based on a division into two time periods: from 1876 through 1977 and from 1978 onward. Although there are other possible divisions, I argue that this division is most relevant to my discussion and analysis, both because of the socio-political-cultural rationale and because of the findings that will be discussed later.<sup>13</sup> This division views 1977 and the previous years as a period during which the process of the demise of national and male domination of the translation enterprise took place. The most salient expressions of that process are the cancellation of the military administration in 1966, the rise of the Likud to power in 1977, and the consequent intensification of the rift between the political and literary establishments.<sup>14</sup> The rise to power of the hitherto opposition Likud party in Israel in 1977 paved the way for the rise of Arab, women, and Mizrahi writers, and contributed to establishing the status of the Palestinian narrative in the Hebrew literary arena with the translation for the first time of three long Palestinian works: two novellas by the Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani—*Gvareem ba-shemesh: Ma she-notar lakhem* (published together in one collection)—and the novel *Ha-tzabar*, by the Palestinian author Sahar Khalifeh.<sup>15</sup>

Gender by genre: The participation of women in the translation enterprise varies from one genre to another. The data show that the rate of women's involvement is higher in prose translations, as well as in the translation of longer works such as novels, novellas, autobiographies, and diaries, as opposed to shorter works such as poems, short stories, and nonfiction.

To assess the gender variable by genre, the data selected were related to translations from genres having at least ten items in the database. This yielded 4,888 translations for this variable. The genres that were reviewed—novels, autobiographies and memoirs, plays, short stories, poems, hadith, proverbs, sayings, and nonfiction—were sorted into three categories: poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. The works from this range of genres were published in books, short story collections, poetry collections, anthologies, magazines, newspapers, and nonfiction books. In addition, some of the data refer to only partial translations, for example translations of segments of a novel.

For this study I checked how many works from each genre were translated into Hebrew, how many were translated by men and how many by women, and how women's activity in translation is reflected by genre.

Gender and women's literature: I use the term "women's literature" to refer to works written by women. It is important to distinguish between women's literature—a definition based on the gender of the author—and feminist literature, which includes any work concerned with women's rights and equality between the sexes and which presents women's social status critically. This article is about women's literature rather than feminist literature. The choice made by women translators to introduce the literary works of Arab women into the Hebrew domain is a choice to give voice to the women's stories and voices that had been excluded by the male translators.

To evaluate this variable, 4,893 translations for which the gender of the author of the original appeared were selected from the index. I checked how many works were written by women and how many by men, how many of the works written by women were translated by women and how many by men, and what changes occurred in the translations of women's literature before 1978 as compared to during and after 1978. I also checked the influence of female translators on the translation of women's literature and on shaping the nature of the translation enterprise.

Gender and Palestinian literature: Palestinian literature is one of the branches of Arabic literature. Arabic literature researcher Ami Elad-Bouskila proposed dividing Palestinian literature into three branches, according to the location of the author: literature written in Israel, literature written in the West Bank and Gaza, and literature written in exile.<sup>16</sup> Palestinian researcher Adil al-Usta is not satisfied with the Palestinian origin of the authors or their parents for determining whether or not literature is Palestinian.<sup>17</sup> In his view Palestinian literature is literature that is also committed to the Palestinian narrative. In this article the term "Palestinian literature" includes any work written by writers of Palestinian origin, regardless of their place of residence—Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or the diaspora—or the degree of their commitment to the Palestinian narrative. Despite that general definition, it is important to note the centrality of political content in Palestinian writing.<sup>18</sup> The contribution of women translators to introducing Palestinian literature into the Hebrew domain is not measured by the number of works they translated but by the change of which they were part: the translation of long works about the Palestinian narrative. This change constituted a subversive challenge to the exclusivity of the male Zionist narrative.

To evaluate this variable 2,116 translations of works written by authors whose origin was defined as Palestinian or Israeli were selected from the index. As in the discussion about the translation of women's literature, here too I checked how many works were written by women and how many by men, how many of these works were translated by women and how many by men, and what changes occurred between pre- and post-1978 in the translations of Palestinian literature. I also checked the contribution of women translators to shaping the nature of the translation enterprise and their impact on the translation of Palestinian literature. In addition I checked the impact of the national identity of the translator on the choice to translate Palestinian literature.

Two deliberations arose during the review of the inventory. The first was whether to treat collections of stories, poems, and anthologies as a single unit, or to divide them according to the pieces included in them. Ultimately, the second option was chosen—to review stories and poems included in collections separately, because collections of stories and poems and anthologies are not considered a genre in its own right but rather a platform combining different genres. Another reason for that decision was that such collections often include works translated by different translators.

The second deliberation was whether to include works originally written in Arabic but translated into Hebrew from other languages. Since the purpose of this article is not to make a stylistic comparison of translations compared to the source, I decided to include them.

## **Gender and Nationality in Translation**

Alongside the gender element, there is also an obvious national element in the identity of the translators. Therefore, before I make a deep analysis of the gender aspect according to the three categories—genre, women's literature, and Palestinian literature—I would like to present data related to the rates of Arab and Jewish women and men who have translated from Arabic into Hebrew and examine the impact of the national element on the translation enterprise.

A gender analysis of the translations from Arabic into Hebrew in general, from the end of the nineteenth century to the present, finds that of a total of 257 translators who operated throughout that time period, 177 were men (69%) and 80 were women (31%). To this I add another category, nationality, and examine the number and rates of male and female, Jewish and Arab translators. Of the 257 translators who operated

in this field, 218 were Jews (85%); of the total number of translators, 145 were Jewish men (56.5%) and 73 were Jewish women (28.5%). The rest of the translators, 39 (15%), were Arab; of the total number of translators, 32 were Arab men (12.5%) and 7 were Arab women (2.5%). This examination illustrates the double exclusion of Arab women translators from the translation enterprise, on the basis of both nationality and gender. It raises questions: What causes this exclusion? And (most relevant for me) have Arab women translators had an influence on the nature of the translation field from Arabic into Hebrew, despite that exclusion?

A review of the translation activity of the Arab women translators paints a bleak picture as to the degree of their impact on the translation enterprise. First, that the number of translations in which Arab women participated was small is evident. Out of a total of 5,332 translations created from 1876 to the present, Arab women translators were involved in only 1%, and in most of these translations they were not the only translators but were part of a mixed-gender team. Second, Arab women started entering the translation enterprise at a relatively late stage, and this offset their degree of influence on it. Whereas the first translation by an Arab translator was published in the mid-1950s, just like the first translation by a Jewish woman translator, the first translation by an Arab woman translator was published in 1988.<sup>19</sup> This translation, by Arab poet Siham Daoud, was of the most debated poem by Mahmoud Darwish, “Ha-ovreem be-deboor ha-over” (“Those Who Pass between Fleeting Words”).<sup>20</sup> Third, Arab women translators tended to focus on the translation of poems, short stories, and short nonfiction texts, as opposed to Jewish women translators, who tended to focus on the translation of long texts. Yet despite these debilitating factors, there are two salient characteristics in the translations by Arab women: out of a total of 62 pieces translated by Arab women translators, 38% are works by women authors, and 92% are of Palestinian literature—of which 93% are translations of works by Palestinian authors who are citizens of Israel, and 7% are works written by Palestinians from the West Bank and the diaspora. However, since works from these genres—women’s literature and Palestinian literature—had been introduced into the Hebrew domain by the male translators who preceded them, the choices made by the Arab women translators did not receive the status of novelty.

A more optimistic picture arises from the activity of Arab men translators, as compared to Arab women translators. Despite their lower rate among translators from Arabic into Hebrew, several factors made them influential: they began their activity in

the 1950s, contributed to introducing Palestinian literature and women's literature into the Hebrew literary arena as early as the 1960s, worked mostly as individual translators, and translated long works.<sup>21</sup> In addition, some of the translators, such as Anton Shammas, are considered important figures in the Hebrew cultural landscape because of their involvement in that scene as writers in Hebrew as well.<sup>22</sup>

To understand the difference in the numbers of Arab male and Arab female translators, a separate study is needed. Here I offer two possible explanations: The first is women's inferior status in Arab society, about which much has been written.<sup>23</sup> The second explanation is that the space in which the activity of translation from Arabic into Hebrew occurs—a politically charged space that is based on asymmetric power relations—may deter women, as well as many men, from joining it.<sup>24</sup>

The purpose of this article is to examine how women translators impacted the translation from Arabic into Hebrew enterprise in the years 1976–2018. Given the minor impact of Arab women translators, the discussion will focus on Jewish women translators. I will refer to the national identity of the translator only in cases where that element is relevant to the discussion.

To understand the involvement of Jewish women in the translation enterprise, it is important to note two social and political aspects that had a major impact on the (non-) participation of women in it. The first is the inferior social status of women in Jewish society in Israel. Despite the proclamations by Zionism from its inception as to the full equality between the sexes, the reality was very different.<sup>25</sup> The perception that women had full equality in Israel was widespread until the mid-1970s, when it began to crack as a result of both social changes in Israel and the influence of women's liberation movements throughout the world.<sup>26</sup> This time period marks the beginning of both the change in the status of women in Israel and the establishment there of feminist theory.<sup>27</sup>

Regarding the national element, the Jewish women translators, just like their male counterparts, are part of the hegemony in the framework of the asymmetrical power relations between Jews and Palestinians. On the other hand, within that hegemony they are considered a fringe group because of their gender. Their marginality contributed to their exclusion from many areas and to ongoing discrimination against them. Thus, the enterprise of translation from Arabic into Hebrew was considered the exclusive domain of men and was ruled mainly by representatives of the male



hegemony; women were excluded from it both as translators and as authors whose works served as the sources of translations.

The second aspect that contributed to the absence of women from the field of translation from Arabic into Hebrew is the link between security constraints and men's co-optation of the translation field. Until the 1970s the translation enterprise was dominated mainly by men of Eastern European origin.<sup>28</sup> Initially, translation activity was characterized by an arrogant and disrespectful Orientalist approach toward Arabic works, as is evident with regard to several aspects: doubting the artistic value of the translated works, lack of faithfulness to the source, and far-reaching intervention in the translated text.<sup>29</sup> The leading figure of this approach to translation is Menahem Kapeliuk. Introduced by the political establishment, this approach sought to establish an asymmetric relationship between the two cultures that would emphasize the otherness of the Arab and his culture in the eyes of the Jewish reader.<sup>30</sup>

This establishment male control of the translation enterprise began to crumble in the 1970s, following a series of transformations in Israeli society: the cancellation of the military administration accompanied by a reduction in establishment control of the Arab population; the collapse of the Ashkenazi hegemony of Mapai; and the rise of the Likud to power in 1977.<sup>31</sup> These changes opened to women translators the possibility of establishing their status and involvement in that enterprise.

After noting the importance of the national element in the identity of the translators and its influence on the Arabic to Hebrew translation enterprise, we now turn to the study's findings and analyze the influence of women translators on that enterprise according to three variables: genre, women's literature, and Palestinian literature.

## **Findings**

Until the 1970s the field of translation from Arabic into Hebrew was dominated and controlled by the Israeli establishment, led by the government ruling party of the time. That establishment instituted in the field of translation patriarchal norms expressed by the exclusion of women, both as translators and as writers. Indeed, a review of the translation inventory finds that out of 1,589 works that were translated through 1977, 1,458 (92%) were translated by men and only 130 (8%) were translated by women; one work was translated by a mixed-gender team. From 1978 onward a multifaceted change

occurred in the development of the translation field: the number of translations rose significantly (3,306 works since 1978); change occurred in the gender structure of the translation enterprise—2,414 works (73%) were translated by men, which is a dramatic decline of about 20% in the number of translations, 477 (14%) were translated by women, and 415 (13%) were translated by mixed teams of women and men; and change began to occur in the guiding norms for the selection of works for translation, and consequently in the content of the translated works.<sup>32</sup> The last change is directly related to the second change: women who joined the translation enterprise were pioneers in translating longer Palestinian works. Although these trends do not offset the gender bias that still pervades the field of translation from Arabic into Hebrew—the ratio of male to female translators throughout the time period included in the index is 5:1—two significant processes are nonetheless evident. First, the rate of women’s participation in the field is on the rise, and second, a look at the translation enterprise by genre, gender, and national identity of the author of the source text indicates that despite their low rate of participation, women have managed to work from a position of power and to challenge the male and Jewish character of that enterprise. What follows is a discussion of each of the three criteria.

### Gender by Genre

Of the 5,332 items that appear in the index, 4,888 items belong to genres that include at least 10 items. I divide these items into three main categories: poetry (2,901 items), prose and fiction (novels, autobiographies and memoirs, segments of novels, novellas, plays, short stories—1,923 items), and nonfiction (works that are not defined as poetry or fiction and prose, including hadith, contemplation, and philosophy—64 items). These works were published in different forums: journals, story collections, poetry collections, anthologies, and nonfiction books.

**Table 1.** Gender distribution of translators by genre in the years 1876–2018 (N=4,888 translations found from this period)

Genre		Men	Women	Mixed
<b>Prose and Fiction</b>	Novels (N=62)	36 (58%)	26 (42%)	0%

Genre		Men	Women	Mixed
	Segments of novels (N=74)	36 (49%)	38 (51%)	0%
	Novellas (N=12)	7 (58%)	1 (9%)	4 (33%)
	Autobiographies and memoirs (N=20)	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	0%
	Plays (N=29)	22 (76%)	7 (24%)	0%
	Short stories (N=1,726)	1,329 (77%)	158 (9%)	239 (14%)
	Total prose and fiction (N=1,923)	1,445 (75%)	235 (12%)	243 (13%)
<b>Nonfiction</b>	N=64	43 (67%)	21 (33%)	0%
<b>Poetry</b>	N=2,901	2,403 (83%)	336 (11%)	162 (6%)

The findings indicate that women’s participation is evident mainly in the translation of prose, whether as individual translators or as part of mixed teams. Whereas women were responsible for the translation of 17% of all of the poems, their participation rate rises to 25% when it comes to translating fiction, and 33% in the translation of nonfiction texts.

The findings also indicate that women tend to translate works in long genres such as novels, novellas, and autobiographies. Until 1978 women translated only short works—poems and short stories. Until 1977 only nine long works had been translated, all by men. Starting in 1978 we see a change: women began to translate long works. This trend began with the translation of the two Palestinian novellas—*Gvareem bashemesh* (*Men in the Sun*) and *Ma shenotar lekhem* (*All That’s Left to You*) by Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani—by Jewish translator Daniela Brafman, together with the Greek priest Yanni Demianus.<sup>33</sup> Since then the trend has increased: of 61 long pieces translated from Arabic after 1978, women translated 26 (43%).

Of the genres in which the rate of women involved in translation was at least 25%, there are three genres of long works: novels (the rate of women’s participation as translators in this genre is 42%), novellas (42%), and autobiographies (25%).

The data confirm the hypothesis raised above as to two trends in translation by genre. First, women tend to translate prose: their rate of participation in the translation of prose is relatively high, whereas their rate in the translation of poetry is low. Second, their preference for translating long genres indicates the establishment of their status in the field of translation specifically and in the cultural domain in general, because the translation of longer texts demands, naturally, more resources than the translation of a single poem or story and its publication in a magazine, newspaper, or book.

### **Gender and Women’s Literature**

There are several trends related to the Arabic to Hebrew translation enterprise concerning women’s literature. The first is the noticeable scarcity of translations of works written by women. Out of an inventory of 4,893 items, information for which includes the gender of the author of the original work, only 397 works (8%) were written by women, whereas 4,496 (92%) were written by men.

The second trend is a constant rise in the translation of works by women over the time axis. Whereas of the 1,374 works translated from 1876–1977, only 58 (4%) were written by women, of the 3,372 works translated from 1978–2018, 324 (10%) were written by women (table 2).

**Table 2.** Gender of author by time period (N=4,746 translations found<sup>34</sup>)

<b>Author’s gender</b>	<b>Time period</b>	
	<b>1876–1977</b>	<b>1978–2018</b>
Male (N=4,364)	1,316 (96%)	3,048 (90%)
Female (N=382)	58 (4%)	324 (10%)

**Table 3.** Author’s gender by translator’s gender (N=4,596 translations found)

	Translator's gender		
	Male translators (N=3,561)	Female translators (N=623)	Mixed (N=412)
Author's gender			
Male authors (N=4,241)	3,322 (78%)	512 (12%)	407 (10%)
Female authors (N=355)	239 (67%)	111 (31%)	5 (2%)

The third trend is the close association between the rise in the rate of women participating in translation and the rise in the translation of works authored by women (table 3). The number of items including information about both the translator's and the author's gender is 4,596. Whereas the percentage of works written by men and translated by women translators only (not as part of mixed teams) is 12%, when it comes to women's literature the picture changes. Out of 355 works authored by women, 111 (31%) were translated into Hebrew by women, 239 (67%) were translated by men, and 5 (2%) were translated by mixed teams.

The fourth trend is a clear preference for translating women's poetry. Most of the works by women that were translated into Hebrew are poems. Out of a total of 397 works written by women, 385 include information about the genre. Of those that included genre information, there were 320 poems (83%), compared to 65 works of prose (17%). This trend is consistent with the perception mentioned above that associates women with poetry.

The fifth trend is the preference of male translators for translating works written by men. Of the 3,561 works that were translated by men, 3,322 (93%) were written by men, and only 239 (7%) were written by women.

These figures paint a grim picture as to the status of Arab women authors in the translation field. It is evident that they are perceived as less relevant for translation, a perception reflected by the low rate of women's literature in the translation enterprise, as well as by the ongoing exclusion of such literature by male translators. In addition it is evident that women authors are identified with poetry, whereas prose is identified

with men. But these findings also indicate that the gender of the translator has a significant impact on the translation enterprise and its basic values, as is evident by the relatively high rate of works written by women that were translated into Hebrew by women.

### **Gender and Palestinian Literature**

Of all of the works that appear in the index, 2,116 were written by Palestinians; of those, the data on 2,058 include their year of publication. The first Palestinian work translated into Hebrew was the short story “Shaar Mandelbaum” (“Mandelbaum Gate”) by author Emile Habibi; the story was published by the Communist newspaper *Kol Ha’am* in 1954, translated by Sasson Somekh.<sup>35</sup> Between the years 1954 and 1977, 255 translations of Palestinian works were published, which is 12% of all of the Palestinian works translated by 2018. In the years 1978–2018 there was a substantial increase in the translation of Palestinian literature: 1,803 works were published (88% of all Palestinian works translated throughout the entire period covered by the index).

A clear gender bias is evident in the translation of Palestinian literature. The inventory of translations that includes information about the translator’s gender contains 1,914 works, the vast majority of which—1,591 (83%)—were translated by men; 231 (12%) were translated by women, and 92 (5%) were translated by a mixed-gender team.

As we have seen above, the sorting and examination of the translations by genre reveals a complex picture and exposes a position of power in the activity of women. In the context of Palestinian literature, women were the pioneers in the translation of extensive works dealing directly with the Palestinian narrative. Though they were involved in the translation of only 323 works (17%) out of the total number of Palestinian works (whether as single women translators or as members of mixed teams), their rate is much higher when it comes to the translation of longer Palestinian works (novels, novellas, autobiographies, and memoirs). Of 21 longer Palestinian works translated in full, women were involved in the translation of six (29%)—a number that approaches the number of long pieces translated by Jewish men (8 pieces, 38%). This figure is consistent with the general trend among women translators, who prefer to translate long works of prose, as described in the discussion on gender and genre.

**Table 4.** The distribution of the translation of longer Palestinian works (novels, novellas, autobiographies, and memoirs) by the gender and nationality of the translator (N=21 translations found)

<b>Gender and nationality of the translator</b>	<b>Works</b>
Jewish females	6 (29%)
Jewish males	8 (38%)
Arab males	7 (33%)

The activity of women is not limited to the quantitative aspect; their activity expresses an act of power that contests the gender and national nature of the translation enterprise. Until 1977, under the influence of the Orientalist approach that ignored the existence of Palestinian culture, that enterprise completely ignored long works written by Palestinians. In 1978 three long works by Palestinian authors were translated into Hebrew for the first time. These works are about the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 and 1967 wars. In the case of two of these works, Daniela Brafman, a Jewish woman, was involved in the translation; the third piece was translated by a male Arab translator. On the other hand, among Jewish translators a different trend is evident: the first long Palestinian work was translated into Hebrew in 1990 by Gideon Shilo, a male Jewish translator, and the other seven were translated from 2001 onward. Previously, Jews who translated long works from Arabic into Hebrew had ignored the Palestinian authors and the Palestinian narrative.<sup>36</sup> This is an interesting figure because it reveals the importance and significance of the national and gender identity of the translator. Male Jewish translators' denial of Palestinian works confirms claims of the tight association between men and the national ethos, an association that has undergone a transformation since the 1990s. The marginal groups, Arabs and women, are those who introduced the first signs of change into the cultural arena by injecting the Palestinian narrative into Hebrew culture.

**Table 5.** Gender breakdown of Palestinian works by authors and translators

<b>Author's gender</b>	<b>Translator's gender</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Mixed team</b>
Males (N=1,670)	1,425 (85%)	177 (11%)	68 (4%)
Females (N=234)	160 (68%)	54 (23%)	20 (9%)

Of the 2,116 translations of Palestinian literature for which we have information about the gender of their authors, 1,881 works (89%) were written by men, and 235 (11%) were written by women. Of these, we have information about the gender of both the author and the translator (table 5) for only 1,904. Of the 1,881 Palestinian works written by men, 1,670 also include information about the translator's gender: 1,425 (85%) were translated by men, 177 (11%) by women, and 68 (4%) by a mixed-gender team. Of the 235 Palestinian works authored by women, 234 include information about the gender of the translator: 54 (23%) were translated into Hebrew by women, 160 (68%) were translated by men, and 20 (9%) were translated by mixed teams. These figures show that the rate of women's involvement in the translation of works written by Palestinian women (32%) is higher than their involvement in the translation of works by Palestinian men (15%). These findings attest to the effort by women translators to introduce the Palestinian narrative into the Hebrew domain as it is voiced by the repressed voices of women, an action that challenges the national and gender values of the translation enterprise.

## **Summary**

This article examines how women translators impacted the translation from Arabic into Hebrew enterprise in the years 1876–2018. Their involvement was explored along three variables: genre, women's literature, and Palestinian literature. The findings indicate a significant gender bias expressed by the low rates of women among authors and translators. At the same time, from 1978 onward we see a steady rise in the involvement of women in translation. Closer examination, however, reveals a more nuanced picture. Women's impact on the enterprise of translation from Arabic into Hebrew does not end with the quantitative aspect; their power is rooted in the attempt to question the



hegemonic values of the translation enterprise by questioning the male/gender and Zionist/national exclusivity of that enterprise.

The rise in the presence of women in the field of translation introduces three new trends. First, the preference of women translators for translating long works expresses an effort by women translators to position themselves in a central place in the translation enterprise. Second, the preference of women translators for translating works by Arab women is a conscious choice to raise the women's voices, which are repressed in both cultures. However, the struggle to introduce women's voices has not yet achieved its goals and is still perceived as marginal by male translators, and to a certain extent by the women translators themselves. Third, the women translators, along with the Arab translators, contributed both to the placement of the repressed Palestinian narrative at the center of the translation field and to that narrative's inclusion in the agenda of the translation enterprise.

These three trends constitute a subversive movement that seeks to dismantle the patriarchal and national exclusivity of the field of translation. Yet it appears that a glass ceiling still limits the full integration of women in that field and maintains its patriarchal character. This is manifest by the clear preference for the encounter with the national "other" over the encounter with the female "other."

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<sup>1</sup> On the limits of the time period examined here, see the "Methodology" section of this article.

<sup>2</sup> For studies about the impact of the conflict between the two cultures on translation from Arabic into Hebrew see, for example, Hannah Amit-Kochavi, "Zareem ve-oyveem o shotafeem le-otah kevrat erez? Al ha-tergomeem men ha sefrut ha-Falasteenet," *Jamaa* 10 (2003), <http://in.bgu.ac.il/humsos/jamaa/DocLib/%D7%92%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9F%2010/%D7%94%D7%A2%D7%9C%D7%90%D7%94%20062016/Amit-kohavi.pdf>; Yehouda Shenhav, "Ha-politika ve-ha-teologya shel ha-tergum: Ketzud meturgemeem nakba me-Araveet le-Ivreet," *Sotziologya Yisraelit* 14, no. 1 (2012); Mahmoud Kayyal, "Tirgumei ha-sifrut ha-Aravit le-Ivrit: Me-orientalizim le-hetkubloot," *Halvrit, Journal of the Hebrew Language* 61, no. 4 (2014); Amer Dahamshe, "Beglal ha-tergum: 'Akhtiya' ve-tergumo ha-Ivree kemashal la-tefkeedee shemout ha-mekumout ve-demoyee ha-makoum ba-sifrut," in *Merhav sefruti Aravi-Ivri*, ed. Hannan Hever and Mahmoud Kayyal (Jerusalem: Van Leer

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Institute Press and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2016); Huda Abu Much, “Al tafkeed ha-tergum me-Araveet la-Ivreet ba-yetzoog ha-terbout ha-Araveet ve-ha-Falasteenet baeny ha-kora ha-Yehodi ba-shaneem 1931–1993,” *Mehkari Yerushalayem ba-sifrut Ivreet* (in progress); Mahmoud Kayyal, “‘Arabs Dancing in a New Light of Arabesques’: Minor Hebrew Works of Palestinian Authors in the Eyes of Critics,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 11, no. 1 (2008). For studies on translation from the point of view of multisystem theory see, for example, Hannah Amit-Kochavi, “Tirgumei sifrut Aravit le-Ivrit, ha-reqa ha-histori-tarbuti shelahem, meafyeneihem u-maamadim be-tarbut ha-matarah” (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> On the exclusion of women, see Jean Delisle, *Portraits de traductrices* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2002). On the establishment of male hegemony, see Amparo Hurtado Albir, *Traducción y Traductología: introducción a la traductología* (España: Cátedra, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> The presence of misogyny and the exclusion of women from the field of translation is evident, among other things, in violent language and the use of vulgar images, such as “raping” the text in order to overcome it. See Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> For example Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, *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, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Hala Kamal, “Muqadema: Al naqd al-adby al-nasawi we-al-targema al-nasaweya,” *Al naqd al-adby al-nasawi*, ed. Hala Kamal (Egypt: Women and Memory Forum, 2015); Luise von Flotow, “Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories,” *Traduire la théorie* 4, no. 2 (1991).

<sup>7</sup> Delisle, *Portraits*.

<sup>8</sup> Simon, *Gender in Translation*; Lori Chamberlain, “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation,” *Signs* 13, no. 3 (1988).

<sup>9</sup> Chamberlain, “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation.”

<sup>10</sup> Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from “The Tempest” to “Tarzan”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Douglas Robinson, *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained* (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> The index appears on Maktoob’s “Index tirgumei ha-sifrut me-Aravit le-Ivrit” website, <http://maktoobbooks.com/search-the-index/>. Her doctoral thesis is Amit-Kochavi, “Tirgumei sifrut.”

<sup>12</sup> The novel *Bereed Beirut* (Hebrew: *Beirut Blues*) by the Lebanese author Hanan al-Shaykh is an example of a work that was written in Arabic but translated to Hebrew from English. The novels of the Syrian author Rafik Schami are examples of works written in German and translated into Hebrew.

<sup>13</sup> For further reading on the importance of the year 1977, see Yehouda Shenhav, *Beyond the Two-State Solution: A Jewish Political Essay* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Dan Miron, *Im lo tehie Yerushalayem: Ha-sifrut ha-Ivreet be-heksher terbuti politi* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> See Ghassan Kanafani, *Gvareem ba-shemesh: Ma she-notar lakhem [Men in the Sun: All That’s Left to You]* (Jerusalem: Mifras, 1978). Sahar Khalifeh, *Hatzabar [Wild Thorns]*, (Jerusalem: Galileo, 1976).

<sup>16</sup> Ami Elad-Bouskila, *Sifrut Araveet be-levush Ivri* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 1995), 38; Elad-Bouskila, *Muledet nelhemet, erez avodah: Shisha prakeem be-sifrut ha-Falasteenet ha-hadasha* (Or Yehuda: Maariv Books, 2001), 20–21.

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<sup>17</sup> Adil al-Usta, *Sheelet ha-zehut: Ha-Falasteniut shel ha-sifrut ve-shel ha-sofer* (Ramallah: Dar Al-Shorok, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Amit-Kochavi, “Zareem ve-oyveem.”

<sup>19</sup> The first work translated into Hebrew by an Arab was the poem “Yetzor she-lo nolad ani” [“An unborn creature”] by Egyptian author Kamal Abdel Halim. The poem was translated in 1954 by communist historian Emile Touma and published in the Communist newspaper *Kol Ha'am* on May 28, 1954. In the same year and using the same platform, the first work translated into Hebrew by a mixed team including a Jewish woman translator was “Mikhtav me-av Mitzri el nasie Artzot ha-Breet” (“A Letter from an Egyptian father to the president of the United States of America”), by the Egyptian author Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi; it was translated by Chaya Kadmon and Salim Fatal and published in *Kol Ha'am* on December 24, 1954. After a ten-year break, the activity of Arab male translators and Jewish women translators resumed in the middle of the 1960s and continues to this day.

<sup>20</sup> Mahmoud Darwish, “Ha-ovreem be-deboor ha-over” [“Those Who Pass between Fleeting Words”], *Maariv*, March 25, 1988. For an extensive discussion, see Huda Abu Much, “Tergum ve-kuah: Al ha-tergum la-Ivrit shel ha-sheer ‘Ha-ovreem be-deboor ha-over’ me-eit Mahmoud Darweesh,” in Hever and Kayyal, *Merhav sifrut Aravi-Ivri*; Abdel Rahman Mari, “Sifrut o-Politika: Al baayet sherev shel Mahmoud Darwish be-marekhet ha-hinokh be-Yisrael,” in Hever and Kayyal, *Merhav sifrut Aravi-Ivri*.

<sup>21</sup> On the contribution of the Arab translators to introducing new norms into the translation field, see Kayyal, “Tirgumei ha-sifrut ha-Aravit le-Ivrit”; Abu Much, “Al tefkeed ha-tergum me-Araveet la-Ivreet.”

<sup>22</sup> Shamma wrote his famous novel *Arabesques* in Hebrew (Anton Shamma, *Arabesques* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986). That novel received a wide range of reactions in the Hebrew literary arena, from acceptance to rejection. In addition he translated the works of Emile Habibi into Hebrew, which helped Habibi win the Israel Prize in Literature. For an extensive discussion, see Amit-Kochavi, “Tirgumei sifrut”; Kayyal, “Arabs Dancing.”

<sup>23</sup> For an extensive discussion on the status of Arab woman, see Manar Hasan, “Ha-politika shel ha-kavood: Ha-patreyarkhya, ha-medina ve-retzah nasheem be-shem kavood ha-mishpaha,” in *Meen, megdar, politika*, ed. Dafna Izraeli et al. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001); Huneida Ghanem, *Emdoot be-nogeya la-mamadah ve-zkhoyoteya shel ha-isha ha-Falasteenet be-Yisrael* (Nazareth: Ruaa and Women against Violence, 2005); Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder and Naomi Weiner-Levy, *Nasheem Falasteenyot ba-Yisrael: Zehut, yehesev kuah ve-hetmudedot* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute Press and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2010); Heba Yazbak and Liat Kozma, *Mamad eshy ve-megder: Nasheem Falasteniut be-Yisrael* (Haifa: Pardes Publishing, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> For sources describing the difficulties facing authors and translators operating on the seam between cultures, see Sami Michael, “Ha-maaver me-safa le-safa,” *Mifgash* 3, no. 7 (1986); Anton Shamma, “Ashmut ha-babushka,” *Politika* 5-6, (1986); Mohammad Ghanaim, “Astuh thaqafeya sakhena,” *Al-Carmel* 50 (1997). On the dispute around the activity of Arabs in the Hebrew domain, see Emile Habibi, “Shaar Mandelbaum,” *Kol Ha'am*, April 2, 1954; Hannan Hever, “Le-hacot be-ekvo shel Akhilis,” *Alpayim* 1 (1989); Hever, “Lu-shov ve-le-hacot be-ekvo shel Akhilis,” *Alpayim* 3 (1990); Reuven Snir, “Petz ehad me-ptzaev: Ha-sefrut ha-Araveet ha-Falasteenet be-Yisrael,” *Alpayim* 2 (1990); Snir, “Ha-avev shel Akhilis o-ha-bevoah shel Narcissus?,” *Alpayim* 4 (1991).

<sup>25</sup> Rachel Elboim-Dror, “Ha-isha ha-Tzeyunit ha-idialet,” in *Ha-teshmaa quly? Yetzuqem shel nasheem be-terbut ha-Yisraelit*, ed. Yael Atzmon (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute Press and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001); Yael Feldman, *Lelo heder mi-sheluhem: Megder ve-leumeyut ke-yetzeratan shel sofrut Yisraeliyut* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2002), 23.

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- <sup>26</sup> Ariela Friedman, “Al femenzim, nesheyut ve-koah shel nasheem be-Yisrael,” in Izraeli et al., *Meen, megdar, politika*.
- <sup>27</sup> Despite the improvement in the status of women, it is still difficult to speak of full equality. For an extensive discussion, see Dafna Izraeli et al., *Meen, megdar, politika*.
- <sup>28</sup> Amit-Kochavi, “Tirgumei sifrut.”
- <sup>29</sup> Kayyal, “Tirgumei ha-sifrut ha-Araviv le-Ivrit”; Kayyal, “‘Ha-shuva le-Haifa’ shel Ghassan Kanafani ba-Ivreet,” in Hever and Kayyal, *Merhav sifrut Aravi-Ivri*.
- <sup>30</sup> Abu Much, “Al tefkeed ha-tergum me-Araveet la-Ivreet.”
- <sup>31</sup> For a discussion of the 1977 “reversal” and its impact on Israeli society see, for example, Nissim Calderon, *Pluralistim beal kurham* (Haifa: Haifa University, 2000).
- <sup>32</sup> See, for example, Abu Much, “Al tefkeed ha-tergum me-Araveet la-Ivreet”; Amit-Kochavi, “Zareem ve-oyveem.”
- <sup>33</sup> In this study I treated each work as a translation in its own right, even if they came out in the same book. Kanafani, *Gvareem ba-shemesh: Ma she-notar lakhem*.
- <sup>34</sup> Of the 4,893 items including information about the gender of the author of the original work, only 4,746 also include information about the year of publication of the translation.
- <sup>35</sup> It is important to note that from 1876–1953 there were 294 translations, which means that only 5% of the translations were made during the first seventy years, while 95% of the translations were made in the second period of seventy years, 1954–2018.
- <sup>36</sup> The reference is to full translations only. Partial translations of novels and novellas can be found. A case in point is Shmuel Regulant’s translation of the last chapter of the novella *Aed ila Haifa* (Returning to Haifa) by Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani (written in 1969). The translation was published in 1972, but it was a partial translation and appeared alongside an article by Sasson Somekh that expressed a patronizing attitude toward the Arab community (see Ghassan Kanafani, “Ha-heftaah,” *Ofek: Le-sifrut, le-hugot ve-lu-bikoret 2* (1972); Sasson Somekh, “Falastenai she-hetseets ve-lo nevgaa,” *Ofek: Le-sifrut, le-hugot ve lu-bekuret 2* (1972); Kayyal, “‘Ha-shuva le-Haifa’.”