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Partitions and Translations: Arab Jewish Translational Models in Fin de Siècle Palestine

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Against the backdrop of the intensifying national conflict between Jews and Arabs, a multilingual translation project emerged in Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century. While the increasing hostility between Jews and Arabs also opened a linguistic breach between Hebrew and Arabic, a group of local Arab Jewish intellectuals insisted on holding on to both languages, positioning themselves on the borderland between them and using translation as a political and cultural tool. Over more than five decades, from the 1880s to the 1930s, they published hundreds of essays, political commentaries, translations, collections of fables and folktales, short stories, and poems, mostly in the local Hebrew and Arabic newspapers. Moving easily back and forth between Arabic and Hebrew, they marked the first modern phenomenon of Arabic-Hebrew literary bilingualism, inspired by the great Arab Jewish poets and philosophers of medieval al-Andalus.

It was no coincidence that their work emerged in the complex political and social surroundings of the late Ottoman era and early Mandatory Palestine. This was a period dominated by intentional processes of national, ethnic, and religious separation that created cultural, social, and political partitions. In this context partitions apply not only to the division of the land but also to the separation of traditions, histories, academic disciplines, and languages: between Hebrew and Arabic, Judaism and Islam, Jewishness and Arabness.[1]

The translation work of these intellectuals was rooted in the tension between the emerging nationalistic ideologies that preached monolingualism and the multilingual and multireligious social and political reality. Thus, these intellectuals operated within a range of differing and even contradictory political and ideological affinities: their commitment to the emerging national monolingual Jewish project, their identification with the Ottoman reformation and the ethos of the shared homeland, and their affiliation to an Arab Jewish and Judeo-Muslim cultural heritage.

Who, then, made up this network of Arab Jewish intellectuals? The prominent members were: Yosef Meyouhas (1868–1942), Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877–1951), David Yellin (1863–1941), Isaac Benjamin Yahuda (1863–1941), and Abraham Elmalih (1885–1967).[2] Born in Palestine in the second half of the nineteenth century, they were part of the growing circles of native scholars who were engaged in a variety of intellectual activities: ethnographic research, translation, literary interpretation, journalism, lexicography, philology, and education.[3] Some of these activities formed part of the emerging Hebrew revival movement, but they were no less inspired by the Ottoman and Arabic linguistic and cultural reformations.[4] At the center of their cultural activities was Arabic-Hebrew translation in its various forms: intertextual translations, oral interpretation, collection and translation of oral traditions, and cultural translation.[5]

The article focuses on two of their translation works selected from a wide and varied corpus of translations: (1) *Yaldey Arav* (Children of Arabia), by Yosef Meyouhas (1927–1929), a collection of biblical tales from the Arab Palestinian oral tradition; and (2) *Mishley Arav* (Proverbs of Arabia), by Isaac Benjamin Yahuda (1932–1934), a comprehensive collection of Arabic proverbs.

Both works are translations of oral tales and proverbs from the Arabic and Muslim literary traditions. While they were among the first modern translations from Arabic into Hebrew, and can thus be considered an integral part of the development of Modern (and national) Hebrew literature, the article explores the ways in which they fundamentally challenged the perception of a distinct and confined Modern Hebrew literature—and more specifically, the boundaries between Hebrew and Arabic language and literature. It explores the authors' translation strategies in light of their personal biographies and of the multilingual and multireligious setting in which they developed: Meyouhas, within the local Arab Palestinian oral tradition; and Yahuda, within the Judeo-Muslim and Judeo-Arabic literary traditions.[6] In this context, their common translation project was not merely a literary exercise: it embodied an alternative political possibility of shared Hebrew-Arabic culture, as against the mainstream Zionist separatist approach.[7]

Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology is very useful for our discussion. Of particular interest are three key concepts from his work—chronotope, heteroglossia, and dialogism—which deal with the complexities of the interrelationship between the textual and the social, between language(s) and narratives, and between unity and heterogeneity.[8] These concepts developed against the background of two opposing forces: unitary monolingual national canonization versus the polyphony of languages, voices, identities, and genres.[9] In that way, they echo the cultural and social trends at the center of our discussion.

Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope as a traveling signifier that contains an essential connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships which travel in time-space is particularly valuable.[10] Exploring Meyouhas's and Yahuda's works, we identify two types of translation models that played an essential role in the formation of their translation strategies: the Ottoman model, with its multilingual character and its unique translational culture; and the Andalusian model, with its unique interplay of languages and writing systems and its Judeo-Muslim and Hebrew-Arabic intertwined symbiosis. These translational models comprise strong chronotopic elements, where poetic and linguistic forms that emerged in a specific spatial context are charged and reactive to movements of time. Translation is the central activity of cross-cultural dialogue and connectivity, the intersection of multiple linguistic and literary traditions under a single geographical imaginary such as Córdoba, Toledo, Istanbul, Baghdad, and Palestine.

We need, however, to add another chronotopic translational model to our equation: the monolingual nationalistic translational model that was dominant at the time of the publication of these translations. It was the formative era of the Modern Hebrew literary canon, which was closely associated with the establishment of Zionism and Hebrew nationalism. Translation into Hebrew at that time had a crucial role in the foundation of the Hebrew national monolingual culture. In this context, translation served as a vehicle in the development of a unified and cohesive Hebrew culture. Use of the domestication translation method resulted in the Hebraization of place-names and protagonists while censoring non-Jewish elements and manipulating the contents of the translated texts. This nationalistic translation model pushed toward the purification and unification of the Hebrew language and literature.[11] The roots of this approach stretch back to the birth of the nation-state in the nineteenth century, when the ideology of "one language and one literature for one nation" was closely linked with the emergence of modern literature and translation.[12] Writing and translating in a national language implied, more than ever, taking part in the construction of a unified and distinct national literature and

culture.[13] At the heart of this model lies the assumption that translation is an act that takes place in a monolingual reality and addresses distinct, separate linguistic and cultural traditions.[14] Multilingualism (and language mingling) poses a challenge to this monolingual translation model.[15]

Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translations developed at the intersection of these conflicting trends and translation models. In this context four main translation methods arise. These involve: (1) translation without a fixed original source; (2) the intersection between spoken and written textual traditions; (3) the heteroglossic translation model; and (4) translation as an act of dialogism. These methods are interconnected, and while echoing the Andalusian and Ottoman translational models, they also had cultural and political implications vis-à-vis the dominant nationalistic trend of their time.

But before delving into the reading of each method, let us present the Ottoman and Andalusian traditions in greater detail.

Ottoman and Andalusian Chronotopes

Ottoman Tradition

The Ottoman Empire was one of the most linguistically diverse political entities of modern times: it ruled over dozens of religious, ethnic, and linguistic communities forming a multiethnic, multireligious, and multilingual society. This cultural mixture produced an environment in which multilingualism was widespread, as fluid boundaries between national territories and linguistic communities created mixed linguistic zones.[16]

Multilingualism and translation were thus an essential part of the Ottoman social and political landscape, which saw the emergence of a unique translation role that was concentrated around the contact zones with European diplomats, travelers, merchants, and researchers. This role—the "dragoman"—(see the introduction to this volume) was played by a mixed population of interpreters, middlemen, translators, and local guides.[17] However, these multilingual individuals often found themselves taking on much more than just the task of interpreting.[18] They also served as go-betweens, servants, diplomats, spies, messengers, managers, and overseers and were frequently required to mediate, scheme, and improvise in both official and unofficial capacities.[19] From the medieval period onward, dragomans fulfilled a "range of political, commercial, and diplomatic functions as essential intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled," while during the modern era they were mostly associated with interpretation and translation to and from local languages such as

Arabic, Turkish, and Persian.[20] The dragomans' translation model was multifaceted and included both oral and textual translation. While it has been common to view their work as a feature of the intercultural and interlingual transactions between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the dragomans also represented an internal Ottoman characteristic as a multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious society (including, among others, Greek, Armenian, Arab, and Bosnian minorities).[21]

At the end of the nineteenth century, then, Ottoman Palestine was a profoundly polyglot society with a variety of local languages, in which cultural multiplicity was not perceived as a threat or a destabilizing factor.[22] For the Arab and Jewish native inhabitants, this was the norm: multilingualism was a basic fact of life, and mediators, interpreters, and translators played an important role in everyday communication.[23]

Andalusian Tradition

During that period another cultural model emerged on the cultural horizon of the Arab Jewish intellectuals. It was the legacy of "al-Andalus" or "Sefarad" of the tenth to twelfth centuries, the famous "Golden Age" of Jewish intellectual life, the time of great thinkers and poets such as Abu ʿImran Musa ibn ʿUbayd Allah ibn Maymun al-Qurtubi (Maimonides), Abu Harun Musa bin Yaʿqub ibn ʿEzra (Moses Ibn-Ezra), and Judah ben Shmuel HaLevi (Yehuda Halevi, also known as Abu al-Hasan al-Lawi), who were intimately linked to Arabic poetry and Islamic philosophy while also advancing the study of Jewish law and Hebrew philology and poetry.

At the heart of this cultural legacy was a unique translation model, based on Arabic-Hebrew bilingualism and translation-interpretation (in Arabic, *tafsir* and *sarh* - שרח) that spread from the Middle Ages to the modern era. This Arab Jewish translation tradition can be dated back to the tenth century with Saadia ibn Yosef al-Fayyumi's (Saadia Gaon) translation (known as the *tafsir*) of the Bible into Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew script). Saadia Gaon's *tafsir* had an enormous impact on the development of the Arab Jewish literary and translation traditions during the medieval and modern periods, on the borderland between the worlds of Arabic and Hebrew, and of Judaism and Islam.[24] This tradition continued to develop in Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the translations of the Ibn Tibbon family and Yahya bin Sulaiman bin Shaul Abu Zakaria al-Harizi (Yehuda Alharizi).[25]

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Judeo-Arabic translation model experienced a revival in several Arab Jewish communities spread to far-flung corners of the globe, including Baghdad, Aden, Damascus, Cairo, Tunisia, Algeria, and Calcutta.[26] The establishment of printing houses in these centers fostered a new wave of translations into Judeo-Arabic from a variety of languages and literary traditions (including Hebrew, Aramaic, European languages, and standard Arabic).[27] This included the publication of new and old translations of biblical texts, translations of prayer books, collections and translations of oral stories, and collections of legends, fables, and folk tales from the Arabic oral tradition.[28]

Translation Methods

Translation against the Grain: The Polyglot Arab Jewish Translation Model

Yaldey Arav, by Yosef Meyouhas, and *Mishley Arav*, by Isaac Yahuda, are the end products of translation projects that began at the end of the nineteenth century, toward the end of the Ottoman period, and continued for decades, spanning the transition from the Ottoman Empire to British rule.[29] These translation works were published in the latter stages of the translators' lives, at a time when their political visions were already marginalized by the dominant political discourse.[30]

In addition to the necessity of reading these translation works within the broad historical and linguistic contexts presented in the previous sections (the Andalusian and Ottoman chronotopes), it is also important to examine them in light of the particular historical context in which they were published, late-1920s and early-1930s Palestine, a period of violent national struggle between Jews and Palestinian Arabs and of increasing linguistic, social, and cultural polarization.[31]

Against the backdrop of these political and social events, which deepened the nationalistic divisions and the linguistic partition process, Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translation methods embody an alternative political and cultural route. The polyglot fusion in their translation work—mixing Arabic and Hebrew, Jewish and Muslim traditions—challenges the nationalistic principles regarding the purity of language and homogeneity of the national tradition. The loose distinction between oral and written traditions and the unfixed intersection between original source and translation dismantle any (national) claim over exclusive ownership of texts, traditions, or languages. Instead, their methods represent a dialogical approach that emphasizes the intertextuality of literary traditions and the intersections of languages and cultures.

Translation without a Stable Original Source

Meyouhas's and Yahuda's works share an exceptional translation model: translation without a stable original source that does not belong to a specific geographical sphere or to a single linguistic tradition but rather spans multiple linguistic, geographic, and religious traditions. In that way, their model is substantially different from the dominant monolingual nationalistic model. The anxieties regarding the division between the "original" and the "translation" are irrelevant in their case. This is not to say that there are no internal differentiations among the multiple versions they used, but any concern over the issue of a single, stable, authentic source is absent from their work. This can be attributed to their connection to the Andalusian model, with its long-standing Judeo-Muslim tradition that remained free of notions of "fixity" of text and the need to respect the text's boundaries.

Meyouhas's *Yaldey Arav* comprises forty-seven biblical tales from the Arab Palestinian oral tradition translated into Hebrew. The tales are divided into two parts: Torah stories, and stories about the prophets. This format resembles the Muslim literary tradition of the oral and textual biblical and prophet stories. It also resembles the Jewish literary tradition of translations of the Bible into Judeo-Arabic described above (*tafsir* and *sarh*). The stories are written in a mix of biblical Hebrew, Modern Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. The translated stories do not reference a specific author or "original" source. Since there is no original with which to compare the translation, it is impossible to draw a strict line separating the translation from the source. This represents an unusual example of literary writing originating from a bilingual or multilingual context where "writing and translating overlap in a creative act that is not based on any original."[32]

Moreover, in Meyouhas's work, translation became not merely a transaction between two (distinct) languages, or an act of linguistic "substitution" of one version by another, but rather an intersection between several entangled languages, textual traditions, and cultures. In this intertextuality translation operates in multiple ways, sometimes between texts and sometimes between the oral and the textual dimensions. The end product can be read as a non-annotated Hebrew version of a text whose implicit source appears to be Arabic. This single text stands for both the original and the translation, with Hebrew serving as original and translational language.

Yahuda's *Mishley Arav* (Proverbs of Arabia) includes in its two volumes some 2,500 proverbs taken from the literary, linguistic, and popular Arabic tradition, across the various Arabic dialects.[33] The proverbs are presented in Arabic (in Hebrew script) alongside a Hebrew translation. In some cases, Yahuda also included parallel

proverbs in other languages (Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, Aramaic, and Persian) along with a Hebrew translation.

In Yahuda's work, translation is situated within the text, not between texts, as he presents the original and its translation side by side as part of a textual whole. In this way, Yahuda's translation challenges the traditional definition of translation as the substitution of one language for another and of one literary text for another. Instead, the process of translation is multidimensional, occurring in different spaces and between different languages and texts, sometimes simultaneously. *Mishley Arav*'s structure also exposes the production process of the translations and blurs the temporal order between what comes first and what follows.

In his book *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti explores the translation convention that emphasizes the transparency of the translator as the key factor for "good" translation work.[34] This approach values the ability of the translator to be invisible, leaving no traces in the translated text and giving the impression that the finished product is not in fact a translation but the original. It advocates a fluent translation, one "which aims to conceal the translation production with the numerous conditions under which it was conceived."[35] Yahuda's translation work in many ways represents the opposite approach. He explicitly positions himself as the translator/interpreter within the text, and openly reveals the translation production with its dilemmas and choices. He presents not only both the original and translated texts but also various other translation and interpretation options, opening before the reader a variety of translational choices and routes.

Yahuda's and Meyouhas's translation strategies undermine the monolingual translation convention that affords sovereign authority to the original textual source and requires that the translation be faithful to it, seeing in the act of translation the demarcation of the sovereign boundaries of the original text and its replacement in a new linguistic territory.[36] There is always a gap that the translation process cannot hide, a gap that places the translation in the middle, between the borders of multiple languages, traditions, and cultures.

The Seam Line between the Spoken and the Textual

The intersections between written and oral traditions have a fundamental role in Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translation work. Both translations are based on numerous oral traditions (fables, legends, proverbs) with minimal references to textual sources. While the origins of the translated tales and proverbs are vaguely presented, the biographical links to those literary traditions are strongly emphasized. Meyouhas's

and Yahuda's personal backgrounds in the borderland between Jewish and Muslim traditions played a seminal role in the formation of their translation work.

Meyouhas lengthily presents his relations to the Palestinian oral tradition. In his writings he describes the influence that his childhood in the Palestinian village of Silwan had on the formation of his intellectual and political vision.[37] He stresses that during his formative years in Silwan, the Arab Muslim Palestinian oral tradition became "an integral part of his kinship culture."[38] Reading this statement one can assume that some of the stories and fables translated in *Yaldey Arav* are based on the tales he heard as a child in Silwan. This blurs distinctions between orality and textuality and between author and translator. It also highlights the complexity of his translation work. It is not possible to determine clearly which parts of the tales are his own creation based on his childhood memories and which are translated from an official oral or textual corpus.

Yahuda's biographical background also played a crucial role in his own translation work. Yahuda opens his introduction to the first volume with a declaration regarding the process of collecting the proverbs: "I started to collect these proverbs for personal use, as I valued proverbs from a young age. Each time I heard a beautiful proverb, I used to write it down and later, while reading books, I highlighted the ones I liked. In that way I collected many proverbs."[39] While the personal links to the translated collection are evident, the open statement also reveals some foundational elements in Yahuda's translation methods. First, he declares that the proverb collection is not based on a stable corpus or source; second, that it was formed along with his personal intellectual development with its unique social and cultural mixture; third, that his collection process comprises a mixture of textual and literary traditions—spoken/oral beside textual/written. He also presents his collecting method, which was based on various forms of textual transmission: listening, documenting, writing, and reading. He blends them together without strict distinctions or hierarchization. In doing so he defies the dominant literary convention of his time that pushed toward strict distinctions between the spoken word and the script, the oral and written traditions.[40]

Moreover, the discussions throughout the translation span larger historical, political, and social contexts. These discussions often combine stories, fables, and legends from a wide variety of literary traditions. Yahuda demonstrates a remarkable knowledge of Islamic literature in all its forms, from oral literature through legal and religious literature to philosophy and mysticism. In addition he references Arab chronicles and oral histories. The depth of his personal acquaintance with Muslim scholars of his time is also evident in the text.[41] This unique structure acts as an

intersection of textualities, highlighting the connectivity and movement between oral and written traditions.

Yahuda often discusses the pronunciation of the text either directly or implicitly. He highlights the importance of the spoken dimension of the word/character/sentence and how it influences the structure of the written text as well as its meaning. In doing so, he reveals the gap between the written text and the spoken word in what Barthes calls "the trap of scription [writing]."[42]

For instance in one of his discussions Yahuda describes the complex relations between the written script, the oral articulation, and the meaning in the Arabic language. He refers to a fable from the Arab oral tradition that demonstrates the power of the language when minor differences in the script can dramatically change the meaning of the word in a way that is sometimes of critical importance. In the middle of the fable, he moves to a metalinguistic discussion on the tension between form and meaning in the Arabic script:

> It is known that in Arabic there are many letters that have the same shape while only dots distinguish between them, for example *bāʿ* and *tāʿ* share the same shape and the only difference between them is the dots, for *bāʿ* has one dot below and for *tāʿ* two dots on top.[43]

After this metalinguistic note, he returns to the tragic story of the clown who was emasculated due to a mix-up of dots and letters that dramatically changed the king's order.

The distinction between sentence and utterance is one of the foundational aspects of Bakhtin's work. While the "sentence" is one of the central unities of language for linguistic study, Bakhtin switches the focus to the utterance as the basic unity of language in actual communication. An utterance may be made up of a single sentence, but equally, it may be made up of a single word or exclamation or of a large number of sentences together. For Bakhtin, any study of discourse, literature, and language should focus on the interrelations between the written and the spoken dimensions of the text.[44] In that way the "text as such never appears as a dead thing; beginning with any text—and sometimes passing through a lengthy series of mediating links—we always arrive, in the final analysis, at the human voice, which is to say we come up against the human being."[45] Following Bakhtin's argument, Julia Kristeva views the text as the interplay of texts, not as a singular entity, emphasizing that a text creates meaning with the relations between the text and the corpus of already existing texts, which opens new possibilities of viewing a text from many different purviews.[46]

In the context of the biblical tales, the connectivity between orality and textuality contains subversive political interpretations. In his translation work Meyouhas blends different oral and textual traditions of the biblical story, mixing Islamic hadith and oral traditions with Jewish midrashic and Talmudic traditions, without a clear boundary between them. Furthermore, he uses a mixture of biblical Hebrew with Arabic pronunciation of names of places and protagonists, which highlights the multiplicity of optional readings and writings of the biblical narrative. By doing so, Meyouhas offers a different interpretation of the biblical text in the political context of his time: instead of reconnecting to only one fixed original written text, he positions the biblical stories within their vast array of interpretations and translations in the written and oral traditions, Jewish as well as Muslim, over the ages. This path, in turn, required that the Arab Palestinians and their history and stories be included—in the text and in the land.

Reading Meyouhas's translation of biblical stories from the Muslim oral tradition, it is hard to avoid a comparison with the European models of biblical translation. These were rooted in the privileging of literacy over orality and in the connection between the rise of the vernacular languages and nation-states in Europe. They differ substantially from the model that was developed in the Judeo-Muslim cultural and religious sphere. In that tradition, oral texts have traditionally been of greater significance, and multilingualism served to undermine any monolithic language-nation connection.

Polyglot: Linguistic Fusion

We are used to thinking of cultures and languages as autonomous singularities and that texts for translation are usually written in one language and are rooted in the corresponding culture. But what if, as is the case of these translation works, multiple languages reside in a single text or a single word and embody multiple literary and cultural traditions?

While the relations between Hebrew and Arabic have a strong input in Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translations, the label "bilingualism" or "multilingulism" is not sufficient to define the use of language in them.[47] Instead of placing two natural languages (polyglossia) side by side, it destabilizes the boundaries between them in a way that undermines any attempt to create a separated language or cultural system. It also reveals the intralinguistic heterogeneity highlighting the gaps between different usages, writings, and pronunciations of the same language.

Bakhtin uses the term "heteroglossia" to describe the way in which multiple languages reside within a single cultural and linguistic community. Vyacheslav Ivanov defines Bakhtin's use of heteroglossia as "the simultaneous use of different kinds of

speech or other signs, the tension between them, and their conflicting relationship within one text," while differentiating it from monoglossia (the dominance of one language) and polyglossia (the coexistence of two languages).[48] For Bakhtin, heteroglossia is the arena in which the interrelations and connectivity between different forms and uses of language occur; each character, word, or sentence is subject to multiple and sometimes conflicting pronunciations, meanings, intonations, and allusions.[49]

The layout of the pages in Yahuda's book reflects its heteroglossic nature. The translations are not located at the center of the page but in a format composed of multiple texts, languages, and interpretations (resembling a Talmudic page), and although the Arabic version stands alongside the Hebrew version, there is nothing binary in this layout. Instead, the structure breaks the division between original source and translation. In addition, the fact that the Arabic proverbs are written in Hebrew letters only intensifies the connectivity between Hebrew and Arabic and positions the (Arabic) source and the (Hebrew) translation on a spectrum of overlapping relations.[50]

One example from *Mishley Arav* is telling. In the translation of one of the proverbs, the similarity between the Arabic and Hebrew versions is particularly apparent:[51]

נוסח ערבי (Arabic version): אלאשכאפי חאפי ואלחאיך עריאן.

נוסח עברי (Hebrew version): האושכפי יחף והאורג ערום.

Besides the usage of Hebrew characters for both languages, which highlights the visual similarity between them, Yahuda's selection of wording has an additional important affect. Yahuda chose the Hebrew-Aramaic word *ushkafi* (אושכפי) in his translation of the Arabic word *iskāfī* (إسْكافي)—meaning "shoemaker." He could have used the more common Hebrew word *sandlar* (סנדלר) but chose the word that reflects most intensely the connectivity and similarity between the two languages.

This example only demonstrates the significant role that the linguistic dimension had in Yahuda's translation work. He often delves into linguistic-philological discussions that compare the meanings of words in Arabic and Hebrew, which often also involve a comparison with other languages, usually from the same geographical sphere—such as Turkish, Persian, and Aramaic—but on rare occasions also European languages such as English, German, and French. It also points to the multiple variations of Arabic languages (including variations of Judeo-Arabic) spread by geography and historical contexts. In this way he challenges the divisions between Arabic and Hebrew as two distinct national or regional languages. Some of the proverbs are identified

by Yahuda as belonging to a specific geographical area (Eretz Yisrael/Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, or North Africa), and in other discussions he emphasizes the changing meanings of certain words or proverbs in different geographical, social, and cultural contexts. Thus, he presents a broad Arab and Arab Jewish linguistic and cultural sphere that spreads across a wide imagined geography.

In his translation Meyouhas uses the Arabic names of the biblical protagonists (Musa, Haroon, Suleiman, Daud, Ibrahim, etc.), and he sometimes uses the Arabic names of the places in the biblical landscape as well. This translational strategy has dramatic literary, political, and linguistic implications. It is not a conventional foreignizing strategy (bringing the text closer to the source language) for two main reasons: First, it echoes the Judeo-Arabic translations of the Bible (especially Saadia Gaon's *tafsir*), which used the same translational strategy of mixing Arabic and Hebrew names. Second, it highlights the intimacy and proximity between Arabic and Hebrew and between the Muslim tradition and the Jewish tradition in relation to the land of the Bible (Palestine) and the biblical story. For example, in one of the stories, Meyouhas gives the Arabic place name beside the Hebrew place name:

> One day, an evil spirit fell on Musa, in his old age and infirmity, and he left the camp of the Children of Israel and wandered in a foul temper along the shores of *Bahar Lot*, which is *Yam Hamelah* [the Dead Sea], among the rocks. There, he saw a shepherd coming in his direction, and as he drew closer, he saw it was the shepherd to whom his father-in-law *Shahib*, or Jethro, had entrusted his flocks when Musa left Midian to return to Egypt and to lead the people of Israel out of the suffering inflicted by Pharoah.[52]

By placing the Arabic name *Bahar Lot* (בחר לוט) beside the Hebrew name *Yam Hamelah* (ים המלח), Meyouhas is highlighting the multilingual settings of the historical and contemporary Palestinian landscape and geography. Moreover, at a time of national conflict, when the politics of place-naming had a crucial role in discourse and practice, the mixing of Hebrew and Arabic names of places in his translation destabilized the national effort of separating between languages and territories—in the Zionist case, via toponymic (place-naming) activities and remapping projects that replaced Arabic names with Hebrew names.[53] This was part of a wider process of de-Arabization of the land and its population.[54]

Intertextuality and Translation: The Dialogic Dimension

The intersection between various languages, traditions, and stories in Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translations represents a notion of connectivity between Jewish and

Muslim traditions. None of the literary traditions or "languages" forms a separate system but relates to and interacts with other languages or traditions in a recursive manner. This translational model constantly challenges the nationalistic perception of distinct monolingual literary and linguistic traditions. Thus, these translations act not as a form of mediation between two different and separate languages or traditions but as representatives of a shared cultural space. They form what Kristeva would coin as "intertextuality," which she defines "as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings."[55] Kristeva's usages of dialogue echo Bakhtin's terminology. For Bakhtin language and textual communication are constantly engaged with and are informed by other texts and voices in dialogized manner. In these dialogized settings each text echoes multiple other texts and the different usages and meanings associated with each word, phrase, or utterance.

The intertextuality and the dialogized relations in Meyouhas's work interconnect between Jewish and Muslim oral and written traditions of the biblical story. At a time when national and cultural boundaries were separating Jews and Arab Palestinians, and when a struggle was raging over the question of the ownership of the (biblical) text and of the land, Meyouhas's intertextuality proposed a different cultural and political vision, one that sought to undermine the question of singularity and originality. Instead of focusing on the authority of a single unified tradition, Meyouhas emphasizes the dialogical notion of connectivity and fluidity between multiple traditions of the biblical story. And in contrast to the nationalistic Zionist political trend, which used the biblical text as a tool to claim exclusive Jewish ownership of the land, the translation work suggested a different narrative: instead of a single authorized source of the biblical text, it presents multiplicity and heterogeneity of texts, tales, and translations that intersect in a dialogized manner with no independent territories or clear borders between them. If there is no one unified text or tradition, no one can claim exclusive ownership of it or of the land.

Yahuda's translation entangles multiple literary and religious traditions. *Mishley Arav* includes various types of translational and linguistic practices such as philological analyses, metalinguistic explanations, and comparative investigations of oral and textual traditions, while also emphasizing the connections between them. Testimony to this approach can be found in the programmatic introduction that Yahuda wrote to the first volume of his work. In this introduction, he describes the intertextual and unfixed nature of the translated proverbs and fables:

> There are many international fables that are universally owned; while the content is the same, these fables appear in different versions, which are told in all languages by all nations, and it is impossible to know who their creators were and what land they came from. However, for the proverbs of the Arabs before Islam, their history, tellers, and tribes are known. And also, many of the proverbs that were told after the rise of Islam have known origins in terms of who told them and where they lived; even those that are related in a dialect language, their history and place of origin are known, as the proverbs themselves refer to these, telling a story that happened in a certain place where the proverb came to be told.[56]

In another section of his introduction, Yahuda emphasizes the constant transition of proverbs between languages and oral traditions:

> Some Arabic proverbs resemble Hebrew proverbs. In some cases, Hebrew proverbs crossed into Arabic while retaining their content and style; in others, the contents of an Arabic proverb are similar to a Hebrew proverb, not because it was copied into Arabic but because they were also inspired by the same spirit, and they created proverbs that are similar to ours but have a different style and form.[57]

Yahuda's work brings literary traditions from Islamic sources together with tales from rabbinic literature, and fables and legends from classical Arabic literature (*A Thousand and One Nights* or *Kalila wa Dimna*) with localized folk tales and personal memories. It contains a strong notion of intertextuality that is "constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."[58] This dialogized intertextuality creates an imagined interreligious and interlingual landscape that spreads from Morocco in the west to Persia in the east in the format of Ottoman or Andalusian imagined geographical boundaries.

Conclusion

This article suggests a new reading into two translation works from the polyglot Arab Jewish translation model that operated in the Arabic-Hebrew cultural and linguistic borderlands where partitioned languages and traditions interact and come together. It explores the ways in which they act as symbolic literary contact zones that redefine the relations between languages, cultures, and identities. At a time when emerging national and cultural boundaries separated Jews and Arabs, Hebrew and Arabic, settlers and natives, and a struggle was raging over the ownership of the (biblical) land and the (biblical) text, these translations focused on tales and traditions free of ownership and without any stable original source, thus indicating the connectivity

between them. While the dominant translation model in Hebrew literary circles pushed toward forming a unified and distinct monolingual literary framework, they emphasize the multiplicity and heterogeneity dimensions of the Hebrew and Arabic languages and literary traditions.

Yet when these works were published (between 1927 and 1934), the separation between Arabic and Hebrew, and between Jewish and Muslim literary traditions, was at its peak. Most of the (Hebrew) readers and publishers were monolingual (in relation to Arabic), lacking the ability (and/or the will) to identify and address the heteroglossic and polyphonic dimensions these works contained. In this context it is not surprising that these translations were viewed merely as part of the development of the national Hebrew literary field and marginalized under the rubric of folkloric literature.[59]

Moreover, at a time when Arabic-Hebrew bilingualism and language mingling were easily associated with betrayal of the national collective, the use of *Arav* (Arab) in the title of both translated works was already perceived in the nationalistic and monolingual logic as an act of separation between the Arabic tradition (with its distinct "national" histories and values) and the Jewish or Hebrew literary tradition. However, Meyouhas's and Yahuda's translational methods refused to remain confined by distinct borders of language, literature, and religion, shifting the attention to Andalusian and Ottoman models of coexistence and interaction of multiple linguistic traditions in a single geographical-cultural framework bringing together Islamic, Jewish, Turkish, Hebrew, Persian, Arabic, and Aramaic traditions in a dialogized and intertwined way.

Thus, the fluidity that is inherent in these translations becomes a source of resistance to the dominant monolingual and nationalistic literary and translation canon and represents an alternative translation model. For Yahuda and Meyouhas, translation was not a tool for mediation between two separated languages, identities, or traditions; rather, it operated within the same multilingual and multireligious cultural landscape located on the borderlands, connecting Hebrew and Arabic (Judeo-Arabic), Arabs and Jews (Arab Jews) or Judaism and Islam (Judeo-Muslim).

Notes

1 For a discussion on the concept of partition in this context, see Ella Shohat, "Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews," *Social Text* 21, no. 2 (2003): 49–74; Gil Z. Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination*, vol. 24 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

2 For more on this group, see Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, "The Possibility of Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 1 (2014): 43–61; Yitzhak Bezalel, *Noladetem Tsiyonim: Ha-Sefaradim be-Eretz Yisrael ba-Tsiyonut u-va-tehiyah ha-Ivrit ba-tkufah ha-Osmanit* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2008); Yuval Evri and Almog Behar, "Between East and West: Controversies over the Modernization of Hebrew Culture in the Works of Shaul Abdallah Yosef and Ariel Bension," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 16, no. 2 (2017): 295–311; Hillel Cohen, "Hayav u-moto shel ha-Yehudi ha-Aravi be-Eretz Yisrael u-me-hutza la," *Iyunim bi-Tkumat Yisrael* 9 (2015): 171–200.

3 On the native intellectual circles in Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century, see Salim Tamari, *Mountain against Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

4 See Lital Levy, "The Nahda and the Haskala: A Comparative Reading of 'Revival' and 'Reform,'" *Middle Eastern Literatures: Incorporating Edebiyat* 16, no. 3 (2013): 300–316. For more, see Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brotherhood: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Jonathan Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

5 Although the scholarly literature has taken a growing interest in the work and activities of these Arab Jewish figures, their rich and complex translation project has not been systematically and thoroughly examined. The new scholarly literature includes: Abigail Jacobson and Moshe Naor, *Oriental Neighbors* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2016); Campos, *Ottoman Brotherhood*; Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors*; Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*; Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture, 1893-1958* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013); Lital Levy, *Jewish Writers in the Arab East: Literature, History, and the Politics of Enlightenment, 1863–1914* (PhD diss, UC Berkeley, 2007).

6 Yosef Meyouhas (1868–1942) was an educator, translator, researcher, and public figure, a prominent member of both local Arab Palestinian intellectual circles and the Hebrew revival circle. He took part in the formation of key institutions in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century, including the first Hebrew language committee (together with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda).

Besides his extensive political and educational activities, Meyouhas was involved in a wide range of literary and translation activities, focusing mainly on the collection and translation of Palestinian Jewish and Muslim oral literary traditions. For more on Meyouhas, see Yuval Evri, "Translating the Arab-Jewish Tradition: From al-Andalus to Palestine/Land of Israel," in *Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien 1/2016* (Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien, 2016). Isaac Benjamin Yahuda (1863–1941) was born in the Old City of Jerusalem and raised in a multilingual and multiethnic environment. While Arabic was the dominant spoken language, Hebrew, Aramaic, Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Yiddish were also part of his childhood landscape. From an early age he began to learn Arabic from private teachers and studied it more systematically after joining the newly established Alliance school in Jerusalem. He was part of the school's first group of Arabic students, together with David Yellin and Yosef Meyouhas, who, like Yahuda, became leading and influential teachers, translators, and scholars of Arabic language and culture.

7 The ideal type, as Max Weber put it, is not the model that exists and is not necessarily the desired model, but a model that is based on structured tension and that does not describe the act as it exists in reality, but rather suggests principles of "objective possibilities." Here I use Max Weber's notion of "objective possibilities" as a basis for the notion of "missed opportunities." See Max Weber, "Objective Possibility and Adequate Causation in Historical Explanation," *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1949): 164–188. For more on their political and cultural project, see Galia Yardeni, *Ha-itonut ha-Ivrit be-Eretz Yisrael ba-shanim 1863-1904* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1969). Yaffah Berlovitz later developed this analysis; see Berlovitz, "Reshita shel ha-sifrut be-Eretz Yisrael ve-zikoteiha le-shirat Sefarad: Hatzaa le-model tarbut Yehudi-Aravi," *Bikoret ve-Parshanut* 32 (Winter 1997): 95–110; and also in my work: Evri, "Translating the Arab-Jewish Tradition"; Bezalel, *Noladetem Tsiyonim*.

8 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

9 On the development of Bakhtin's work in the context of his time, see Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 2003).

10 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 84.

11 For more on the Hebrew monolingual translation model, see Nitsa Ben-Ari, "The Double Conversion of Ben-Hur: A Case of Manipulative Translation," *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies* 14, no. 2 (2002): 263–301; Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem," in *Literature and Translation: New Perspectives in Literary Studies*, ed. James S. Holmes, José Lambert, and Raymond van den Broeck (Leuven: Acco,1978), 117–127.

12 Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2002).

13 Roberto Valdeón, "Nation, Empire, Translation," *Handbook of Translation Studies* 4 (2013): 111.

14 Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2012); Bassnett, *Translation Studies*.

15 Reine Meylaerts, "Multilingualism as a Challenge for Translation Studies," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartrina (London: Routledge, 2013), 537–551.

16 Eric R. Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues: Language and Communication in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Past & Present* 217, no. 1 (2012): 47–77.

17 For further reading on the role of the dragomans, see E. Natalie Rothman, "Dragomans," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*, ed. Franz Pöchhacker (London: Routledge, 2015), 119–124.

18 E. Natalie Rothman, "Afterword: Intermediaries, Mediation, and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 2-3 (2015): 245–259.

19 Rachel Mairs and Maya Muratov, *Archaeologists, Tourists, Interpreters: Exploring Egypt and the Near East in the Late 19th–Early 20th Centuries* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 13.

20 Rothman, "Dragomans," 119.

21 E. Natalie Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossings in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 4 (2009): 771–800; Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues."

22 Tamari, *Mountain against Sea*; Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*; Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

23 Dursteler, "Speaking in Tongues."

24 Benjamin Hary, "Judeo-Arabic as a Mixed Language," in *Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic*, ed. Liesbeth Zack and Arie Schippers (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 125–143. It is important to stress here that our discussion of the Judeo-Arabic literary and translational model differs with the common assumption that this language represents a separate Jewish language. In doing so it follows Ella Shohat's argument regarding the idea of Judeo-Arabic being invented as a Jewish language separate from Arabic and distanced from the history of Arabic and the Judeo-Muslim tradition. Shohat argues that while the term and category of the "Arab Jew" elicited mainly hostility and opposition in scholarly and political circles, the category "Judeo-Arabic" has by contrast been widely accepted as a legitimate object of scholarly inquiry. Shohat's work seeks to reveal and problematize the boundaries of the category and of the field itself, exploring its organizing principles, revealing the broader political and ideological context in which it emerged, and pointing out the aspects that were overlooked, erased, negated, or marginalized. See Ella Shohat, "The Question of Judeo-Arabic," *Arab Studies Journal* 23, no. 1 (2015): 14–76; Ella Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic: Nation, Partition and the Linguistic Imaginary," *Interventions* 19, no. 2 (2017): 153–200.

25 S. J. Pearce, "'The Types of Wisdom Are Two in Number': Judah ibn Tibbon's Quotation from the Ihya'ulum al-Din," *Medieval Encounters* 19, no. 1–2 (2013): 137–166.

26 Yosef Tobi and Tsivia Tobi, *Judeo-Arabic Literature in Tunisia, 1850–1950* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2014); Benjamin H. Hary, *Translating Religion: Linguistic Analysis of Judeo-Arabic Sacred Texts from Egypt*, vol. 38 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

27 One of the most interesting examples of this phenomenon took place in the Baghdadi diaspora in Southeast Asia. *Haham* Shlomo Twena (1855–1913), a Baghdadi-born rabbi, opened a publishing press in Calcutta in 1888 that published dozens of translations into Judeo-Arabic, including Psalms, Ecclesiastes, the book of Esther, and the book of Ruth, as well as the Mishnaic *Ethics of the Fathers*, the Passover Haggadah, and various popular Jewish legends. See Yitzhak Avishur, "Sifrut ve-itonut ve-Aravit-Yehudit shel Yehudei Bavel be-dfusei Hodu," *Peamim* 52 (1992): 101.

28 Yitzhak Avishur, "Ha-sifrut ha-amamit shel shlosha rabanim Bavliyim be-mahatzit ha-mea ha-tisha asar," *Peamim* 59 (1994): 105.

29 Yahuda began to translate texts from Arabic in the 1880s for various Hebrew periodicals (mainly the *Hazvi* newspaper and *Luach Eretz Yisrael*). Besides translation of some classic and contemporary Arabic texts, he also published the first translations from his collection of Arabic proverbs. In addition, he opened a translation office near the main Ottoman government building in Jerusalem, offering his services as translator and interpreter from and to Ottoman Turkish and Arabic.

30 For more on the political position of the Arab Jews during this period, see Jacobson and Naor, *Oriental Neighbors*; Cohen, "Hayav u-moto shel ha-Yehudi ha-Aravi."

31 Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1929* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015).

32 Meylaerts, "Multilingualism as a Challenge for Translation Studies," 539.

33 Of all of Isaac Yahuda's rich and diverse cultural activities, *Mishley Arav* would appear to be his most important cultural and intellectual achievement. This translation project began in the 1880s, with his first translations being published in the Hebrew periodicals in Jerusalem. It culminated in the publication of two full volumes, in 1932 and 1934: *Mishley Arav* (Tel Aviv: Land of Israel History and Ethnography Institution, 1932, 1934).

34 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2017).

35 Liron Mor, "Translation," *Mafte'akh* 2e (2011): 123.

36 Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation* (London: Routledge, 2007).

37 When Meyouhas was five years old, his family moved outside the Old City walls to the nearby village of Silwan, becoming the first Jewish family to live in the village. His father died unexpectedly a short time afterward, and his mother stayed in Silwan with her four small children. Meyouhas often described how their Muslim neighbors supported his mother during that crucial time and welcomed the family into the community.

38 Yosef Meyouhas, *Me-hayei ha-ezrahim be-Eretz Yisrael* (Cairo: 1919), v.

39 Yahuda, *Mishley Arav* (1932), 8. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

40 The intersection between oral and textual traditions in Yahuda's work is also connected to his unique intellectual position at the crossroads between different religious, linguistic, and academic traditions. His multilingual fluency (in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, French, German, and English) granted him an advantageous position at the crossroads of trade and scientific and religious knowledge, and an ability to translate between different philosophical, religious, and literary traditions.

41 In 1906 he moved to Egypt and opened a bookstore near al-Azhar University in Cairo, specializing in Arabic, Aramaic, Turkish, Hebrew, and Persian rare books and manuscripts. He became a well-known merchant among European, Arab, and Muslim scholars. His global connections with large centers in Europe, India, Iraq, Yemen, Istanbul, and North Africa enabled him to locate and trade rare and expensive manuscripts.

42 Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009) 3.

43 Yahuda, *Mishley Arav* (1932), 113.

44 Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 38.

45 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 252–253.

46 P. Prayer Elmo Raj, "Text/Texts: Interrogating Julia Kristeva's Concept of Intertextuality," *Ars Artium* 3 (2015): 77.

47 Reine Meylaerts, "Multilingualism and Translation," in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 227.

48 Vyacheslav Ivanov, "Heteroglossia," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, no. 1-2 (1999): 100.

49 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*; Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "The Cinema after Babel: Language, Difference, Power," *Screen* 26, no. 3-4 (1981): 35–58.

50 On the ways in which Judeo-Arabic intersects with a wide spectrum of linguistic and literary traditions, see Ella Shohat, "The Invention of Judeo-Arabic"; Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

51 It is of great importance in an article dedicated to the proximity between Arabic and Hebrew, and of scholars who lived this proximity, that we exemplify it while using the Arabic and Hebrew script.

52 Yosef Meyouhas, *Yaldey Arav* (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1927), 83.

53 Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2002); Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

54 Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 1 (1999): 5–20.

55 Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 65.

56 Yahuda, *Mishley Arav* (1932), 9–10.

57 Ibid., 10.

58 Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 37.

59 More recent accounts have investigated these works in light of the emergence and institutionalization of the field of folklore and ethnographic research in Palestine. See Amos Noy, *Edim o mumhim: Yehudim maskilim bnei Yerushalayim ve-ha Mizrah be-thilat ha-mea ha-20* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2017).