

Hebrew Works by Arab Authors

Literary Critiques of Israeli Society

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Introduction

Modern Hebrew literature originated and developed in Europe since the late 18th century as an exclusive Jewish affair. Over time Hebrew literature in Europe became interconnected with the ideology of Zionism and Jewish nationalism and society became central themes of the modern Hebrew canon.¹ In 1948 Zionism culminated into the establishment of the state of Israel and since then Israel was the main center of Hebrew literary production. However, there is also a substantial Arab minority living in Israel, something that was not foreseen by the Zionist establishment, and led to the placement of the Arab minority under a military administration from 1949 until 1966.² The modern Hebrew canon until this time had served as a national Jewish literature which was exclusively produced by Jewish authors, but since the second half of the 1960s, after the military administration had ended, Hebrew literary works by Arab authors who are citizens of the state of Israel have also started to appear. “Although it is relatively new to see Arab authors writing in Hebrew, the phenomenon is in no way temporary, or a passing fad. Quite the reverse: the number of Arab novelists writing in Hebrew is growing.”³

Central to this thesis will be the Hebrew language novels written by Israeli Arab⁴ authors. Out of the group of Arab authors that write in the Hebrew language a selection of three novels by three different authors has been made. The novels by these three authors have been chosen because together these authors provide the broadest possible selection out of the total group of authors that write in Hebrew with regard to the generation they belong to, the reception of their Hebrew novels, the variation in their complete literary oeuvres, their activities in other professions and their personal background. The first author whose novel will be addressed is Atallah Mansour (1934). Mansour, who was born before the state of Israel was established, is the first Arab to ever write a novel in Hebrew. His novel *Beor Hadash*,⁵ which means *In a New Light* and was published in 1966, is furthermore said to be

¹ See: Ezra Spicehandler, Tova Cohen, Yaffah Berlovitz, Avner Holtzman, Anat Feinberg, Gershon Shaked, et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd edition. Volume 8. Editors Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007). 685, 686.

² See: William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton. “Israel and the Palestinians from 1948 to the 1970’s.” In: *A History of the Modern Middle East*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009) 345-367.

³ Adel Shakour. “Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew: Fleeting fashion or persistent phenomenon?” *Language Problems & Language Planning*. 2013. Vol. 37(1): 11.

⁴ In this thesis the term Israeli Arab will occasionally be used to denote those Arabs who are citizens of the state of Israel despite the fact that this term can be viewed as problematic and that the Arab citizens of Israel might reject the term Israeli Arab and identify themselves as Palestinian Arab rather than Israeli Arab.

⁵ Atallah Mansour. באור חדש. (*In a New Light*). (Tel Aviv: Karni Publishing House, 1966).

based on his own experiences living in Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim.⁶ Aside from his literary work, Mansour has had a prominent career as a journalist for both Hebrew language and Arabic language newspapers. Mansour is a Christian Arab and currently lives in Nazareth. The second author whose work will be examined is Naim Araidi (1950). Araidi has published one novel *Tevilah Katlanit*,⁷ which translates as *Fatal Baptism* in English, and foremost has a career as a poet in both the Hebrew and the Arabic language. He obtained a PhD in Hebrew Literature from Bar Ilan University and as a Druze has also served in the Israeli Defense Forces. Araidi has worked as a professor at Gordon College in Haifa and is the General Director of the Center for Arab Children's Literature in Israel. In 2012 Naim Araidi became the first ever Arab ambassador to Israel when he served as Israeli ambassador in Norway. The third author whose work will be assessed is Sayed Kashua (1975). He is the most successful of all the Arab authors writing in Hebrew and a well known public figure in Israel. Kashua has published three novels which all have been popular both inside and outside of Israel. However, for matters of space only Kashua's first novel *Aravim Rokdim*⁸, which translates as *Dancing Arabs*, will be addressed in this thesis. Apart from being a novelist, Kashua has a flourishing journalistic career for Hebrew-language newspapers and is the writer of the successful bilingual sitcom *Avodah Aravit*⁹ (*Arab Labor*). Sayed Kashua was born in Tira in a Muslim Arab family and has recently moved to the United States where he now resides in Chicago with his family.

The main research question posed in this thesis is how and why the social and political reality of Israeli society is reflected in the novels of Atallah Mansour, Naim Araidi and Sayed Kashua. The focus of the main research question lays with the critiques of Israeli society as expressed through the stories in the novels. In order to answer the main research question and to determine the meaning of the texts as well as their methods and goals, the philological method will be deployed and the novels will primarily be approached from a literary critical perspective. As such there will be considerable attention for the personal backgrounds of the authors. Moreover the choice of the three authors to write in Hebrew will also be assessed per individual author as well as the intentions the three authors had with writing their novels. Furthermore, the fact that the three authors belong to different generations and have diverse backgrounds and experiences will allow for a comparison between the novels in assessing any

⁶ The transliterations of the Hebrew titles in this thesis follow the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*'s general transliteration rules for scientific purposes.

⁷ Naim Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). (Tel Aviv: Bitan Publishing, 1992).

⁸ Sayed Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). (Moshav Ben Shemen: Modan Publishing House, 2002).

⁹ *Avodah Aravit*: in Hebrew עבודה ערבית (*Arab Labor*)

changes and similarities between them over time. Approaching the three novels in such a way will add to our understanding of Israeli society in general but especially to our understanding of the Arab experiences in Israeli society. In spite of growing academic attention to the phenomenon of Arab authors writing in Hebrew and their literary works, a study precisely as this does not yet exist and therefore also holds scholarly value.

The next chapter of this thesis, titled “Israeli Arab Hebrew Literature: A Review”, will present the complete group of Arab authors that write in the Hebrew language and will review their placement within the context of Modern Hebrew literature. Furthermore, this chapter will also review the already existing academic studies and perspectives on the phenomenon of Arab authors writing in Hebrew as well as the individual authors examined in this thesis and their novels. The third chapter will attend to the author Atallah Mansour and his novel *Beor Ḥadash*. The subsequent chapter assesses the author Naim Araidí and his novel *Tevilah Katlanit* followed by a chapter about the author Sayed Kashua and his novel *Aravim Rokdim*. The last chapter will present the conclusions of this thesis.

Israeli Arab Hebrew Literature: A Review

Thus far multiple novels have been written in the Hebrew language by Arab authors who are citizens of the state of Israel. According to Adel Shakour who researched the phenomenon of Arab authors writing novels in Hebrew the group of Arab authors who writes their work in the Hebrew language consists of nine writers.¹⁰ Some of these authors have become well known and widely read whilst others have remained obscure. The first author to ever publish a novel in Hebrew was Atallah Mansour whose novel *In a New Light* appeared in 1966.¹¹ Twenty years later another Hebrew novel by an Arab author appeared, Anton Shammas' *Arabesques* which was published in 1986.¹² In 1992 two Hebrew novels by Arab authors came out: Naim Araidí's *Fatal Baptism* (1992)¹³ and Salman Natur's *Walking on the Wind* (1992).¹⁴ A little later in the 1990s Osama Abu Gosh published *Like a Jew among Jews – A Love Story* (1995).¹⁵ After the turn of the century another seven Hebrew novels by Arab authors appeared. Jurays Tannus' *In the Shade of the Jujube Tree — Pictures of my Neighborhood* which was published in 2007.¹⁶ Odeh Basharat's *The Streets of Zatunia*¹⁷ appeared in 2009 and Ayman Siksek's *To Jaffa*¹⁸ came out in 2010. Furthermore, the complete oeuvre of Sayed Kashua was also published during this time beginning with *Dancing Arabs*¹⁹ (2002) and followed by *Let it Be Morning*²⁰ (2006) and *Second Person Singular*²¹ (2010). Kashua is the only one of the Arab authors who has published more than one novel in the Hebrew language and he could be considered the most popular of all of them. The other writers who have been mentioned above thus far have only published one novel in Hebrew, although some of them have also published novels in Arabic. This could be due to a variety of factors. For example, most of these authors are not primarily Hebrew literary writers but also have careers in journalism, academia and

¹⁰ See: Shakour. "Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew." 1-17.

¹¹ Atallah Mansour. באור חדש (*In a New Light*). (Tel Aviv: Karni Publishing House, 1966)

¹² Anton Shammas. ערבסקות (*Arabesques*). (Am Oved Publishers: Tel Aviv, 1986).

¹³ Naim Araidí. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). (Tel Aviv: Bitan Publishing, 1992)

¹⁴ Salman Natur. הליכה על הרוח (*Walking on the Wind*). (Beit Berl: The Center for Research of Arab Society in Israel, 1992).

¹⁵ Osama Abu-Gosh. סיפור אהבת כיהודי בין יהודים: סיפור אהבת (*Like a Jew among Jews – A Love Story*). (The Center for Research of Arab Society in Israel, 1995).

¹⁶ Jurays Tannus. בצל השיזף: תמונות מחיי שכונתי (*In the Shade of the Jujube Tree — Pictures of my Neighborhood*). (Nazareth: Alnahda, 2007).

¹⁷ Odeh Basharat. חוצות זתוניה (*The Streets of Zatunia*). (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2009).

¹⁸ Ayman Siksek. אל יפו. (*To Jaffa*). (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Aharonot; Sifre Hemed, 2010).

¹⁹ Sayed Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). (Moshav Ben Shemen: Modan Publishing House, 2002).

²⁰ Sayed Kashua. ויהי בוקר (*Let it be Morning*). (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2006).

²¹ Sayed Kashua. גוף שני יחיד (*Second Person Singular*) (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2010).

politics. Some of them, such as Naim Araidi, mainly write poetry, both in the Hebrew and Arabic languages, and some of them are mostly active as Hebrew-Arabic translators such as Salman Natur. Moreover, not all of the novels have been received equally positive within the Israeli literary establishment. It should also be mentioned that only those Arab authors who write novels originally in Hebrew are discussed here. There are also Arab authors who write in Hebrew, such as Salman Masalha, but who only write poetry and there are authors who write their work in Arabic for a Hebrew audience, at least in part, and have their work translated, such as Emile Habiby.

The Hebrew literature produced by Arab authors has been the topic of multiple studies which take a variety of academic perspectives. However, there is fairly little agreement on how to situate these works within the modern Hebrew canon, if at all. Furthermore, the function of the use of the Hebrew language by Arab authors is also a contentious topic. A large part of the discussion is caused by the unique development of modern Hebrew literature. Modern Hebrew literature has its origins in Europe and began its development during the so-called European Period (1781-1917) which is generally split in two literary time periods, the period of Haskalah literature (1781-1881) and the Modern Period (1881-1917).²² The Haskalah,²³ the Jewish enlightenment movement which originated in Prussia, began producing literature in the Hebrew language because the Yiddish dialects spoken by the Jewish communities in Prussia were considered “to be a vulgar and ungrammatical corruption of German.”²⁴ “The prime purpose of [Haskalah] literature was to educate the reader morally, socially, and aesthetically.”²⁵ By the 1880s a new kind of modern Hebrew literature emerged in Poland and Russia. The Hebrew literature of the Modern Period (1881-1917) rose out of the process of modernization and the European nationalism that accompanied it.²⁶ In combination with the rise of anti-Semitism, poverty amongst most of the Eastern European Jewry and the need to grapple with mass politics a Jewish nationalism was fostered in Eastern Europe in the 1880s, Zionism.²⁷ “[...] they [Eastern Europe’s Jewry] redefined their national identity by asserting a new aggressive creativity, mainly through massive development of

²² See: Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 686-696.

²³ See: Shochat, Azriel. Judith R. Baskin, and Yehuda Slutsky. “Haskalah.” In *Eyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd edition. Volume 8. Editors Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007) 434-444.

²⁴ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 687.

²⁵ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 686.

²⁶ See: Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 691, 692.

²⁷ See: Robert M. Seltzer. “The Onslaught of Modernity: Jewish History From 1880 To The Present.” In: *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1980) 634 - 642.

literary and spoken Hebrew.”²⁸ Hence Zionism and the Hebrew language became closely intertwined and the Hebrew language functioned as the vehicle by which cultural nationalism was expressed.

Simultaneously with the Hebrew literature of the Modern Period in Europe the Hebrew literary establishment in Ottoman Palestine also slowly began to develop due to the onset of Zionist inspired immigration to Eretz Yisrael²⁹ by European Jewry.³⁰ During the First Aliyah³¹ (1881-1903) some Hebrew authors had already immigrated to Ottoman Palestine but only during the Second Aliyah (1904-1914) a significant number of Hebrew authors relocated in the city of Jaffa.³² This ushered in the so-called Palestinian-Halutzic Period (1905-1948) which is generally divided into the Ottoman Period (1905-1917) and the Mandate Period (1917-1948).³³ The Ottoman Period brought forth the Palestinian short story with a “more realistic depiction of the hardships of pioneering, the life of disillusioned immigrants in Jaffa or Jerusalem.”³⁴ Most relevant, however, to the Ottoman Period is the further revival of Hebrew as a spoken language.³⁵ “Stylistically, the development of spoken Hebrew and its extension from the classroom, the library, and the study to the farm and the workshop not only lent a new flexibility to the language but also broadened its active vocabulary.”³⁶ When the Mandate Period began the Hebrew literary establishment in Palestine had already “begun to develop an indigenous Palestinian literature – the so-called ‘Eretz Yisrael genre’.”³⁷ However, only when the European Hebrew literary centers ceased to exist in 1917 did the Hebrew literary center in Palestine become fully independent center of literary production.³⁸ When a generation of younger writers who arrived during the Third Aliyah (1920-1924) entered the literary establishment, however, the cohesiveness of the literary community was

²⁸ David Aberbach. *Jewish Cultural Nationalism: Origins and Influences*. (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2008) 100.

²⁹ Eretz Yisrael, ארץ ישראל in Hebrew, is a term that in Ottoman times referred to the geographical area around Jerusalem. During the period of Mandate Palestine the term Eretz Yisrael referred to the geographical area encompassed by the British mandate. After the establishment of the state of Israel the term Eretz Yisrael became used to refer to the land of Israel.

³⁰ Seltzer. “The Onslaught of Modernity.” 635,336.

³¹ The word Aliyah, עליה in Hebrew, means ‘ascent’ and is used to denote Jewish immigration to Eretz Yisrael. In this case Aliyah refers to a wave of immigrants over an extended period of time.

³² Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 396.

³³ See: Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 396-399.

³⁴ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 396.

³⁵ See: Jack Fellman. *The Revival of Classical Tongue: Eliezer Ben Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language*. (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1973).

³⁶ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 396.

³⁷ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 397.

³⁸ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 397.

challenged. The younger generation of writers influenced by radical changes in thought caused by World War I and the Russian Revolution envisioned a new social order for Jewish society along the lines of socialist ideals.³⁹

With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 a new period of modern Hebrew Literature began, the Israel Period (1948 to the present).⁴⁰ Hebrew became the official language of the Israeli state and by 1948 most of the latest generation of Hebrew writers spoke Hebrew as their native language.⁴¹ By now the Hebrew language had been firmly connected to Jewish cultural nationalism but also to the Israeli Jewish identity.⁴² Despite the facts that there have been post-state Hebrew literary movements that have rejected all forms of ideology such as the New Wave,⁴³ and that the Hebrew literary establishment today knows a variety of genres and styles “the long-established tradition which considered Hebrew literature to be a means for examining and grappling with the basic questions of Jewish-Israeli existence by exposing the collective tensions in individual characters and fates”⁴⁴ has endured more or less unchallenged.

Within the specific context of the development of modern Hebrew literature the Hebrew language novels written by Arab authors in Israel present an interesting and problematic case. After all, the production of modern Hebrew literature up until this point in time had been an exclusively Jewish affair. When it comes to the classification of Hebrew literature written by Israeli Arabs there is no scholarly consensus on whether these works belong to the body of Palestinian literature or whether they belong to the body of Israeli literature. This issue is closely related to the issue of the authors’ choice to write in Hebrew rather than their native Arabic. For example, according to Brenner, the fact that the authors are Israeli citizens in connection with “the Arab writers’ choice of Hebrew, which signifies the intention to address the Israeli Hebrew-speaking majority readership, has defined them as Israeli writers.”⁴⁵ As such the Arab authors are classified by Brenner as belonging to the Israeli literary establishment. On the other side Elad-Bouskila, for example, is of the opinion that Palestinian literature is literature written by Palestinians regardless of the language

³⁹ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 397.

⁴⁰ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 702.

⁴¹ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 702.

⁴² See: Bernard Spolsky. “Hebrew and Israeli Identity.” In: *Language and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa*. Editor Yasir Suleiman. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996) 181-191.

⁴³ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 705.

⁴⁴ Spicehandler et al. “Modern Hebrew Literature.” 706-707.

⁴⁵ Rachel Feldhay Brenner. *Inextricably Bonded: Israeli Arab and Jewish Writers Re-Visioning Culture*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) 4,5.

used.⁴⁶ The Israeli Arab authors of Hebrew literature, according to Elad-Bouskila's classification, belong to the branch of the Palestinian literary establishment that became separate when the Israeli state was founded.⁴⁷ Another, more general, classification of these literary works is also possible if one views the Hebrew works of Israeli Arab authors simply as part of the entirety of the body of Hebrew literature, of which all texts written in the Hebrew language since antiquity until now are considered to be a part. Such a classification avoids the discussion of the national literature the works of these authors belong to and makes it possible to perceive the works independently.

The choice of the Arab authors to write in the Hebrew language is another source of disagreement amongst scholars. Some, such as Peter Clark, simply state that "Palestinians choose to write in Hebrew out of convenience rather than for ideological reasons."⁴⁸ This, according to Clark, is due to the fact that these authors live in what he calls a Hebrew-medium environment and the Hebrew language pervades their lives on a daily basis; consequently they have internalized the Hebrew language. Adel Shakour views the choice to write in Hebrew in a similar manner although he does not consider it as a decision out of convenience but rather as a conscious aesthetic choice. He states that "Some authors prefer to write novels in Hebrew because they know the language so well and because their a unique way of expressing themselves in this language can sometimes outstrip their capacity to express themselves in their mother tongue, Arabic."⁴⁹ Moreover, according to Shakour, "the fact that it [the Hebrew language] is a basic necessity [in Israel] has raised its status in Arab society."⁵⁰

For Brenner the choice for the Hebrew language is a conscious choice with the objective to address and challenge the Jewish Israeli public. She argues that "first, its subject matter presents the Jewish majority with the Arab minority's perception of the moral failings of the Zionist project. Second, its Hebrew language dismantles the Zionist exclusionary claim to Hebrew culture."⁵¹ The first author to truly challenge the Hebrew literary establishment was Emily Habiby, according to Brenner. Despite the fact that Habiby wrote in his native language Arabic and had his work was translated into Hebrew "the art and scope of Habiby's oeuvre, as well as its timing – it appeared after the 1967 Six-Day War and extended beyond the first intifada in the late 1980s – have challenged Israel's cultural self-definition in a

⁴⁶ Ami Elad-Bouskila. *Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture*. (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999) 9.

⁴⁷ Elad-Bouskila. *Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture*. 9.

⁴⁸ Peter Clark. "Marginal Literatures of the Middle East." In: *Literature and Nation in the Middle East*. Editors Yasir Suleiman and Ibrahim Muhawi. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) 187.

⁴⁹ Shakour. "Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew." 11.

⁵⁰ Shakour. "Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew." 2.

⁵¹ Brenner. *Inextricably Bonded*. 111.

fundamental way.”⁵² Furthermore, for Brenner the Hebrew translations of Habiby’s work, as well as Hebrew language work by Arab authors, on the one side reflect the desire of the author for recognition of the stories by the dominant Jewish majority whilst on the other side they also constitute resistance against that same dominant Jewish majority.

Hannan Hever presents a different perspective on the matter and argues that “the active attempt of a Jewish Zionist national minority to constitute a utopian, imagined community poised to become a national majority”⁵³ during the Modern Period in Europe was transposed when the state of Israel was established in which the Jewish citizens constitute a majority and the Arab citizens a minority. The literature of the oppressed, he argues, became the literature of the oppressors and “against this background, some Arab authors tried to enter the Hebrew canon and to become equal partners in this ‘imagined community’.”⁵⁴ Taken from Hever’s perspective the choice to write in Hebrew signifies the attempt to become part of the majority culture whilst at the same time it challenges the ethnic boundaries of the Hebrew canon.

With regard to Atallah Mansour, Naim Araidi and Sayed Kashua, the three authors whose work will be discussed later on in this thesis, several academic studies have been conducted approaching both the authors and selections of their oeuvres from different perspectives. The works already mentioned above by Elad-Bouskila, Hever to an extent also deal with the authors Mansour and Araidi but in their capacity as Hebrew writing authors without reviewing the content of their work. Brenner, discusses *In a New Light* together with A.B. Yehoshua’s “Facing the Forests” in a separate chapter in her book as a reflection of the moment in which the stories of Jews and Arabs can no longer avoid each other.⁵⁵ These books, in addition, were all published before Kashua’s first novel had even come out and as such they do not mention him. Furthermore Brenner and Hever do not mention Mansour at all. Brenner does examine Atallah Mansour and *In a New Light* in another study in which she places the works of Mansour, Emile Habiby and Anton Shammas within the specific context of Israeli Arab identity formation and cultural hybridity.⁵⁶ Another scholar, Ramras-Rauch, shortly describes Mansour’s novel and its plot in her book about the representation of the

⁵² Brenner. *Inextricably Bonded*. 114.

⁵³ Hannan Hever. *Producing The Modern Hebrew Canon: Nation Building and Minority Discourse*. (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 9.

⁵⁴ Hever. *Producing The Modern Hebrew Canon*. 9.

⁵⁵ Brenner. *Inextricably Bonded*. 173-205.

⁵⁶ Rachel Feldhay Brenner. “The Search for Identity in Israeli Arab Fiction: Atallah Mansour, Emile Habiby, and Anton Shammas.” *Israel Studies*. 2001. Vol. 6(3): 91-112.

Arab in Hebrew literature because it was the first Hebrew novel by an Arab author, but she does not engage with the work or the author in any way.⁵⁷ Similarly Ramras-Rauch also mentions Araidi in the same chapter but just within the context of his literary activities in the Hebrew language. Omer-Sherman has discussed *In a New Light* within the context of Hebrew novels that contain the stories are situated in a Kibbutz.⁵⁸ Kayyal also discusses Mansour's *In a New Light* in combination with Shammas' *Arabesques* and Kashua's *Dancing Arabs* which he views as a collective expressions of Palestinian Arabs in Israel.⁵⁹ Although Kayyal's approach borders on the approach in this thesis and analyzes the meanings of the three novels the focus of his article lies with the reception of these works and whether they have been included in the Palestinian literary canon. Moreover Kayyal is of the opinion that these three novels are all collective expressions which is not necessarily the case as will be made explicit later in this thesis. The main interests with regard to Araidi seems to be his poetry and his choice to write in the Hebrew language. Cultural anthropologist Lavie is one of the scholars who researched Araidi's choice to write in Hebrew.⁶⁰ Moreover, Araidi's poetry amongst that of others, for example, is extensively analyzed within the context of the traditions of Hebrew poetry by Levy in the book *Poetic Trespass*.⁶¹ Araidi's choice to write in Hebrew, along with Anton Shammas' choice to do the same, is examined by Snir who argues that the two authors chose the Hebrew language in order to rebel against the exclusive Jewish ownership of the Hebrew language.⁶² Oddly enough, however, Snir is under the impression that Shammas and Araidi are the only Arab authors who have written novels in the Hebrew language. Araidi's novel, although usually mentioned in academic works, has not been discussed in any academic study. Sayed Kashua's literary works have been discussed from a wide variety of perspectives. Hochberg takes an approach similar to this thesis and researches the way in which Kashua's writings participate in the construction of a critical minority discourse

⁵⁷ Gila Ramras-Rauch. "Arab Writers of Hebrew: Anton Shammas and Others." In: *The Arab in Israeli Literature*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) 193-202.

⁵⁸ Ranen Omer-Sherman. "At the Periphery of the Kibbutz: Palestinian and Mizrahi Interlopers in Utopia." 2013. *Frankel Institute Annual*. Volume 2013: 36. On: www.academia.edu. Last Accessed August 12, 2015. http://www.academia.edu/4001440/At_the_Periphery_of_the_Kibbutz_Palestinian_and_Mizrahi_Interlopers_in_Utopia

⁵⁹ Mahmoud Kayyal. "Arabs Dancing in a New Light of Arabesques': Minor Hebrew Works of Palestinian Authors in the Eyes of Critics." *Middle Eastern Literatures*. 2008. Volume 11(1): 31-51.

⁶⁰ Smadar Lavie. "Blowups in the Borderzones: Third World Israeli Authors' Gropings for Home." In: *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*. Editors Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg. (Duke University Press: Durham, 1996).

⁶¹ Lital Levy. *Poetic Trespass*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁶² Reuven Snir. "Hebrew As the Language of Grace: Arab-Palestinian Writers in Hebrew." *Prooftexts*. 1995. Vol.15(2): 163-183.

through the analysis of his works and an examination of Kashua's participation in the public sphere.⁶³ Omer-Sherman has also conducted a comparative study of the works of Sayed Kashua and Almog Behar with a focus on the overarching theme of identity confusion in the oeuvres of these two authors.⁶⁴ Rottenberg, in her short article, has analyzed Kashua's *Dancing Arabs* and proposes that the function of the novel is "to dramatize the many parallels between Israel's "ethnocracy" and the colonial situation."⁶⁵ Shimony has sought to "use the term Jewish-Arab as a mirror image of the Arab-Jew in order to analyze the conflicted identity of Kashua's Arab characters,"⁶⁶ in Kashua's most recent novel *Second Person Singular* and his short story *Hezl Disappears at Midnight*.⁶⁷ Lastly there is the article by Bilsky which takes a completely different approach and juxtaposes Israeli court decisions regarding imposters who assumed a fake identity and the main character in Kashua's novel *Dancing Arabs* in order to address the Israeli public citizenship discourse.⁶⁸

⁶³ Gil Hochberg. "To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab: Sayed Kashua and the Prospect of Minority Speech-Acts." *Comparative Literature*. 2010. Volume 62(1): 68-88.

⁶⁴ Ranen Omer-Sherman. "Paradoxes of Jewish and Muslim Identities in Israeli Short Stories." *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*. 2010. Vol. 22(4): 440-452.

⁶⁵ Catherine Rottenberg. "Dancing Arabs and Spaces of Desire." *Topia*. 2008. Vol. 19: 99-114.

⁶⁶ Batya Shimony. "Shaping Israeli-Arab Identity in Hebrew Words – The Case of Sayed Kashua." *Israel Studies*. 2013. Vol. 18(1): 146.

⁶⁷ Batya Shimony. "Shaping Israeli-Arab Identity in Hebrew Words: 146-169.

⁶⁸ Leora Bilsky. "Speaking through the Mask: Israeli Arabs and the Changing Faces of Israeli Citizenship." *Middle East Law and Governance*. 2009. Vol.1: 166-209.

*Atallah Mansour*⁶⁹

Biography

Atallah Mansour was born on February 9, 1934, in the town of Jish⁷⁰ in Upper Galilee which at that time was part of the British mandate of Palestine. Mansour was born into a Roman Catholic, Christian, family and he himself also practices the Catholic faith. In 1946 Mansour left Jish for a period of three years to attend high school in Lebanon and in order to escape the Jewish-Arab hostilities of the time. He lived in the Lebanese town of Al Mokhtarah during this period and attended the first school for Palestinian refugees there from 1948 until 1949. In 1950 Mansour illegally returned to what was now the state of Israel and where his family had become Israeli citizens. The young Atallah decided to live in a kibbutz for a while and resided in kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim⁷¹ from 1951-1952 in order to learn and study the Hebrew language. Only in 1960, when Mansour had already become a known journalist working for the newspaper *Haaretz*,⁷² did he obtain Israeli citizenship. At the age of thirty-nine Mansour graduated from Ruskin College in Oxford in 1973 where he studied history. Currently Mansour lives in the city of Nazareth. He is a widower and has three grown children.

A Long Career

Atallah Mansour has become a renowned journalist and author over the years, writing in the media both locally and internationally in Arabic, Hebrew as well as English. Mansour was the first Israeli Arab to write in Hebrew for an Israeli newspaper, the first to become an editorial member of the Hebrew newspaper *Haaretz* and in fact the first Christian Arab ever to become a member of the editorial board of a major Hebrew-language Israeli newspaper. Furthermore, Mansour was also the first Israeli Arab to publish a novel in Hebrew, and the first to publish on the Palestinian nation in English for an American audience. Mansour did and does not only write in Hebrew, working for Hebrew-language newspapers, but he has also worked for multiple Arabic newspapers throughout his career and became one of the founders and editors

⁶⁹ Parts of this chapter are derived from and built upon one of my research papers titled *Atallah Mansour and Identity* which was previously written for the course "Minorities in the Middle East: History, Religion, Ethnicity" under Dr. R.B. ter Haar Romeny

⁷⁰ Jish: in Arabic الجش, in Hebrew גיש or חלב גיש

⁷¹ Sha'ar HaAmakim: in Hebrew שער העמקים

⁷² *Haaretz*: in Hebrew הארץ

of the Nazareth based Arabic weekly paper *Al Sinnara*.⁷³ During his career Mansour covered all major political events in Israel for *Haaretz* such as the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the Yom Kippur war in 1973, the First Lebanon war in 1982, the Camp David Accords and the subsequent peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, as well as the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994. Mansour also met every prime minister of Israel, with the exception of Benjamin Netanyahu, throughout his journalistic career. All these important events he covered from his own unique perspective as an Arab living in Israel.

Mansour is best known for his journalistic work for the daily newspaper *Haaretz*, but he began his journalistic career working for the Tel Aviv based, Hebrew weekly news magazine, *HaOlam Hazeh*,⁷⁴ from 1954 until 1959. Mansour's career at the well-known daily newspaper *Haaretz* began a little later with an angry letter to the paper's publisher after a bad report about the clashes between Arabs and the Israeli police in 1958. He elaborates in an interview saying: "*Haaretz* wrote a very bad report based not on a police spokesperson but on some sergeant."⁷⁵ The angry letter telling the publisher that *Haaretz's* report on the situation got it all wrong resulted in a job offer. Mansour worked for *Haaretz* from 1958 until 1992, and aside from reporting on current events, he also became an editorial member of the newspaper. In the same interview Mansour states that his loyalty to *Haaretz* was and is due to the fact that *Haaretz* was never a Jewish newspaper but always an Israeli one, and added that "if all the Israeli mainstream media handled the Arab issue like *Haaretz*, the Arabs would be far more integrated [in Israeli society]."⁷⁶ Moreover Mansour stated that in 1992 he had enough of Hebrew writing and wanted to speak to his people directly⁷⁷ thus he quit his job at *Haaretz* and started working exclusively for Arabic-language papers.

Aside from his career as a journalist Mansour has also published two novels, two autobiographies, a couple of academic works and numerous essays. His first novel, which Mansour wrote in Arabic, is titled *And Samira Stayed*.⁷⁸ *And Samira Stayed* tells the story of an unhappily married couple and the unsettling time in their village, as well as in Haifa, before the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. According to Shmuel Moreh's review of the novel,

⁷³ Al Sinnara: in Arabic الصنارة

⁷⁴ *HaOlam Hazeh*: in Hebrew העולם הזה

⁷⁵ Jessica Donath. "Profile: Atallah Mansour - Legendary Arab-Israeli Journalist, Author." June 15, 2011. *Neon Tommy: Annenberg Digital News*. On: www.neontommy.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015.

<http://www.neontommy.com/news/2011/06/profile-atallah-mansour-legendary-arab-israeli-journalist-and-author>

⁷⁶ Donath. "Profile: Atallah Mansour."

⁷⁷ Donath. "Profile: Atallah Mansour."

⁷⁸ Atallah Mansour. *وبقيت سميرة (And Samira Stayed)*. (Tel Aviv, Arab Publication House of the Histadruth, 1962).

“[Mansour] reveals an important part of the psychological, social and political life of the Arabs in that period, their view towards life and sex, especially their attitudes towards women. Moreover, the writer depicts the political struggle between the Arabs themselves and the impact of Israeli society on Arab society from the social and economic points of view and the change in Arab attitudes towards love, marriage and sex.”⁷⁹ Overall, however, *And Samira Stayed* was poorly received by both the Jewish and Arabic communities in Israel. In a review of the novel in *Newsweek* the explicit criticisms of the Israeli government regarding its policies towards the Arab minority in Israel are pinpointed as the reason for its unpopularity.⁸⁰ The magazine *Maariv* went even further with its criticisms of the novel by stating on its front page that the novel was an insult to the Israel Defense Forces, the state of Israel, and the Jewish people.⁸¹

Mansour’s first autobiography appeared in 1975. The English-language work, which appeared under the name *Waiting For the Dawn*.⁸² In this book Mansour shares his experiences as an Arab living in Israel as well as his hopes for a better future for Israel’s Palestinian citizens and a resolution for the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One reviewer writes:

“Mansour’s English-language book is a powerful testimony of the difficulties and challenges that the Arab Palestinian population faced within a newly established state that clearly favored its Jewish Zionist citizens. From travel bans to sheer poverty and lack of governmental development funds, Mansour’s book weaves between the personal and the communal in telling a previously unknown story of the more than 1.5 million Palestinian Muslims and Christians who make up one-fifth of Israel’s population.”⁸³

⁷⁹ Shmuel Moreh. “Arabic Literature in Israel.” *Middle Eastern Studies*. 1967. Vol.3(3): 293.

⁸⁰ Author Unknown. “Double Chutzpah.” *Newsweek*. February 18, 1963. On: www.atallahmansour.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015.

http://www.atallahmansour.com/pages/opnewsfiction.htm?../photos/fiction_1e.gif

⁸¹ Author Unknown. “ההסתדרות מדפיסה שוב ספר ערבי המכיל השמצות על צה"ל והמדינה” (*Histadruth prints Arab book again containing slander of the IDF and the State*). *Maariv*. July 29, 1962. On: www.atallahmansour.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015.

http://atallahmansour.com/pages/opnewsfiction.htm?../photos/fiction_1c.gif

⁸² Atallah Mansour. *Waiting for the Dawn*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975).

⁸³ Daoud Kuttab. “Book Addresses Forgotten Palestinians of Israel.” April 2, 2013. *Al Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East*. On: www.al-monitor.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/israeli-palestinian-book.html#>

In 2013 a sequel to Mansour's autobiography came out. The title of this English language book, reflecting the ongoing conflict and his unfulfilled hopes, is *Still Waiting for the Dawn: A Long Life for a Palestinian with his Step-Father, Israel*.⁸⁴ He also wrote an Arabic-language memoir called *A Handful of Earth*.⁸⁵ Mansour also published two academic works *Sub Tenants*⁸⁶ in Hebrew and *Narrow Gate Churches: the Christian Presence in the Holy Land under Muslim and Jewish Rule*,⁸⁷ in English.

Beor Hadash – In a New Light

Atallah Mansour's second novel, unlike the first one, was written in Hebrew and is titled *Beor Hadash*.⁸⁸ The novel was published by Karni Publishing House in 1966 and only three years later in 1969, it was translated into English by Avraham Birman and published by Vallentine, Mitchell & Co under the title *In a New Light*.⁸⁹ As Ranen Omer-Sherman argues, "the novel's predominant focus is on the limited horizons set for the Jewish state's young Arabs, as Mansour stealthily crafts his narrator's outlook as a prospective kibbutz candidate for membership in relation to the reader's ignorance of his identity."⁹⁰ The novel which is written in the first person is the fictional autobiography of the Arab Yusuf Mahmud, who since his childhood posed as the Jewish Yossi Mizrahi and has cut all ties with his past. "Yossi believes in the socialist ideal, as implemented in the Zionist kibbutz movement. In an effort to become a kibbutz member, he renounces his Arab identity, national roots, and ethnic heritage. When the question of Yossi's Arab identity eventually arises, the kibbutz confronts the issue of whether to accept an Arab as a full member of the community. The membership is approved on condition that Yossi's Arab identity remains undisclosed."⁹¹

The novel is narrated by its main character who the reader throughout the story knows as Yossi Mizrahi. Yossi does not tell his life's story in chronological order but looks back on his life and as such the reader is not only unaware of the content of Yossi's secret but also gets an insight into Yossi's thoughts and beliefs. The reader is introduced to Yossi and his story in the first chapter as follows:

⁸⁴ Atallah Mansour. *Still Waiting for the Dawn: A Long Life for a Palestinian with his Step-Father, Israel*. (Createspace Independent Publishing, 2013).

⁸⁵ Atallah Mansour. *حفتة تراب (A Handful of Earth)*. (Nazareth: the Ministry of Arab Culture, 2004).

⁸⁶ Atallah Mansour and Uzi Benziman. *דיירי משנה (Sub Tenants)*. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1992).

⁸⁷ Atallah Mansour. *Narrow Gate Churches: the Christian Presence in the Holy Land under Muslim and Jewish Rule*. (Pasadena: Hope Publishing House, 2004).

⁸⁸ Atallah Mansour. *באור חדש (In a New Light)*. (Tel Aviv: Karni Publishing House, 1966).

⁸⁹ Atallah Mansour. *In a New Light*. Translator Abraham Birman. London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., 1969.

⁹⁰ Omer-Sherman. "[At the Periphery of the Kibbutz: Palestinian and Mizrahi Interlopers in Utopia](#)."

⁹¹ Brenner. *Inextricably Bonded*. 174.

הכל רגיל. היקום כולו יציב, פרט לי. אני שנשתנית מין הקצה אל הקצה. אנא, אל לכם ללעוג לי. אני כואב את אשר קרה. לבי מתכווץ מדי היזכרי בשקר שלי. זה נורא. ממש מביש. אך האם כל האשם בי? האם אין גם העולם עצמו אשם במידת מה? במאומה? קשה לי להאמין, ואינני מאמין. גם העולם אשם: כך נראה לי וכך אני רוצה להאמין, ולא איכפת לי אם יטענו כנגדי שאך טעות היא בידי. הסיפור שלי ארוך. מפוזר הוא בשובלי ההיסטוריה של הארץ הזאת ואריכותו כמשך חמישים השנים האחרונות.⁹²

*Everything is commonplace. The whole universe is firm and stable. I am the only exception, having undergone a complete, irrevocable change. Please do not make fun of me. I am still smarting under what has happened. My heart cries out when I recall my lie. It's terrible, it's shameful, but am I wholly to blame? Doesn't a small part of the fault lie with the world? I find this hard to believe. No, the world must be at fault, too. This is what I want to believe and don't care if they keep telling me I'm mistaken. My story is quite long. It stretches over the annals of this country, over the last fifty years.*⁹³

After this short introduction to Yossi's apparently shameful secret the narrator turns to the beginning of his story which takes place in the fictional kibbutz Har-Or, which means something along the lines of 'Mountain of Light' in Hebrew, during the early years of the Israeli state. The young man Yossi lives in Har-Or as a prospective member and tends to the fields of the kibbutz. Gradually the reader finds out how Yusuf Mahmud became Yossi Mizrahi. It turns out that Yossi's parents were killed at his native village of Ein-al-Hirba when he was only five years old. A fate he was saved from by his father's business partner Baruch Mizrahi, who is mostly called Old Mizrahi, with whom his father sold eggs to Jewish colonists. Old Mizrahi for the time being takes care of Yossi. While all the other kids, including Old Mizrahi's sons Abraham and Isaac, call him goy and shun him, Old Mizrahi's daughter, Ruth, calls him Yossi and becomes his only friend. Throughout the novel Yossi's past with the Mizrahi family is revealed piece by piece. It is also with Ruth that Yossi runs away to join the Youth Movement the nearby kibbutz Beth-Or, which means something 'House of Light' in Hebrew, when they are children. Old Mizrahi, who is a devout Jew, eventually comes to pick up Ruth from Beth-Or to take her home. Yossi, however, is just left there and stays on at the kibbutz to eventually become the fully-fledged kibbutz member Yossi Mizrahi, the son of Old Mizrahi, who by all intents and purposes is in no different from

⁹² Mansour. באור חדש. (*In a New Light*). 7.

⁹³ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 11.

the other kibbutz members. At Beth-Or Yossi even works for the *Haganah* for a while until it is discovered that he has an allergy for blood, an allergy that is caused by the traumatic experience of watching his father die. The truth about Yossi's true identity threatens to come out when he and some of the other members of Beth-Or are invited to Ruth's wedding and Yossi refuses to go because he fears that it will be noticed that he and Ruth are not siblings at all due to Ruth addressing him as friend rather than brother. It is then that Yossi Mizrahi leaves Beth-Or and moves to Har-Or instead.

It is in Har-Or that the story of *Beor Hadash* begins, a story that encompasses the period of approximately one year. During this time three important events occur in Yossi's life. It is in Har-Or that Yossi for the first time in his life falls in love with a woman. His love interest, Rivkah, is an American Jewish woman who despite her marriage to another member of the kibbutz, Yehudah, eventually falls in love with Yossi and starts an affair with him, partly under the cover of being Yossi's English teacher. Yossi takes us back to the moment he first fell for her and in successive chapters their love story is laid out. It becomes apparent that the main purpose of Rivkah's marriage to Yehudah is to appease her father who desperately wanted her to marry a Jewish man but otherwise the marriage is not a successful and happy one. This is mainly due to the fact that Rivkah wants children and Yehudah does not. Eventually, at the end of the novel, Rivkah leaves Yehudah for Yossi despite the fact that the kibbutz by now has found out about Yossi's Arab identity and the existing resistance against mixed relationships by some of their fellow kibbutz members. It is also in Har-Or that Yossi is first introduced to politics through his participation in the kibbutz' political party, the Party of Equitable Unity. Yossi is first appointed to help Shlomo, a fellow kibbutz member, to gather votes for the upcoming elections in the neighboring Arab town Nur-Allah, which means something along the lines of 'Light of Allah' in Arabic. Neither Shlomo nor Yossi are very happy with being assigned this task as Shlomo simply dislikes Arabs and Yossi is all too afraid it will be discovered that he too is an Arab and not a Jew. After Yossi's Arab origin is discovered, he is promptly assigned as the sole party delegate to Nur-Allah under the assumptions that he himself wishes to be close to his own people and that because he is closer to the people of Nur-Allah he can better function as a bridge between them and the kibbutz. It is also in Har-Or that Yossi's secret is revealed when he asks to become a fully-fledged member of the kibbutz, the secretary general of Har-Or, a man named Zelig, decides to investigate Yossi's past because nobody really knows him. After Zelig pays Old Mizrahi a visit he finds out that Yossi is not his son at all but the son of his former Arab business partner. After Zelig's discovery is made known to the other kibbutz members everything changes for

Yossi and he is suddenly treated very differently. Eventually, in the last chapter of the novel, the kibbutz holds a meeting to decide about Yossi's fate which results in his admittance to the kibbutz but only under the condition that his true, Arab, identity remains a secret.

There are two important main themes throughout the novel. Firstly, the difference between Jews and Arabs, and the presumed identities and behaviors that are part of being either Jewish or Arab, is a recurring and central theme. Secondly, the ideology of socialism as embodied by the kibbutz movement and the question whether or not it is an inclusive or exclusive movement plays a vital role throughout the novel. These two themes are strongly interrelated throughout Yossi's story. On the one side Yossi believes in socialism and its inclusiveness of all humanity, but on the other side Yossi is also continuously aware of the societal distinctions between the identity categories of the Arab and the Jewish people and especially the impossibility of becoming the one if you are considered to be the other and the tension between the two identities. For example, Yossi likes and strongly believes in the socialist fundamentals underlying the kibbutz. Furthermore, he initially feels that he himself is very much part of the future imagined by his comrades at kibbutz Har-Or, as becomes apparent from the following:

אמרו לי, שטוב יהיה לכולם, והייתי מאושר, כי גם אני אחד מכולם. ללא הרהורים מיותרים הייתי מקבל את דברי החברים, סילון - דברים שנתמשך עד - אין - קץ.⁹⁴

I was told that the whole human race was going to have it good and I was very happy, for didn't I belong? Without too much thinking I accepted the flood of words that poured from the mouths of the learned comrades.⁹⁵

But at the same time Yossi is highly uncomfortable with lying about who he truly is which is illustrative of the first theme which becomes apparent through Yossi's relationship with Rivkah. She confronts him with his past and as such forces him to lie directly in order to conceal his Arab identity. For example, when Rivkah asks where Yossi was born, her words make him feel like a rusty hacksaw is cutting into his flesh. Furthermore Yossi's relationship with Rivkah forces him not only to reflect upon his lies, but more importantly it forces him to reflect on why he so desperately wants to keep his secret.

⁹⁴ Mansour. באור הדש. (*In a New Light*). 8.

⁹⁵ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 12.

אף פעם לא הצלחתי להרגיש עצמי שלם עם שקרי. אין שמי יוסי מזרחי, זאת לא האמת. אבל להשתחרר מיוסי זה לא הצלחתי. הוא רדף אחרי, ותמיד מצאתי את עצמי מספר שוב ושוב על אחותי רותי ועל אחי יצחק ואברהם שנשארו במושבה. סיפרתי על אבי, בעל חנות - המכולת הקטנה. הוא לא בא אף פעם לבקר אותי. הסברתי שלא בא לבקר אותי משום שהוא כועס עלי שנשארתי בקיבוץ. איש לא חשד באמיתות הסיפור.⁹⁶

I could never quite come to terms with the lies I had to tell. My name was not Yossi Mizrahi, but I still could not get rid of this false entity. It kept chasing me and I always found myself talking again and again about my sister Ruth and my brothers Abraham and Isaac who remained in the village. I told them about my father, the owner of a small grocery, who never came to see me. This, I said, was because he disapproved of my going to a kibbutz. Nobody suspected the story was untrue.⁹⁷

עוד בבית-אור אני זוכר שחשבתי עליהם רק פעם-פעמיים. אבל התביישתי בהם. יוחנן, המדריך שלנו, היה נוהג לומר: "הערבים מפגרים". פעם אמר לו אחד הילדים: "כמו הספרדים?" יוחנן המדריך כעס, וענה: "הרבה יותר. הרבה, הרבה יותר!" לא חשוב שמישהו לחש לי בזמנו, כי יוחנן נעלב בגלל זה שהוא ספרדי. אבל עובדה היא שהתביישתי ונחרדתי לעצם הרעיון שיגיד עלי מישהו שאני דומה לערבי.⁹⁸

During my stay at Beth-Or I recalled them [Yossi's Arab family] a few times but was ashamed of the fact. Our instructor, Yohannan, used to say, "The Arabs are a backward people." Once a boy ventured to comment, "They are like the Sephardi Jews", and Yohannan became very angry and retorted, "No, no, a thousand times more backward." What if someone whispered to me that Yohannan had taken offence because he was a Sephardi Jew himself? The important thing was that I became ashamed and alarmed at the very idea that somebody might say I looked like an Arab.⁹⁹

Aside from Rivkah's interest in Yossi's family she also is very politically orientated which leads to many uncomfortable moments for Yossi, as Rivkah is convinced that the Arabs must hate the Jews for turning their land into Israel. Rivkah's opinions lead Yossi to doubt whether she would love him if she knew he was an Arab, but more importantly leads him to question

⁹⁶ Mansour. באור חדש. (In a New Light). 36,37.

⁹⁷ Mansour. In a New Light. 39.

⁹⁸ Mansour. באור חדש. (In a New Light). 127.

⁹⁹ Mansour. In a New Light. 128.

the universality of the Zionist ideology he has learned at the kibbutz. The following is illustrative of both themes:

האם מספיקה אהבתה כדי שתמשיך אתי גם כשתדע שאינני יהודי? אבל מדוע לא? הרי היום היא-היא שדיברה בזכותם של הערבים. היא הדורשת ממני להכיר בזכותם של הערבים לשנוא. אבל אני זקוק להכרה גם בזכותי לאהוב ולהיות אהוב – וזה, אני חושש, אינו אותו דבר.¹⁰⁰ [...]
מסתבר מדבריה שרביקה לא מאמינה בכל אשר הטיפו לנו החברים-המרצים אודות העתיד הוורוד המשותף לכל הברואים בצלם.¹⁰¹

Would I overstep the limits of her (Rivkah) love if I told her that I was not Jewish? Hadn't she spoken up for the Arabs that day? She was the one who demanded that I should recognize their right to hate. But I also needed a recognition of my right to love and be loved, and this, I feared was not the same thing. [...] Rivkah's speech implied she didn't believe in all those fine words that the Comrade Lecturers had preached to us about the rosy future which would be shared by every human being.¹⁰²

Slowly but surely Yossi becomes more and more unsettled with the opinions his fellow kibbutz members have on Arabs. He has never heard such anti-Arab talk and begins to doubt his strong belief in socialism as a better future for all.

למען האמת, הייתי רגיל בבית-אור לעתים קרובות לשמוע דיבורים מעין אלה על "אנחנו" ו"הם". "אנחנו" משמעו לפעמים היה חברי-הקיבוץ בלבד, לפעמים התרחב מושג זה בהרבה וכלל את כל היהודים. "הם" משמעו היה ערבים, אנגלים, כל הגויים. אבל בהר-אור היה מובנן של שתי מלים אלה שונה מן הקצה אל הקצה: "אנחנו" זה כל הטוב והשאיפה-הטוב-ולצדק-לכולם, ו"הם" - אלה בני-האופל הניצבים לנו כמכשול בדרך הזאת. שלמה היה הראשון שכינה את הערבים "הם". אבל איש מן הנוכחים בחדר האוכל ליד סידור-העבודה לא עורר ולא עירער על כינויו.¹⁰³

In all fairness to my present kibbutz, there was a lot of talk at Beth-Or as well about "us" and "them." There, however, the term "us" usually meant the members of the kibbutz but was sometimes extended to include all Jews. "Them" referred to the Arabs, the English, to anyone

¹⁰⁰ Mansour. באור חדש. (In a New Light.) 68,69.

¹⁰¹ Mansour. באור חדש. (In a New Light). 69.

¹⁰² Mansour. In a New Light. 69,70.

¹⁰³ Mansour. באור חדש. (In a New Light). 77, 78.

non-Jewish. Whereas at Har-Or these two words had acquired a totally different meaning. "We" were anything that was good, the aspirants-to-general-welfare-and-justice, whilst "they" were the Sons of Darkness who sought to quash our aspirations. Shlomo was the first to call the Arabs "them" and nobody seemed to resent it.¹⁰⁴

However, it becomes apparent that the Arabs in Nur-Allah think in a similar negative manner about the Jews in the Kibbutz when Yossi and Shlomo go to Nur-Allah for a Party of Unequitable Unity meeting. A teacher there tells his rather insulting version of the history of the kibbutz:

אחר המורים לא חיכה לרשות-הדיבור, החל מסביר: "פעם, לפני הרבה שנים, כשלא הצליחו המהגרים היהודים להסתדר בארץ, פנו להקמת כפרים משותפים כדי שיוכלו לעזור אחר לחברו..."¹⁰⁵

*One of the two teachers, without waiting to be given the floor began to lecture: "Once upon a time, when the Jewish immigrants could not make a go of it in this country, they set up collective settlements so that they could lean on one another -"*¹⁰⁶

Similarly when Yossi runs into a few children from Nur-Allah in the fields of the kibbutz he is made aware once again of the socially constructed differences between Arabs and Jews:

"תגייד שלום לשמחה אפנדי?" "שמחה לא אפנדי. שמחה זה פאראח, זה חוואג'ה. הדוד שלי זה האמד אפנדי. אתה לא יודע? מוסלמי זה אפנדי. יהודי, נוצרי, זה הכל חוואג'ה." נזכרתי. זאת שמעתי מקודם. אין קוראים למוסלמי חוואג'ה, זה כינוי השמור ליהודים ונוצרים. למוסלמי קוראים אפנדי. ליהודי אין קוראים גוי, ולגוי אין קוראים יהודי. חוואג'ה ואפנדי הם שני דברים שונים. כשם שיהודי וגוי הם שונים. אלה פני הדברים. כבר בינקותנו אנו לומדים להיות שונים: השכם והערב משננים לנו את התורה הזאת.¹⁰⁷

"Please give my regards to Simkah Effendi." "Simkah is not and Effendi. Simkah is Farakh, a Hawadja. My uncle is Hamed Effendi. Don't you know? A Moslem is an Effendi. A Jew, a Christian and anybody else is a Hawadja. I remembered now, I had heard that a Moslem is never called Hawadja. This appellation was reserved for Jews and Christians. One didn't call

¹⁰⁴ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 80.

¹⁰⁵ Mansour. באור חדש. (*In a New Light*)87.

¹⁰⁶ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 89.

¹⁰⁷ Mansour. באור חדש. (*In a New Light*)105.

*a Jew a goy or a goy a Jew. Hawadja and Effendi were two different things, just as a Jew and a goy were different. From early childhood we learned to be different, and everybody repeated this fact a thousand times.*¹⁰⁸

Later on in the story when two party officials from Tel Aviv, Aryeh Ben-Tsedek and his assistant Mahmud, are coming to Har-Or to help with the elections and the Nur –Allah voters, the boundaries between the Jews as a people and the Arabs as a people are once more accentuated. For example, Ben-Tsedek, who is a bit of an orientalist, cannot stop speaking about the amazing coffee Mahmud's father made for him earlier that day much to Yossi's dislike:

דברהאיש דיכאו אותי. הוא לא שתה קפה כזה? מה פירוש? וכי לא היה בבית ערבים מאז הגיעו לארץ?
"איזה קפה זה היה?" אני שואל. "סתם קפה רגיל. אבל החבר בן-צדק לא מכיר את הקפה שלנו." משיב מחמוד
בגאווה. "זה אתה מדבר, מחמוד! זה היה קפה רגיל?" מארעם הקשיש, "זה קפה מיוחד במינו בספלים כאלה
קטנים. אבל חזק כזה!"¹⁰⁹

*His words made me gloomy. What did he mean by implying that he'd never had such coffee in Israel? Had he never been to an Arab house before? "What kind of coffee was it?" I inquired. "Oh, nothing special but Comrade Ben-Tsedek is not familiar with the stuff we serve", said Mahmud proudly. "What do you mean 'nothing special'?" retorted the older man. "It was special coffee and they served it in very small cups. And it tasted so good and strong --."*¹¹⁰

But when Yossi asks Mahmud about his opinion on Arabs joining a kibbutz he dislikes Mahmud just as much as he does Ben-Tsedek:

אותו שאלתי, כשהלכנו להיפרד מאריה בן-צדק: "האם היית רוצה להיות חבר קיבוץ?"
והוא במילה אחת: "לא!"
"מדוע?"
"תפקידי להיות בכפר ולשרת את בני עמי!"

¹⁰⁸ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 106.

¹⁰⁹ Mansour. באור חדש. (*In a New Light*)153.

¹¹⁰ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 154,155.

לא רציתי לפגוע בו ולכן לא שאלתיו לאופן בו הוא עושה זאת. אבל שלמה שאל: "ומה תהיה דעתך על ערבי שירצה להתקבל לקיבוץ?" מחמוד לא ענה מייד. עם שחיפש את המילים, ענה תחתו, בן-צדק: "מתפקידו של הערבי להישאר בקרב בני-עמו ולעזור להם!"¹¹¹

As we were bidding Ben-Tsedek goodbye I asked Mahmud, "Would you like to join a kibbutz?" And the answer came in one short word, "no."

"Why not?" I queried.

"Because it is my duty to live in my village and serve my own people."

I didn't want to hurt his feelings and therefore refrained from asking how he went about it, but Shlomo barged in with, "What would you think of an Arab who wants to join a kibbutz?" Mahmud did not answer right away and while he was fumbling for words Aryeh Ben-Tsedek replied in his place: "It's an Arab's duty to stay with his people and help them."¹¹²

This distinction becomes even more painfully clear in the conversation Yossi and Zelig have about Yossi's admittance to the kibbutz. Zelig has researched Yossi's past, spoken to Old Mizrahi and found out the truth about Yossi's life story. Yossi and Zelig have a highly uncomfortable conversation during which Yossi is caught in his lie and forced to tell the truth. Despite the fact that the kibbutz already received clearance from the Ministry of Defense to admit Yossi as a fully-fledged member the fact that Yossi is not Jewish and lied about it is important to Zelig. According to Zelig knowing the whole truth is important even if Yossi himself does not even know the whole truth about his family. The kibbutz needs time to get accustomed to the idea of Yossi being an Arab and start to see Yossi in a new light. Yossi, however, does not really understand why his Arab origin is so important when he has always been Arab and has for the most part of his life lived in a kibbutz and fully intends to stay there regardless but Zelig decides otherwise.

זליג לא עשה רושם כמי שהבין. פניו הסמיקו מכעס. לראשונה פחדתי.
"אתה לא רוצה להבין?", שאל.

התחלתי מספר לו מן הזכרון את עיקר הרצאתו האחרונה. סיפרתי לו על המהפכה העולמית; על הדגלים האדומים שיתנוססו מחר על מבצריהם של כוחות-החושך דהיום, על הפריחה התרבותית; על האדם החדש...
"תפסיק עם השטויות האלה. אל תספר לי מעשיות. מה על העתיד שלך. שלך. עם מי תתחתן, ומה יהיה על ילדיך?"
"אינני מבין, אתה קורא למהפכה שטויות?"

¹¹¹ Idem, 164.

¹¹² Mansour. *In a New Light*. 166.

Zelig didn't seem to understand. His face was absolutely livid. At first I took fright.

"Don't you want to understand?" he managed to ask.

I started quoting from memory the highlights of his last lecture. I presented him with a verbal memorandum about the world revolution, the red flags that would soon be hoisted on the strongholds of the reactionary forces, the new cultural prosperity, the new type of humanity - .

"Stop all that nonsense. What about your future? Whom will you marry? What will become of your children?"

"I don't understand. You call the Revolution nonsense?" All this was really beyond my comprehension¹¹⁴

¹¹⁵ אני חייב להישאר כמועמד עוד תקופת־מה. כמה זה? עדשכולם יראו אותי באור החדש.

He said I had to remain a "candidate" for some time. For how long? UNTIL THEY ALL SAW ME IN THE NEW LIGHT.¹¹⁶

Finally there is a meeting to decide Yossi's admittance to the kibbutz as a fully-fledged member. According to his official papers Yossi is a Jew and not an Arab, nevertheless the kibbutz knows the truth and some of its members find this to be a problem. After all how will Yossi bring up his children? The avant garde to the Revolution to some of the others primarily serves the struggle for socialism for the Jewish people and not other peoples. Some even state they oppose mixed Jewish Arab marriage. Moreover not everybody is sure whether their kibbutz should serve as an experimental center for racial integration. Rivkah and Shlomo, who both previously were the most vocal about their rather negative opinions about Arabs, fully support Yossi's admittance. At last a decision is reached. Yossi can stay for a twofold reason, he has never behaved suspiciously during his time at Har-Or and the elections are coming up. Therefore Zelig proposes the following motion:

¹¹³ Mansour. באור חדש. (*In a New Light*)115, 116.

¹¹⁴ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 115,116.

¹¹⁵ Mansour. באור חדש. (*In a New Light*). 116, 117.

¹¹⁶ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 117.

נקודה שנייה: אתם יודעים שבשבוע הבא המפלגה שלנו הולכת לבחירות, והיא עומדת על נפשה בפני התקפות מחוסרות כל רסן גם מצד הימין גם מצד השמאל. ואסור לנו כאן לתת עילה לשונאיי-המפלגה לנגח אותה. על כן אני מציע לקבל את החבר יוסף לחברות מלאה בקיבוץ, בתנאי שכל מה שנאמר כאן לא יירשם בפרוטוקול של הישיבה. הקיבוץ מקבל עוד חבר, וזהו. לא ערבי. לא יהודי. נוסף לזה, אני מציע כהחלטה, שאת הדיון הזה צריך כל חבר וחבר לשמור בסוד. זהו. האם יש הצעה אחרת?"¹¹⁷

*And there is another aspect we need to consider. Next week our party goes to the polls. We are hemmed in by vicious, unscrupulous attacks from right and left alike, and we mustn't give our enemies a club to beat us with. I therefore move that Yossi be accepted as a fully-fledged member, provided that, nothing which has been said here will be put on record. The kibbutz will simply admit one more member, neither Jew nor Arab, and that's that. I also move that all of you keep the whole discussion confidential. Any further questions?"*¹¹⁸

Yossi is allowed to stay. Zelig's motion is seen as the Golden Path but Yossi feels bad because he can stay but as 'a thief in the night', hiding where he has come from even now. He sees everything in a new light:

הרגשתי מוזרה מאוד. למעשה ניצחתי, אבל טעמו של הנצחון הזה מר. רבקה מבינה כנראה לרוחי. "מעכשיו והלאה נסה לראות את הדברים באור חדש", היא אומרת, "קשה ללחום בכל העולם!" "אבל..." אמרתי.

"אני רוצה בן ממך!" לוחשת היא באוזני, "הוא יעשה את המהפכה."

הבטתי לתוך עיניה. מוזר עד מה איבדו עיניים אלה מזוהרן. פחדתי וחיש עצמתי עיני. הרגשתי כמו העולם עלי סחרחר. היא נרכנה מעלי ונשקה למצחי. דמעה נשרה מעיניה. החזקתיה קרוב אל לבי. פתאום פרצתי בבכי. ריקנות השתלטה עלי. את הכל ראיתי באור חדש.¹¹⁹

"I was overwhelmed by strange feelings. I had won my fight, but this kind of victory left a bitter taste in my mouth. Rivkah knew.

"From now on you must try and see things in a new light," she says. "It's not easy to fight the whole world."

"Yes, but - ."

"I want your child," she whispered in my ear. "He will make the Revolution."

¹¹⁷ Mansour. באור חדש. (In a New Light). 173.

¹¹⁸ Mansour. In a New Light. 175.

¹¹⁹ Mansour. באור חדש. (In a New Light). 174.

*I looked deep into her eyes. Strange how those eyes had lost much of their luster. I took fright and was quick to close my own eyes. The whole world was whirling around me. Rivkah bent down and kissed me on the forehead. A tear dropped out of her eye. I held her close and suddenly burst into tears. I was pervaded by emptiness. I saw everything in a new light.*¹²⁰

Language, Identity and Critique

Beor Ḥadash was the very first Hebrew-language novel written by an Israeli Arab and as such it is both an interesting and unique work. Notwithstanding the novel's clear link to the socio-political reality in Israel of the 1950s and 1960s and its evident critique of the exclusiveness of the socialist ideas fundamental to the kibbutz movement and Israeli society more generally, *Beor Ḥadash* was received predominantly positive in Israel. In a video interview Mansour states that "all the newspapers that existed in the early 60s received it as great literary news because here for the first time someone who is not Jewish broke in and became a Hebrew writer, that was all they said."¹²¹ One might question whether the positive reception of *Beor Ḥadash* was due to the dissemination of the Hebrew language in general or the innovative novel specifically. Regardless of the reason, it is surprising that the critique and satire of Israeli society and the kibbutz was not found offensive as was the case with Mansour's first novel *Wabaqeyat Samira*. According to Rachel Feldhay Brenner Mansour himself also "found it hard to believe that no one had taken offense at his attack on Israeli society."¹²²

Mansour's choice to write a novel in Hebrew in 1966 is out of the ordinary to say the least. As becomes clear from Mansour's influential essay from 1971 for *The New York Review of Books* a semi-monthly magazine which publishes articles on literature, culture and current affairs, Mansour above all identifies himself as belonging to the Palestinian nation. The essay titled "Palestine: The Search for a New Golden Age"¹²³ explains how the Palestinian people became a distinct group, or nation, different from other Arab peoples, something which had not been done before at that point in time. Mansour identifies himself as part of the Palestinian nation. Despite this Palestinian self-identification Mansour consciously made the

¹²⁰ Mansour. *In a New Light*. 176.

¹²¹ Woolf Institute. "Interview with Atallah Mansour." July 19, 2013. Published by Woolf Institute on www.youtube.com Last Accessed on August 15, 2015. First Q&A Fragment. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHA_BC4XjPQ&noredirect=1

¹²² Brenner. "The Search for Identity in Israeli Arab Fiction." 101.

¹²³ Atallah Mansour. "Palestine: The Search for a New Golden Age." *The New York Review of Books*. October 7 Issue, 1971. On: www.nybooks.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015.. <http://www.nybooks.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/articles/archives/1971/oct/07/palestine-the-search-for-a-new-golden-age/?page=1>

decision to write and publish *Beor Ḥadash* in Hebrew. John Joseph, in his book about the relation between language and identity, writes that “most of those giving up their traditional language are [...] doing so as part of constructing an identity for themselves that is bound up with a conception of modernity as communication extending beyond their village and their country to the world at large.”¹²⁴ In essence Joseph’s theory applies to Atallah Mansour’s choice in the sense that Mansour consciously chose to write in Hebrew in order to be able to communicate with Jewish Israelis about the problems Israeli Arabs encounter. However, Mansour does not seem to intend to construct an identity as an Israeli in doing so. In his article Mahmoud Kayyal states:

“Atallah Mansour maintains that the Arabs in Israel have become bilingual without impairing their Arabic national identity. [...] Mansour emphasizes that Arab writers aspire to present an alternative narrative, and to tell the Israeli public about the special problems of Arab citizens in its own tongue, since most Jews do not know Arabic; in this way the Jews will identify with these problems, or, at least, understand them.”¹²⁵

In an interview he took it a step further and stated: “I was very angry so I wrote a novel in Hebrew to tell them they are racist.”¹²⁶

Works that are written by a minority in a majority’s language, as in the case of *Beor Beor Ḥadash*, are considered to be so-called minor works. Minor works all share three main characteristics according to Kayyal. “It deterritorializes the language; every individual matter with which it deals immediately becomes political; and it is responsible, in a positive sense, for the function of collective expression.”¹²⁷ These three characteristics are all present in *Beor Ḥadash*, the novel can be seen as an attempt by Mansour to deterritorialize the Hebrew-language and make it the common property of all Israeli citizens. It is definitely a political work, as the main character of the novel attempts to assimilate to Israeli Zionist society and sheds his original identity as an Arab. Furthermore the novel can be seen as the collective expression of the Arabs living in Israel. Taken these three characteristics into account the choice to write *Beor Ḥadash* in Hebrew begets another dimension of giving a voice to the

¹²⁴ John. E. Joseph. *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004) 23.

¹²⁵ Kayyal. “Arabs Dancing in a New Light of Arabesques.” 35.

¹²⁶ Donath. ‘Profile: Atallah Mansour.’

¹²⁷ Kayyal. “Arabs Dancing in a New Light of Arabesques.” 36.

Arabs in Israeli society. If we take Mansour's novel to be semi-autobiographic it might also tell us something about his personal identity, although generally Mansour's personal identity is elusive since he consciously chooses to speak for the collective of Arabs living in Israel rather than for himself. One thing is very clear, though, Mansour articulated that as an Arab in Israel you cannot avoid or hide your identity in a society where Jews and Arabs derive their identity from the distinction between each other.

Naim Araidi

Biography

Naim Araidi was born on April 2, 1950, in the small village Maghar¹²⁸ in the Lower Galilee. The majority of Maghar inhabitants is Druze and Araidi himself also belongs to a Druze family. After Araidi finished his military service in the Israeli army he went on to study at Haifa University, where he studied Hebrew language and literature, comparative literature and political science. After finishing his studies Araidi continued to do a PhD in Hebrew Literature at Bar-Ilan University which he finished in 1989. The topic of his thesis is the Hebrew poetry of the acclaimed Israeli poet Uri Tzvi Greenberg.¹²⁹ Araidi also received an honorary doctorate from the International Center for Poetry of the University of California in 1991. Araidi and his wife have two children; he currently lives with his family in his native village of Maghar again.

Career

Naim Araidi has had a long and diverse career. He is an academic as well as a literary author, translator, poet, and more recently Araidi also was named ambassador of the state of Israel. Araidi has always taught next to his other work and has lectured at the Gordon College of Education on Hebrew language, education and literature from 1980 until 2012. He also taught at Haifa University from 1988 until 1994 and lectured on Hebrew Literature at Bar-Ilan University from 1992 until 1994. Aside from this, Araidi also fulfills many public functions promoting literature, education and culture. For example, he has been the General Director of the Center for Arab Children's Literature since 1995 and he is also a member of the Board of Directors of 'The National Culture Basket'¹³⁰, a governmental program which aims to bring Israeli children in contact with art and culture. Furthermore, Araidi also initiated some of his own projects of which the best known is the Nissan festival which was founded by Araidi in 1999. The Nissan is an international poetry festival that takes place yearly in April in Maghar.

¹²⁸ Maghar: in Arabic المغار, in Hebrew מג'אר or מע'ר

¹²⁹ Naim Araidi. הגולים המנגים ביצירת אורי צבי גרינברג. (*The Fluid Playing in the Oeuvre of Uri Zvi Greenberg*) (Tel Aviv: Eked Publishing, 1989).

¹³⁰ In Hebrew: תוכנית סל תרבות ארצי

In April 2012 it was announced that Araidi would become the Israeli ambassador to New Zealand.¹³¹ Araidi's appointment constituted the first time that a non-Jewish Israeli was chosen for the position of ambassador. During a press conference Araidi stated that "[a]fter years of representing the State of Israel unofficially, it would be a great privilege for me to do so in an official capacity and show Israel's beautiful side, as well as the coexistence that despite all the hardships can only be maintained in a true democracy."¹³² In June 2012 Araidi's appointment was changed from the embassy of New Zealand to the embassy of Norway¹³³. According to multiple news sources the change had to do with the fact that Israel's foreign minister of the time, Avigdor Lieberman, "may be trying to shake off Israel's racist image in Norway."¹³⁴ Araidi served as Israel's ambassador in Norway from 2012 until February 2014.

Araidi is best known for his poetry which he writes both in Hebrew and Arabic. By the time Araidi finished his PhD in 1989 he had already become a published poet. His first Hebrew poems under the title *Is Love Possible*¹³⁵ were published in 1972. *Is Love Possible* was just the first of multiple poetry publications and was followed by *Compassion and Fear*¹³⁶ in 1975, *I returned to the Village*¹³⁷ in 1986, *Perhaps It's Love*¹³⁸ in 1989, *In Five Dimensions*¹³⁹ in 1991, *Penetrating Silences*¹⁴⁰ in 2002, *Leaving the Rage to Others*¹⁴¹ in 2006, and lastly *All Seasons: Selected Poems 1972-2006*¹⁴² in 2010. Aside from these Hebrew publications Araidi also published six volumes of Arabic poetry as well as a variety of

¹³¹ Itamar Eichner. "Druze Professor Appointed Ambassador to New Zealand." April 22, 2012. *Ynetnews*. On: www.ynetnews.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4219320,00.html>

¹³² Jewish Virtual Library. "The Druze in Israel: First Druze Ambassador." April 2012. On: www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org. Last Accessed August, 12, 2015. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/druzeamb.html>

¹³³ Hillary Zaken. "Israel sending Druze ambassador, Christian deputy to Oslo: Foreign Ministry Hopes New Delegation to Norway Will Combat Anti-Israel Sentiment." June 6, 2012. *Times of Israel*. On: www.timesofisrael.com. Last Accessed 31-05-2015. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-sending-druze-ambassador-to-oslo/>

¹³⁴ Itamar Eichner. "Integration at Israel's Embassy in Norway: Druze Professor Appointed Ambassador to Norway; Christian-Arab diplomat Will Serve as His Deputy." June 6, 2012. *Ynetnews*. On: www.ynetnews.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4238948,00.html>

¹³⁵ Naim Araidi. איך אפשר לאהוב (*Is Love Possible*). (Tel Aviv: Eked Publishing: 1972).

¹³⁶ Naim Araidi. חמלה ופחד (*Compassion and Fear*). (Tel Aviv: Eked Publishing, 1975).

¹³⁷ Naim Araidi. חזרתי אל הכפר (*I Returned to the Village*). (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1986).

¹³⁸ Naim Araidi. אולי זו אהבה (*Perhaps It's Love*). (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Maariv, 1989).

¹³⁹ Naim Araidi. בחמישה ממדים (*In Five Dimensions*). (Bnei Barak: Sifriat Poalim, 1991).

¹⁴⁰ Naim Araidi. שקטים חודרים (*Penetrating Silences*). (Kiryat Gat: Korim Publishing, 2002).

¹⁴¹ Naim Araidi. משער את הכעס לאחרים (*Leaving the Rage to Others*). (Tel Aviv: Gvanim Publishers, 2006)

¹⁴² Naim Araidi. כל העונות: מבחר שירים 2006-1972 (*All Seasons: Selected Poems 1972-2006*). (Tel Aviv: Gvanim Publishers, 2010).

academic works about Hebrew and Arabic literature. Many of Araidi's poems have been translated into other languages among which English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Turkish, Russian, Polish, Swedish, Japanese, Hindi and Yiddish.¹⁴³ Some of the best known translations of his work are the English translation of *I Returned to the Village* which appeared in 1991 under the title *Back to the Village*,¹⁴⁴ and the Italian anthology of his poems, named *Canzoni di Galilea*¹⁴⁵ which was published in 2014.

Tevila Katlanit –Fatal Baptism

During his long career Araidi published only one novel, the Hebrew language work *Tevila Katlanit*,¹⁴⁶ which translates in English as *Fatal Baptism*, or *Fatal Christening*. *Tevila Katlanit* was published in 1992 by Bitan Publishing and was never translated into any other language. The story of the novel revolves around an Israeli Druze man who tells his life story throughout the novel. Like Atallah Mansour's *Beor Khadash*, *Tevilah Katlanit* is also a fictional autobiography. The main character of *Tevilah Katlanit*, whose name remains unknown throughout the story, narrates the story in the first person retrospectively. The focus of the novel lies with the problems regarding mixed Druze-Christian marriage and the social limitations imposed by the different Arab religious communities. After the main character had finished his military service he goes to study at the university in Haifa where he decides he will enjoy the freedom of university life, away from the social control of his native Druze village, as much as possible. He becomes involved with two girls, the Muslim Arab Samira and her best friend the Christian Arab Nasrin. In the end the main character chooses to stay with Nasrin and eventually he is faced with the choice to either marry her or to leave her. After much consideration he decides to marry Nasrin. However, because the main character wishes to get married in Jerusalem and because marriage ceremonies in Israel, where civil marriage does not exist, take place within the religious communities to which the couples belong he decides to convert to Christianity. The main character thus gets baptized, the fatal baptism the title of the book refers to, and he and Nasrin get married in secret and have three

¹⁴³ Author Unknown. "Naim Araidi". November 8, 2010. On: www.blogs.bananot.co.il. Last Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://blogs.bananot.co.il/327/?p=4>

¹⁴⁴ Naim Araidi. *Back to the Village*. Translator Unknown. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁵ Naim Araidi. *Canzoni di Galilea*. Translators [Igor Costanzo](#), [Beppe Costa](#) and [Stefania Battistella](#). (Rome: Edizioni Seam, 2014).

¹⁴⁶ Naim Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). (Tel Aviv: Bitan Publishing, 1992).

sons. His religiously mixed marriage with Nasrin, however, has unexpected consequences when the families of both Nasrin and the main character renounce their relationships with the young couple once they find out about it. Although the relationship between Nasrin and her family is eventually mended the relationship between the main character and his family is not, his father had always wanted him to get married to a Druze girl and due to his choice to convert to Christianity the main character at the end of the story realizes he has become dead to his family. In the long run this not only makes the main character very unhappy but it also makes him reflect on his decision to marry Nasrin, especially in light of the consequences this has for the identity of his children.

At the very beginning of the novel the reader is abruptly introduced to the story which begins with the main character's thoughts on his three children with the following words:

זה שנים מטרידה אותי המחשבה שאני עלול למות לפני, להשאיר את שלושת בני תחת קורת־הגג של הבית אשר יהיה ביתה־שלה, ומי יודע אם לא יהיה זה בית הוריה. והם, שלושת הילדים הנפלאים האלה, שלושה ענפי הדס ירוקים וריחניים, יענדו צלב על צווארם, יהגו את הקו"ף הגרונית, האל"ף המתואשרת [sic המתאשרת recte], יגדלו ולא יוכלו לשרת בצבא, כי החלק הדרוזי שאני נטעתי בהם ילך וישכח.¹⁴⁷

For years the thought that I might die before her bothers me, to leave behind my three sons under the roof of the house which will be her house, and who knows if it will not be her parents' house. And they, these three wonderful children, three fragrant and green myrtle branches will wear a cross on their necks, they will pronounce the Kuf guttural, the alef confirmed, they will grow up and not be able to serve in the army, because the Druze part that I instilled in them will disappear and be forgotten.¹⁴⁸

After the first chapter has set the tone and introduced the main character's troubles the reader is taken back in time to the beginning of the main character's relationship with Nasrin. At university the main character and Nasrin are introduced to each other through Samira, the main character's other lover and Nasrin's best friend. The period the main character spends at university is meticulously described and ends with him living in a university couples room at the university after he married Nasrin in their semester break. Once they graduate the main character starts a job as a teacher at a mixed school where he teaches in the Hebrew language and Nasrin starts a job as a social worker. They have three sons: Naim, Nadim and Nabil.

¹⁴⁷ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*).7.

¹⁴⁸ Since *Tevilah Katlanit* has not been translated all English translations in this chapter are my own.

Further down the road when his sons start growing up, the main character starts to miss his own family more and more and he begins to doubt whether he did the right thing by marrying Nasrin, especially so because Nasrin, on the other side, has managed to repair her relationship with her own parents. A feeling of nostalgia takes over and thoughts about his family, his native village and its landscape become unremitting.

The main theme of *Tevila Katlanit* is multiculturalism and cultural hybridity amongst Arabs within Israel. The main theme can be divided into two recurring sub-themes. The first subtheme is the differences present amongst the different Arab communities and the presumed identities and behaviours that are part of being an Arab Druze, an Arab Christian and to a lesser extent an Arab Muslim. Placed within this context the main character generally has a preference for his native Druze culture. The second subtheme is the influence that Jewish culture on a whole has on the Arab culture, or cultures, in Israel. In general *Tevila Katlanit* attends more to the social and cultural issues amongst Arabs within the Arab minority society present in Israel than to the social and political issues of Arabs within the broader Israeli society. For example, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is not mentioned at all and the state of Israel is also rarely mentioned in the novel. Furthermore, the main character classifies all the characters along religious and ethnic lines such as Jewish and Arab, including all their religious subcategories, rather than referring to them in their capacity as Israeli citizens. The main theme of multiculturalism is most succinctly illustrated by the following quote:

חברה משונה צמחה כאן בארץ. תערובת של תרבויות. האחת מחקה את האחרת עד שנוצרה מין חברה סינתטית, נטולת שורשים, חלשה, שאינה מתמודדת עם בעיותיה. ואני - מה עם שורשי-שלי?¹⁴⁹

A weird society has grown here in the country. A mixture of cultures. The one mimics the other until a kind of synthetic society is created: lacking roots, weak, that does not deal with its problems. And I – what about my roots?

The first subtheme, the differences present amongst the different Arab religious communities and the difficulties this creates, is illustrated by the statement by the main character that he has always been treated as a Druze everywhere he went:

¹⁴⁹ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*).93.

בכל חברה ובכל מקום שם נמצאתי, הרגשתי שבהתייחסותם של האנשים אל היותי דרוזי, היתה נקיטת עמדה ברורה: היהודים מכאן, והערבים מכאן, אם אמרתי משהו חיובי על היהודים, אמרו הערבים: מה הפלא!! סוף סוף הוא דרוזי ואם אמרתי משהו חיובי על הערבים, אמרו היהודים: מה הפלא!! סוף סוף הוא ערבי!¹⁵⁰

In every society and every place where I found myself, I felt that in the attitude of the people towards my being a Druze, was taking a definite position: Jews here, and Arabs here. If I said something positive about the Jews, the Arabs said: no wonder!! Ultimately he is a Druze and when I said something positive about the Arabs, the Jews said: no wonder!! Ultimately he is an Arab!

Another clear example of the first subtheme is a conversation that the main character recalls having with his Christian friend from the village. The main character views his Christian friend to be rather narrow-minded and considers him to be illustrative of the religious conservatism in Arab society:

החברה הערבית מטבעה הינה חברה שמרנית מאוד, ובמיוחד בכל מה שנוגע לדת. לפעמים הדבר מגיע עד לאבסורד: חבר שלי נוצרי מן הכפר סיפר לי על מקרה מביך וקשה: ילדיו הקטנים צופים דרך קבע באחת הסדרות המשודרות בטלוויזיה הירדנית, סדרה המתארת את מלחמות הצלבנים בערבים במזרח-התיכון. מטבע הדברים צפוי היה שלסדרה הירדנית יהיה אופי מגמת-מוסלמי. אך בירדן חיים הרבה ערבים נוצרים שלא לדבר על הצופים בסדרה מחוץ לירדן על ערבים נוצרים בישראל, בגדה המערבית, במצרים, בסוריה ובלבנון. ואולם, במאי הסדרה לא התחשב כלל ברגישות הנושא. "הבמאי היה או טיפש או פושע במזיד." הוא אמר, "והלביש את הצלבנים בצלבים גדולים והבליט את ההרג שעשו המוסלמים הערבים בצלבנים."¹⁵¹

Arab society by nature is a very conservative society, especially with regard to religion. Sometimes it comes to the absurd: a friend of mine, a Christian from a village, told me about an embarrassing and difficult case: his young children regularly watch one broadcast series on the Jordanian television, a series that depicts the wars of the Crusaders with the Arabs in the Middle East. Naturally it was expected of the Jordanian series that its character would be Muslim orientated. But many Christian Arabs live in Jordan not to mention the viewers of the series outside Jordan including the Christian Arabs in Israel, in the West Bank, in Egypt, in Syria and in Lebanon. However, the director of the series did not take at all the sensitivity of

¹⁵⁰ Araidi. (Fatal Baptism).20. טבילה קטלנית.

¹⁵¹ Araidi. (Fatal Baptism). 21. טבילה קטלנית.

the matter into consideration. "The director was either stupid or a deliberate criminal," he said, "and he dressed the Crusaders with large crosses and emphasized the killing of the Crusaders by the Arab Muslims."

The conservatism of Arab society, however, dismays the main character in more ways than one. The main character, despite the fact that he is enjoying his freedom at university, at the same time is also frustrated with the norms and restrictions of Arab society when it comes to relationships and friendships between men and women. This becomes clear when he has a conversation with Samira about their relationship, which is more than just a friendship.

"אתה יודע שאצלנו לא מבחינים בין ידידות לבין משהו אחר! ידידות בין בחור ובחורה אינה נחשבת לידידות בחברה שלנו."

"אבל אנחנו לא בחברה שלנו! אנחנו כאן, בעולם אחר!"

"נדמה לך! אנחנו כאן עם אחותי, עם נסדין, עם הסטודנטים הערבים! גם אם אנחנו פיסית רחוקים מן החברה, הרי היא תרדוף אותנו בכל מקום. וכל מה שאנחנו עושים זה בסתר!"¹⁵²

Samira: *"You know that we do not distinguish between friendship and something else! Friendship between a guy and a girl is not considered friendship in our society."*

Main Character: *"But we are not in our society! We are here, in another world!"*

Samira: *"You think! We are here with my sister, with Nasrin, with the Arab students! Even if we are physically distant from the society, it will haunt us in every place. All that we do is secret!"*

The first subtheme reaches its pinnacle near the end of the story when the main character, Nasrin and their sons finally visit his parents at his native village because the main character's sister is getting married. The visit confronts the main character with the ruined relationship with his parents and he contemplates about the reasons his family could have not to like Nasrin. After all she is beautiful, unique, understanding and intelligent and gave birth to three sons, so why do his parents not receive her as any other? The conclusion he draws is that it must come down to the fact that she is a Christian.

¹⁵² Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). 30.

או אולי הם רוצים לשמר את הדת שמאמיניה הם מיעוט־שבמיעות? מדוע אינה יכולה להיות לדרוזית? ואני יודע שאפילו אפשרי היה הדבר, היא לא היתה נאותה לעשות זאת. כמו שלא היתה מסכימה שאהפוך לנוצרי.¹⁵³

Or perhaps they want to preserve their religion whose followers are a minority within a minority? Why can she not become a Druze? And I know that even if it were possible, she would not agree to do it. Just like she had not agreed that I would become a Christian.

Moreover, not only does the main character's family not treat Nasrin as they do other people, they do not treat him as a son anymore either and he is for the most part excluded from the familial traditions involved in his sister's religious Druze wedding. When he takes his father's hand it becomes painfully clear to the main character just how much he and his family have become estranged due to his conversion to Christianity and his marriage to Nasrin.

הוא הפנה את פניו אלי. נטלתי את ידו כמו בכוח ולחצתי אותה. כל המבטים הופנו לעברנו ושקט כבד העיק על כל החדר הגדול. כולם שתקו בציפייה דרוכה. אמא עמדה לידי קפואה והמתינה לתגובתו של אבא. כמו רצתה להגייד לו להיענות, אך היא לא אמרה מאומה. לפתע שמט אבא את ידו מתוך ידי ונאנח אנחה עמוקה שלא יכולתי להבין את פשרה. הוא הפנה את מבטו הצדה. אחותי שזהו אך הפסיקה את בכייה בציפייה, שוב פרצה בבכי. מבוכה כסתה את פני אחי, כולם הביטו דווקא באבא ולא בי. פני השחירו מרוגז, הידקתי את לסתותי זו לזו בכוח רב, עד שלחיי נעשו קמטים קמטים. לבי התרוקן. הנה אני חשוב כמת.¹⁵⁴

He turned his face to me. I took his hand as if by force and shook it. All the looks were directed towards us and a heavy silence weighed on the big room. All of them were quiet in a tense expectation. Mom stood by petrified and waited for Dad's reaction. As if she wanted to tell him to respond but she said nothing. Suddenly Dad pulled down his hand from my hand and sighed a deep sigh that I could not make any sense of. He turned sideways. My sister who had just stopped crying in anticipation started weeping again. Embarrassment covered my brother's face, everybody in fact looked at Dad and not at me. My face became dark with anger, I pressed my jaws together tightly until my cheeks became all wrinkles. My heart became empty. I am indeed considered dead.

The second subtheme, the influence that Jewish culture has on the Arab culture, becomes most apparent through the references to the Hebrew language the main character makes but

¹⁵³ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). 100.

¹⁵⁴ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). 103.

also through the kind of criticisms of both the Arab and Jewish societies he has. For example, after contemplating the positive features of the Druze village culture earlier in the story the main character goes on with an abrasive criticism of Arab society as follows:

בדרך כלל אימצו הערבים את כל התכונות השליליות של היהודים, וצירפו אותן אל התכונות השליליות הקיימות אצלם זה מכבר, וכך – איבדו את הגאווה והייחוד של תרבותם. ואילו אני רציתי לשמר את כל הטוב שבמסורת שלנו ולהמיר את הדברים השליליים בתכונות החיוביות המיובאות מן העיר.¹⁵⁵

Generally the Arabs adopted all the negative features of the Jews, and connected them to the negative features existing with them already, and in this manner - they lost the pride and the uniqueness of their culture. Whereas I wanted to preserve all the best of our tradition and exchange the negative things for the positive features imported from the city.

Another example of the second subtheme is the main character's relation to the Hebrew language. At a certain point in the story when he still attends university and follows classes about Hebrew literature he makes a statement about his admiration of the poetry by Uri Zvi Greenberg. First of all, this could indicate an autobiographical element in the novel as Araidi himself studied Greenberg's poetry while writing his PhD thesis. Secondly, the fact that the main character finds Greenberg one of the most interesting poets is slightly odd in light of Greenberg's exclusive and ideological visions on Israel and Zionism which are articulated through his work.¹⁵⁶ Lastly, the statement reflects the main character's familiarity with Hebrew literature as well as a degree of internalisation of the Hebrew language.

היה זה קורס בספרות עברית על אחד המשוררים המעניינים ביותר בתולדות הספרות העברית החדשה, אורי צבי גרינברג. משורר, שעל אף גדולתו הפיוטית נדחה על ידי הממסד התרבותי הישראלי בשל דעותיו הפוליטיות הימניות.¹⁵⁷

It was a course in Hebrew literature about one of the most fascinating poets in the history of modern Hebrew literature, Uri Zvi Greenberg. A poet, who in spite of his poetic greatness was rejected by the Israeli cultural establishment because of his right-wing political opinions.

¹⁵⁵ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). 16.

¹⁵⁶ See: Ezra Spicehandler. "Uri Zevi Greenberg." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd edition. Volume 8. Editors Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007) 74-76.

¹⁵⁷ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). 47.

Another striking example relating to the second subtheme with regard to the Hebrew language, and its internalisation, is the realization of the main character that the female Arab students at university do not only find him more attractive than his fellow Arab student because he served in the army, which made him more mature than his peers, but also because of his excellent command of Hebrew.

להפתעתי, גם העברית שידעתי טוב מרוב הסטודנטים הערביים היה בה כדי למשוך אלי את תשומת-לבן של הבנות.¹⁵⁸

To my surprise, also the Hebrew that I knew much better than that of most Arab students ensured that the attention of girls was drawn to me.

Although the main character expresses his affection for some aspects of Jewish culture, such as his admiration for Greenberg's poetry, he at times also critiques other aspects of it. For example, when the main character thinks of the cactus bushes growing near his parents' house he symbolically expresses his critique on Israeli Jewish society by criticizing the Sabra, the Hebrew word for cactus that has gained symbolic meaning in Zionist discourse as a term used for Jews born in Israel.

מאחורי הבית, בצדו הצפוני, צמחו שיחי צבר עמוסי פרי. אני מעולם לא אהבתי את הפרי הזה, שבו התפרסמה הארץ, ועל שמו נקראו ילידיה ואף ייחסו להם את תכונותיו. בעיני סימל צמח מדברי זה דווקא את הצחיחות, היובש והעוני.¹⁵⁹

Behind the house, on the Northern side, grew cactus bushes loaded with fruit. I never liked this fruit, for which the land became famous and is named after the natives and even the qualities attributed to them. In my eyes this desert plant in fact symbolized the aridity, the dryness and the poverty.

¹⁵⁸ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). 15.

¹⁵⁹ Araidi. טבילה קטלנית (*Fatal Baptism*). 100.

Language, Identity and Critique

Tevilah Katlanit is the only novel ever written by Naim Araidi and as such it has not received much attention either from the media or from academia, which in part could also explain the fact that the novel has never been translated. Araidi's poems, on the other side, have become quite popular and the scholars who examine Araidi's work tend to focus on his poetry.¹⁶⁰ According to Elad-Bouskila, however, Araidi's work is not held in high esteem in the Arab world and he is considered a traitor to Arab culture due to his choice to write in Hebrew.¹⁶¹ With further regard to Araidi's choice to write in Hebrew the opinions, as expected, are divided. For example, Reuven Snir who addresses the Hebrew works of Anton Shammas and Araidi, states that:

“[...] Araidi and Shammas rebel against the exclusive ownership of the Jews over the Hebrew language as well as against the ethnic norm that identifies each Hebrew author as a Jew. From their point of view, Hebrew has ceased to function as the language of Zionism, the liberation movement of the Jewish people, and has become the language of Israel's citizens.”¹⁶²

Adel Shakour, however, presents a different vision on the matter and is of the opinion that “Araidi and Shammas' writing reflects the fact that they belong to two alienated cultures: Arab culture, where they were born and took their first steps in literature, and Hebrew culture, where at first they were thrown reluctantly, but which they came to prefer, for identifiable personal, aesthetic reasons.”¹⁶³ In an interview with Lital Levy Araidi himself stated “I am not sure if the Jewish people in Israel are aware of what I think of the Hebrew language, and this does not concern me. It is not for them that I write in Hebrew but because of them.”¹⁶⁴ With this statement Araidi implies that he does in fact write in Hebrew because he lives and was raised in a Hebrew-speaking society. This is confirmed by Smadar Lavie who states that “this [Israeli, Hebrew-language] education forced him into spatial and cultural exile in the schools

¹⁶⁰ For example see:

Levy. *Poetic Trespass*.

Snir. “Hebrew As the Language of Grace: Arab-Palestinian Writers in Hebrew.”

¹⁶¹ Elad-Bouskila. *Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture*. 38.

¹⁶² Snir. “Hebrew As the Language of Grace.” 164,165.

¹⁶³ Shakour. “Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew.” 7.

¹⁶⁴ Levy. *Poetic Trespass*. 150.

of the privileged Jewish elite.”¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, in the same work by Lavie Araidi stated the following during an interview:

“[...] I’m living on a fence - one foot here, one foot there, always trying to close my legs, sometimes with the literary establishment’s help, sometimes despite their protest. I know I can never become a real Hebrew author. Never. It’s a matter of pride. They won’t let me be that, but I won’t let myself be that, either.”¹⁶⁶

Tevilah Katlanit addresses the socio-political reality in Israel of the 1990s in several ways although always with a focus on Arab society in Israel and from the unique Druze perspective of the main character. The relationship between the Druze and the rest of the Arabs in Israel is a complicated one. Although Druze do identify as Arab and speak the Arabic language they identify as Druze first and are acknowledged by the Israeli state as a distinct ethnic group. In comparison the Druze community is much more integrated into the Israeli state than the other Arab communities. This is reflected in the unique status Druze have within the broader Israeli society. For example, Druze are subjected to the military draft whereas Arab Christians and Muslims are not.¹⁶⁷ *Tevilah Katlanit* reflects this fact firstly through the rejection of the main character’s family of his conversion to Christianity. The exceptional status of the main character amongst his fellow students at the university as well as his comments about being treated as different by both Arabs and Jews are also exemplary of hereof. Moreover, the main character’s harsh criticisms of both Arab and Jewish society also render the middle man position of the Druze within Israel. Furthermore, the setting of the story is in Haifa and Jewish culture pervades the main character’s life at every turn, mostly in the shape of the Hebrew language. Nevertheless, the focal points of the novel are the social limitations imposed on the main character by the different Arab religious communities within Israel and the fact that these communities derive their identity from the distinction between one another. The main character makes a fatal error when he converts to Christianity, as he later realizes, and is therefore ostracized by his family and native community.

The novel also has several evident autobiographical elements. The main character is Druze, he did his military service in the Israel Defense Forces, and he studies at Haifa University and is interested in Hebrew literature, especially Uri Zvi Greenberg’s oeuvre.

¹⁶⁵ Lavie. “Blowups in the Borderzones.” 57.

¹⁶⁶ Lavie. “Blowups in the Borderzones.” 56.

¹⁶⁷ See: Adi Greif. “Druze and Jews.” *Political and Cultural History*. Spring 2005: 1-6.

However, the fact that he does not have a name and remains anonymous, unlike all the other characters in the novel, appears to be symbolic for the main character not having an identity of his own but rather being in between a variety of cultures. The lack of a solid identity in *Tevilah Katlanit's* main character could also be a reflection of Araidí's personal view on the matter. Araidí has stated that "true exposure to the other culture totally changes all the paths of thinking of the soul. On one hand, you do not want to assimilate. On the other hand, you do want to resemble."¹⁶⁸ As such the novel does not give a collective expression of the Arabs living in Israel but rather is an attempt to show how one can lose oneself in a country where a variety of cultures are present.

¹⁶⁸ Snir. "Hebrew As the Language of Grace." 166, 167.

Sayed Kashua¹⁶⁹

Biography

Sayed Kashua was born on January 1, 1975, in the village Tira¹⁷⁰ which is located closely to the Jewish Israeli city of Kfar Saba. Tira is part of the so-called Triangle Region. Kashua grew up with his parents and three brothers until at the age of fifteen he was admitted to the prestigious Jewish boarding school, the Israel Arts and Science Academy in Jerusalem. After he graduated from the Israel Arts and Science Academy Kashua attended the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he studied sociology and philosophy. Kashua and his family lived in Jerusalem for many years until the summer of 2014 when Kashua decided to immigrate to Chicago, United States, due to the rise of anti-Arab demonstrations and violence in Jerusalem during this time.

Career

Kashua exclusively writes in Hebrew and thus far has had a multi-faceted career. Aside from writing literary works Kashua is also a well-known journalist and currently he holds teaching positions at the University of Chicago and at the University of Illinois. Kashua also writes weekly columns for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*¹⁷¹ and the Jerusalem weekly magazine *Kol HaIr*.¹⁷² Kashua's writes his columns both in Hebrew and English and usually the two different language versions of his columns are published simultaneously in the English and Hebrew versions of *Haaretz*. In his columns Kashua used to address the issues and problems Arabs in Israel encounter in a comical way. More recently the subject of his columns has been his move to the United States and the cultural misunderstandings he has found himself in there as an Israeli Arab immigrant. In February 2016 a collection of the English language versions of Kashua's columns written between 2006 and 2014 will appear under the title *Native: Dispatches from an Israeli-Palestinian Life*.¹⁷³ Kashua has also published several short stories in *Haaretz* of which the best known is *Herzl Disappears at Midnight*.¹⁷⁴ The story appeared almost simultaneously in English in the English language version of *Haaretz*

¹⁶⁹ Parts of this chapter are derived from and built forth upon my BA thesis titled *Sayed Kashua: Tussen Twee Werelden*.

¹⁷⁰ Tira: in Arabic الطيرة, in Hebrew טירה

¹⁷¹ *Haaretz*: in Hebrew הארץ

¹⁷² *Kol HaIr*: in Hebrew כל העיר

¹⁷³ Sayed Kashua. *Native: Dispatches from an Israeli-Palestinian Life*. (New York, Grove Press, 2016)

¹⁷⁴ Sayed Kashua. הרצל נעלם בהצות (*Herzl Disappears at Midnight*). *Haaretz*. October 3, 2005. On: www.haaretz.co.il. Last Accessed August 15, 2015. <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1048468>

under the title *Cinderella*.¹⁷⁵ This short comical story revolves around the perilous love life of Herzl Haliwa, a man who changes into an Arab at midnight every evening because his mother, who was already forty and childless, begged God in her prayers at the Wailing Wall to give her a son, even if he would be born half Arab.

Sayed Kashua is also the writer of the satirical sitcom *Avodah Aravit*¹⁷⁶ which translates as *Arab Labor* in English. *Avodah Aravit* aired for the first time on November 24, 2007 on the commercial Israeli television *Channel 2*. In Hebrew the expression ‘avodah aravit’ is used to refer to poorly executed work by Arab laborers. Kashua himself stated in an interview that he thought it was time to change this expression into something positive.¹⁷⁷ Therefore the series ridicules both Jewish Israeli culture and Arab Palestinian culture. The story of the series revolves around the Israeli Arab couple Amjad and Bushra who, together with their daughter, live in an Arab suburb of Jerusalem. *Avodah Aravit* is unique because it is the first time that a Palestinian family has appeared on commercial Israeli television. It is also unique that both Hebrew and Arabic are being spoken in the series. In an interview with LinkTV Kashua stated that his personal life is the primary inspiration for *Avoda Aravit*.¹⁷⁸ However, the series is fictional and not a real story about Kashua and his family but rather an alternative, comical way to view reality. Although the series initially received negative reviews and comments because, as Kashua himself explained, many older Israelis are oriented towards the political right and find it difficult to watch a series which is both about Jews and Arabs, at the end of the first season most reviews had become positive.¹⁷⁹ *Avodah Aravit* aired for four seasons.

Aside from Kashua’s first novel *Dancing Arabs* Kashua has written two other novels. *Let it be Morning*,¹⁸⁰ which was published in 2004, revolves around an Arab Israeli man and his family who move back to his native village only to one day be besieged by the Israeli Defense Forces until finally at the end of the novel it is revealed that the village has been part of a land swap between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government and is now part

¹⁷⁵ Sayed Kashua. “Cinderella.” *Haaretz*. October 2, 2005. On: www.haaretz.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/cinderella-1.171186>

¹⁷⁶ *Avodah Aravit*: in Hebrew עבודה ערבית

¹⁷⁷ “Interview With Arab Labor Creator Sayed Kashua and Cast.” *Link TV*. Publication Date Unknown. On: www.linktv.org. Last Accessed August 6, 2012. <http://www.linktv.org/video/4028/interview-with-arab-labor-creator-sayed-kashua-and-cast>

¹⁷⁸ “Interview With Arab Labor Creator Sayed Kashua and Cast.” *Link TV*.

¹⁷⁹ “Interview With Arab Labor Creator Sayed Kashua and Cast.” *Link TV*.

¹⁸⁰ Sayed Kashua. ויהי בוקר (*Let it be Morning*). (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2006).

of the newly established Palestinian state. *Second Person Singular*¹⁸¹ was published in 2010. The plot of *Second Person Singular* revolves around two characters, one a young Israeli-Arab who has stolen the identity of the young Jewish man he nursed until his death, and one unnamed Israeli Arab lawyer who discovers a note from his wife to a man named Jonathan. The lawyer goes on a search for Jonathan and eventually it is revealed that Jonathan is the young Israeli Arab who stole his patient's identity. Both novels have been translated to multiple languages. *Let it be Morning* appeared in English, French, German, Italian and Arabic. *Second Person Singular* was translated into English, German, French, Dutch, Italian, Catalan and Chinese. All of Kashua's novels have been received very positively in Israel, by the Jewish Israeli audience at least. In Europe, the United States and recently China Kashua's work has also had many positive reactions. However, there is little to no interest in Kashua's works in the Arab world due to his use of the Hebrew language although *Let it be Morning* was translated to Arabic.

Aravim Rokdim – Dancing Arabs

Kashua's debut novel *Aravim Rokdim*¹⁸² appeared in 2002 and was published by Modan Publishing House. The novel has been received highly positive and has been translated into English, German, Dutch, Italian, French, Spanish and Polish. *Aravim Rokdim* was also adapted to film by director Eran Riklis and opened the 2014 Jerusalem international film festival under the same title. Furthermore, Kashua has also received the Israeli Prime Minister's Prize for Hebrew Writers for *Aravim Rokdim* in 2005. The story of *Aravim Rokdim* revolves around an anonymous Arab boy from the village Tira who narrates the story from his perspective in a retrospective manner. Like Mansour and Araid's novels *Aravim Rokdim* is also a fictionalized autobiography. The story is presented in a chronological manner and spans a time period from the main character's childhood until the main character is in his late twenties or early thirties. The main character's life story is presented to the reader in five different parts. The first two parts attend to his childhood in Tira with his parents, three brothers and grandmother. The third part deals with the time the main character spent at a Jewish boarding school in Jerusalem and his attempts to assimilate to the Jewish, Israeli culture and society. In the fourth part of the novel the main character is a university student and meets Samia, who he eventually marries and has a daughter with. His wife Samia is a

¹⁸¹ Sayed Kashua. גוף שני יחיד (*Second Person Singular*). (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2010).

¹⁸² Sayed Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). (Moshav Ben Shemen: Modan Publishing House, 2002).

source of annoyance to the main character due to her Arab appearance which makes the main character also recognizable as an Arab. In the fifth and last part of the book the main character and his family plan to move back to his native village Tira. At this point in the story the main character has realized that he will never be fully accepted into Israeli Jewish society and that his plan to assimilate has failed. In the end he is an Israeli Arab who feels neither fully Arab nor fully Israeli.

The focus of *Aravim Rokdim* lies with the problems of belonging to the Arab minority in Israel with its Jewish majority culture and the equivocality of an Israeli Arab identity. In the first two parts of the novel which describe the main character's happy childhood he is still oblivious to the distinction between Jews and Arabs and the political reality in which he lives. The reader does get an idea of the main characters' family history, especially in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict although the main character himself is at that point not aware of what any of this means. It becomes apparent, for example, that his grandfather was accidentally killed in 1948 by a straying bullet and that his father, who is a passionate communist and hopes for a Russian liberation of Palestine, went to prison from 1969 until 1971 because he blew up the canteen at his university in the name of freedom. Moreover, the main character shares his memory of the first time he ever met Jews, colleagues of his father who come over for dinner, and how anxious these people, who were like aliens to him, made him feel. The main character only fully becomes aware what it means to be Jewish or Arab when he is admitted to a prestigious Jewish boarding school in Jerusalem which he attends for the duration of his high school education and during which time his identity crisis begins. Part three of the novel, symbolically titled *I Wanted to Be a Jew*,¹⁸³ begins with the following two illustrative paragraphs which clearly reflect the identity related predicament of the main character:

אני נראה יותר ישראלי מישראלי ממוצע. אני תמיד שמחה לשמוע את זה מיהודים. "אתה ממש לא נראה ערבי," הם אומרים. יש כאלה שטוענים שזאת גזענות, אבל אני תמיד התייחסתי לזה כאל מחמאה. כהצלחה. הרי זה מה שרציתי להיות, יהוד. עבדתי על זה קשה, ובסוף הצלחתי.¹⁸⁴

I look more Israeli than the average Israeli. I'm always pleased when Jews tell me this. "You don't look like an Arab at all," they say. Some people claim it's a racist thing to say, but I've

¹⁸³ Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Aravim Rokdim*). 65-91. (Part Three: I Wanted to Be a Jew)In: חלק שלישי: רציתי יהודי.

¹⁸⁴ Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 67.

*always taken it as a compliment, a sign of success. That's what I've always wanted to be, after all: a Jew. I've worked hard at it, and I've finally pulled it off.*¹⁸⁵

היתה פעם אחת שקלטו עלי שאני ערבי. זיהו אותי, ומייד לאחר מכן הפכתי למומחה בזיוף זהויות. זה קרה בתום השבוע הראשון ללימודים בירושלים. בדרך מהפנימייה לטירה, עלה חייל לאוטובוס וביקש ממני לרדת. איך שבכיתי. מעולם לא הרגשתי מושפל כל כך.¹⁸⁶

*There was one time when they picked up on the fact that I was an Arab and recognized me. So right after that I became an expert at assuming false identities. It was at the end of my first week of school in Jerusalem. I was on the bus going home to Tira. A soldier got on and told me to get off. I cried like crazy. I'd never felt so humiliated.*¹⁸⁷

The central theme of *Aravim Rokdim* is the impossibility of full acceptance and integration into the Israeli Jewish majority society as an Israeli Arab and the impact of living in between two cultures on a daily basis. The central theme is rendered through the main character's assimilation attempts, the estrangement from his native Arab culture this causes and his eventual lack of a coherent and stable personal identity. The consequence of the main character being exposed to a completely Jewish environment at boarding school is that he, in his childish naivité, wants to be like his Jewish classmates and actively attempts to assimilate to Jewish culture in order to become exactly like them. At the same time his experience at the boarding school alienates him from his native Arab culture, and as such also from his family. For example, during the first week the main character spends at the boarding school he gets made fun of for his pink bed sheets, his pants, his pronunciation of the Hebrew letter bet, not knowing how to eat with a knife and fork and never having heard of the Beatles. Consequently, when he meets the one other Arab student at the school, Adel, who represents all Arab stereotypes, the main character disapproves of Adel's appearance too as becomes apparent from the following:

ידעתי שאני לא רוצה להיראות כמוהו, אבל זה שגיליתי אותו החזיק אותי שם.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Sayed Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. Translator Miriam Shlesinger. (New York: Grove Press, 2004) 91.

¹⁸⁶ Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 67.

¹⁸⁷ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 91.

¹⁸⁸ Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 68.

*I knew I didn't want to look like him, but just seeing him there kept me going.*¹⁸⁹

Another example of the impact of living between two cultures is rendered by the fact that at the end of the first week of school the main character has already become ashamed of his Arab identity and appearance. Because it is Rosh Hashanah he and Adel travel home together on the bus where they run into a group of students from the vocational Polanski school who make fun of them for being different.

אני מורח על פני את החיוך הכי רחב שלי, מנסה להיות הכי מנומס בעולם. הם לא יעשו לי כלום, אני הייתי ב'ניצני שלום', אני מכיר יהודים, הם חייבים לעזוב אותי בשקט. "מטירה", אני אומר, "זה ליד כפר-סבא." אני מנסה להמשיך עם החיוך למרות הצחוק הלועג. אני לוחש לעאדל מהר, "בוא נרד, אני אשלם עליך." אבל הוא לא מסכים.¹⁹⁰

*I put on the biggest grin I can muster, trying to be the most polite person in the world. They're not going to hurt me. I was in Seeds of Peace. I know Jews. They've got to leave me alone. "From Tira," I say. "It's near Kfar Sava." I try to keep up the smile, even though they're already laughing at me. Quickly I whisper to Adel, "Let's get off, I'll pay for your ticket." But he won't do it.*¹⁹¹

The journey home becomes even worse when Adel is recognized as an Arab when the bus arrives at Ben-Gurion airport and both them have to leave the bus for an extra passport control (the event already referred to above). This is the final straw for the main character. He is not only deeply ashamed but also traumatized by the airport event in such a way that during his second week at school he decides to buy trousers at a Jewish store, learn to pronounce the letter bet in the Hebrew way and from then on always brings a Hebrew book and a walkman with Hebrew music with him to avoid being recognized as an Arab. He also ends his friendship with Adel because Adel does not want to adapt. The main character becomes more and more estranged from his own cultural background. He can, for example, no longer tolerate the Arabic music his father and brothers listen to.

כשהייתי חוזר הביתה לחופשות מהפנימייה, צעקתי על האחים שלי ששמעו עדיין את פיירו ואת עבד אל-חלים.

¹⁸⁹ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 93.

¹⁹⁰ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. ערבים ורקדים. 71.

¹⁹¹ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 97.

כשאבא שלי הסיע אותי לתחנת האוטובוס בכפר־סבא, הייתי מתחנן שישמע רדיו בעברית או לפחות שינמיך את המוזיקה שיש לו באוטו. לא בגלל שהתביישתי. באמת לא הייתי מסוגל לשמוע אותם יותר. אמרתי לו שהאוזן שלי כבר הורגלה לדברים אחרים.¹⁹²

*Whenever I'd go home on vacation I'd scream at my brothers, who still listened to Fairuz and Abed el-Halim. When my father took me to the bus stop in Kfar Sava, I'd beg him to switch to a Hebrew radio station or at least to lower the volume. It wasn't that I was ashamed. I really couldn't stand them anymore. I told him my ear had grown used to other things.*¹⁹³

The impossibility of full integration into Israeli Jewish society as an Arab, is, for example, reflected by the main character's experiences in the twelfth grade when he realizes why he is different from his Jewish peers as becomes apparent from the following:

בי"ב הבנתי בפעם הראשונה מה זה '48. שקוראים לזה מלחמת־השחרור. בי"ב הבנתי שציוני זה "סהיוני", ושזאת לא קללה. אני מכיר המילה "סהיוני". בבית־הספר קיללנו ככה זה את זה. הייתי בטוח שסהיוני זה מין איש שמן, כמו דוב. פתאום הבנתי שציונות זו אידיאולוגיה. בשיעורי אזרחות ותולדות עם ישראל התחלתי להבין שלדורה שלי מטול־כרם קוראים פליטה, שלערבים בישראל קוראים מיעוט. בי"ב הבנתי שהבעיה חמורה. הבנתי מה זה בית־לאומי, מה זה אנטישמיות. שמעתי בפעם הראשונה על אלפיים שנות גלות, ושהיהודים נלחמו נגד הערבים והבריטים. לא האמנתי. אין סיכוי. הרי האנגליז רצו כאן את היהודים. בשיעורי תנ"ך גיליתי שאברהם היה אביו של יצחק. בי"ב גיליתי שאת יצחק החליפו עם כבש, לא את ישמעאל.¹⁹⁴

In the twelfth grade I understood for the first time what '48 was. That it's called the War of Independence. In twelfth grade I understood that a Zionist was what we called a Sahyuni, and it wasn't a swearword. I knew the word. That's how we used to curse one another. I'd been sure that a Sahyuni was a kind of fat guy, like a bear. Suddenly I understood that Zionism is an ideology. In civics lessons and Jewish history classes, I started to understand that my aunt from Tulkarm is called a refugee, that the Arabs in Israel are called a minority. In twelfth grade I understood that the problem was serious. I understood what a national homeland was, what anti-Semitism was. I heard for the first time about "two thousand years of exile" and how the Jews had fought against the Arabs and the British. I didn't believe it. No way. The English had wanted the Jews here, after all. In Bible class, I discovered that Abraham was

¹⁹² Kashua. ערבים ורקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 75,76.

¹⁹³ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 104.

¹⁹⁴ Kashua. ערבים ורקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 85.

*Isaac's father. In twelfth grade I discovered that it was Isaac, not Ismael, who'd been replaced with a sheep.*¹⁹⁵

Moreover, the main character realizes that he will never fulfill his dream to become a pilot because as an Arab he won't even be called in for the selection test. His parents on the other hand still believe he can become a pilot exacerbating his identity crisis.

בי"ב התלמידים מהכיתה שלי התחילו לרוץ במגרש החניה. הכנה לצבא. לקחו אותם לכל מיני מתקנים, להדרכה, ואני קיבלתי כרטיס אוטובוס וכרטיס כניסה למוזיאון ישראל. לפעמים הופיעו בבית הספר חיילים במדים, להרצות בפני התלמידים, ולי לא הרשו להשתתף. המחנך שלנו תמיד התנצל. לא היה לו נעים להגיד לי שזה לא בשבילי. בי"ב הבנתי שלא אהיה טייס גם אם ארצה, לא רק בגלל שאין לי כושר ואין לי ציונים. אפילו למבחני המיון אין סיכוי שיזמינו אותי. איך שצחקתי על אבא שלי.¹⁹⁶

*In twelfth grade, the kids in my class started running in the parking lot, getting into shape for the army. They were taken to all sorts of installations and training camps, and I received a bus pass and a ticket to the Israel Museum. Sometimes soldiers in uniform came to our school to talk with the students, and I wasn't allowed to take part. Our teacher always apologized. He was embarrassed to tell me it wasn't for me. In twelfth grade I understood I wouldn't be a pilot even if I wanted to be, not only because I wasn't fit and my grades weren't good enough. There was no way they would even call me up for the screening tests. I sure had a good laugh at my father.*¹⁹⁷

As the final year of school progresses the main character becomes more and more depressed. This is not only due to the realization that he does not have the same opportunities for the future as his Jewish classmates but also to the realization that he will lose his Jewish girlfriend Naomi after graduation as the following illustrates:

¹⁹⁵ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 117.

¹⁹⁶ Kashua. *ערבים רוקדים (Dancing Arabs)*. 85.

¹⁹⁷ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 117-118.

בסוף הבגרויות אנחנו נפרדים, זה היה ברור לי, ככה אמא שלה קבעה. היא אמרה שהפנימייה היא חממה, ושכל עוד אנחנו בחממה, לא איכפת לה שלבת שלה יהיה חבר ערבי. היא אמרה שאין לה שום דבר נגדי, רק חבל שלא קוראים לי היים.¹⁹⁸

*When the exams were over, we'd split up; I knew that. That's what her mother wanted. She said boarding school was a world apart, and as long as we were there she didn't mind that her daughter had an Arab boyfriend. She said she had nothing against me, except it was too bad my name wasn't Reuben or David.*¹⁹⁹

Due to his depression the main character takes an overdose of medication and ends up in the hospital. His parents and Bassem, a friend of his father's, come to pick him up from the hospital and they are not happy with his behavior. It becomes apparent that it is not just Naomi's mother who sees no future for an Arab-Jewish mixed relationship.

עכשיו אני נזכר איך הבאסם הזה עמד מעל המיטה שלי בבית־החלולים, ושאל, "מה יש לו?" ואבא ענה, "זה הכול בגלל הכלבה הזאת שלו, השרמוטה היהודייה."²⁰⁰

*Now I remember how this Bassem stood over my bed at the hospital and asked, "What's wrong with him? What's wrong with him?" And Father answered, "It's all because of that bitch of his, the Jewish whore."*²⁰¹

In addition, the impossibility of the main character's acceptance into Israeli Jewish society is further reflected by the following:

הדבר האחרון ששמעתי היה מה שאבא שלי אמר לחבר שלו על השרמוטה היהודייה. איך שנאתי אותו אז. ואת היועצת שנאתי עוד יותר. היא רצתה שאפסיק לאהוב את נעמי, ואם כבר, אז שאנסה לאהוב את סלוא. הרי יש בחורה ערבייה בבית־הספר, יפה וחכמה, היועצת אמרה לי כל הזמן.²⁰²

The last thing I heard was what my father said to his friend about the Jewish whore. How I hated him then. And I hated the guidance counselor even more. She wanted me to stop loving

¹⁹⁸ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. ערבים רוקדים. 87.

¹⁹⁹ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 122.

²⁰⁰ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. ערבים רוקדים. 86.

²⁰¹ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 119.

²⁰² Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. ערבים רוקדים. 90.

*Naomi, or at least try to love, Salwa, an Arab girl at school. She was pretty and smart, that's what the counselor kept telling me.*²⁰³

The main character starts to wonder whether it is truly possible to assimilate into Israeli society and shake off the label of being an Arab. According to his father, however, once an Arab always an Arab. The thought process of the main character clearly reflects that he realizes his assimilation attempts have failed as becomes clear from the following:

אבא שלי אומר שערבי תמיד נשאר ערבי. והוא צודק. הוא אומר שיהודים יכולים לתת לך את ההרגשה שאתה אחד מהם, ואתה יכול לאהוב אותם, לחשוב שהם האנשים הכי הטובים שהכרת, אבל בשלב מסוים אתה מבין שאין לך סיכוי, שבשבילם תמיד תישאר ערבי.²⁰⁴

*My father says, Once an Arab, always an Arab. And he's got a point. He says that Jews can give you the feeling that you're one of them, and you can really like them and think they're the nicest people you've ever known, but sooner or later you realize you don't stand a chance. For them you'll always be an Arab.*²⁰⁵

Despite the main character's discouraging experiences at the boarding school his desire to fit in with Jewish society as well as his estrangement from the Arab culture continue in his adult life. He also remains prone to depression and starts drinking lots of alcohol and begins smoking cigarettes. He starts a degree in philosophy at the Hebrew University but never finishes it and eventually becomes a professional barman. During his time at university the main character gets into a relationship with Samia, a girl whose family relocated to Tira after the 1967 Six-Day war. After four years they marry because they had already slept together, something which is not accepted by their culture. The entire village of Tira is aware of their relationship and gossips about the indecency of it. The main character wants a quick wedding to just have it over with, but to the annoyance of the main character his own and Samia's family demand a traditional Arab wedding to avoid further gossip about the couple and their respective families.

²⁰³ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 125.

²⁰⁴ Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 76.

²⁰⁵ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 106.

לבשתי חליפה שחורה ונעלתי נעליים שחורות, כמו בסרטים ערביים. הייתה צריך לענווד טבעת על אצבעה של סאמיה. הייתה צריך לרקוד איתה, למרות שאין לי מושג איך רוקדים דבקה. הייתה צריך לחתוך עוגה, ולהתנשק עם גברים מבוגרים שלא ידעתי את שמם. הייתה צריך להתחבק עם הדודות שלי והדודות שלה, ולהייד לצלם. הייתה צריך לשמוע מוזיקה מזעזעת שעושה לי תמיד כאב ראש. והייתה צריך לסבול את הכול בלי אלכוהול ובלי סיגריות. כי אני ילד טוב, ביישן.²⁰⁶

I put on my black suit and my black shoes, like in an Arab movie. I had to put the ring on Samia's finger. I had to dance with her, even though I haven't a clue about dancing the debka. I was supposed to cut cake and kiss men whose names I didn't know. I had to hug my aunts and uncles and smile at the camera. I had to listen to horrible music that never fails to give me a headache. And I had to put up with all that without any alcohol or cigarettes. Because I'm well-behaved and shy.²⁰⁷

Shortly after the wedding the young couple moves to the Arab side of Beit Safafa, a neighborhood in Jerusalem. His wife and her stereotypical Arab appearance and behavior are another great source of annoyance to the main character because it interferes with his continued attempt to pass as a Jew as the following reflects:

אשתי לא מבינה כולם בגינונים האלה. היא לא חושבת עליהם אפילו, וזה מפתיע אותי ומרגיז אותי. היא יכולה לדבר בערבית גם בתוך מעלית עמוסה, ואפילו בכניסה לקניון, כשמעבירים עלינו את גלאי המתכות. היא מסוגלת לשחק עם הילדה בערבית במקומות ציבוריים.²⁰⁸

My wife doesn't know the first thing about any of that. She doesn't give it a second thought, which surprises and annoys me. She's capable of talking to me in Arabic even inside a crowded elevator or at the entrance to the mall, when we're being processed through the metal detector. She plays with the baby in Arabic in public places.²⁰⁹

When the Second Intifada breaks out and the war, as the main character calls it, eventually reaches Beit Safafa he, his wife and their newborn daughter flee Jerusalem. The situation is exemplary of the main character's feeling of displacement and constant anxiety to be recognized as the following shows:

²⁰⁶ Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 107.

²⁰⁷ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 146.

²⁰⁸ Kashua. ערבים רוקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 149.

²⁰⁹ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 203, 204.

אני מקווה שעוד לא חסמו את היציאה, אבל אם כבר עומדות שם ניידות משטרה, אני אגיד לשוטרים שאני אזרח, ושאני רק שוכר פה דירה. אני אראה להם תעודה. הוצאתי אותה במשרד הפנים בנתניה. אני לא באמת פלסטיני. [...] אבן גדולה יורדת לי מהלב כשאנחנו מגיעים לחלקה המואר של העיר. הם לא יזהו אותי, אני סומך על זה שאני נראה יהודי. רק שלא יראו את אשתי. לא יכולתי למצוא מישהי קצת יותר בהירה?²¹⁰

I hope they haven't blocked the exit yet, but if the police cars are there already, I'll tell them I'm a citizen and that I'm only renting here. I'll show them my ID. I got it at the Ministry of Interior in Netanya. I'm not really Palestinian. [...] I heave a sigh of relief as we reach the lit-up part of the city. They're not going to recognize me. I'm counting on the fact that I look like a Jew. Let's just hope they don't see my wife. Couldn't I have picked someone with a lighter complexion?²¹¹

It is only near the end of the novel, when he and his wife are already back in Tira, that the main character truly realizes how impossible his attempts at assimilation have been. When Samia becomes ill on Independence Day he decides to bring her to the emergency room. However, because it is Independence Day the entrance to the village is guarded by soldiers and they get pulled over. At this point the main character realizes that despite all his efforts it is not enough and that he will never be a Jew and always remain an Arab.

החייל מבקש רשיונות, ואני מספר לו שהיתה לי הברה יהודייה, שלמדתי אצל יהודים, ושכל החברים שלי יהודים. אני יודע מה זה פרופיל, קב"ן, קל"ב, תלפיות, חמ"ן תלפיות. אני סותם את הפה, ומוסר לו את רשיונות המכונית ורשיון הנהיגה. מכוניות חולפות על פני, חלק עם דגלים וחלק בלי. האנשים במכוניות מסתכלים עלי ברחמים, ואני מרגיש כל כך מטומטם עם פאות הלחיים והמשקפים שלי. מוזיקה עברית עולה מגליי"צה"ל ברדיו. אני מרגיש דביל שהאמנתי שעשיתי הכול כדי לא להיראות חשוד.²¹²

The soldier asks for our papers and I tell him I used to have a Jewish girlfriend, I studied with Jews, and all my friends are Jews. I know all the Jewish expressions, even army slang. I shut up, and hand him my vehicle license and my driver's license. Cars pass me, some with flags and some without. The people in the cars look like they're sorry for me, and I feel so ridiculous with my sideburns and glasses. On the radio, the military station is blaring Hebrew

²¹⁰ Kashua. ערבים ורקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 112.

²¹¹ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 154.

²¹² Kashua. ערבים ורקדים (*Dancing Arabs*). 148.

songs, and I feel like such an idiot for believing I'd done everything to make sure I didn't look suspicious.²¹³

Language, Identity and Critique

Kashua's *Aravim Rokdim* has been received very well by the Jewish Israeli audience and the Western world to which the numerous translations and film adaptation of the novel testify. However, due to the criticisms of Arab society which Kashua expresses in the novel it has been received very negatively there. According to Mahmoud Kayyal the critics in the Arab World simply ignored Kashua's novel.²¹⁴ Kashua's choice to write in Hebrew is not so much a contentious topic as it is with other Arab writers who chose to write in the Hebrew language. This may have to do with the fact that Kashua has always been very clear about his language choice that appears to be inspired by his personal experience at the *Israel Arts and Science Academy*. In an interview with the Dutch television show *Boeken* Kashua stated that his time at *The Israel Arts and Science Academy* has been defining because here he discovered that part of his identity was to be part of a minority in Israel through the everyday confrontations with the dominant cultural majority of Israel's population. After he became aware of this fact he decided that, aside from learning the exact sciences, he also wanted to study subjects with regard to the western Israeli culture so that he would be accepted by his classmates and Israeli society in general.²¹⁵ In the same interview Kashua stated that once he realized he could also use Hebrew for literary purposes he decided to do this despite the fact that he still finds it difficult to accept that he ignores his mother culture by doing so and that some Arabic readers of his work view his use of Hebrew as using the language of the enemy.²¹⁶ Kashua's use of the Hebrew language is thus the result of his Israeli education in part because it made him fluent in Hebrew but also in part because it enabled him to address the Jewish Israeli audience, detached Jewish exclusivity from the Hebrew language and enabled him to try to convey his own counter narrative of a more inclusive Israeli society. This is confirmed by his much discussed *Haaretz* column titled "Why Sayed Kashua Is

²¹³ Kashua. *Dancing Arabs*. 202, 203.

²¹⁴ Kayyal. "Arabs Dancing in a New Light of Arabesques." 47.

²¹⁵ "Interview with Sayed Kashua." VPRO *Boeken*. May 6, 2012. On: www.npo.nl. Last Accessed August 12, 2015. http://www.npo.nl/sayed-kashua-paul-auster/06-05-2012/VPWON_1165343

²¹⁶ "Interview with Sayed Kashua." VPRO *Boeken*.

Leaving Jerusalem and Never Coming Back,”²¹⁷ in which Kashua announced that he was leaving Israel. In this column Kashua stated the following:

“Twenty-five years of writing in Hebrew, and nothing has changed. Twenty-five years clutching at the hope, believing it is not possible that people can be so blind. Twenty-five years during which I had few reasons to be optimistic but continued to believe that one day this place in which both Jews and Arabs live together would be the one story where the story of the other is not denied. That one day the Israelis would stop denying the Nakba, the Occupation, and the suffering of the Palestinian people. That one day the Palestinians would be willing to forgive and together we would build a place that was worth living in.”²¹⁸

Aravim Rokdim reflects the social and political reality in Israel in multiple ways. The novel is very realistic in the sense that it references historical events such as the War of Independence, Land Day, the Intifada as well as other events throughout the story and attaches these to the novel’s characters as well as to the story as a whole; at times he uses them as the setting of the story. Furthermore, the limitations sketched by Kashua for full acceptance of Arab citizens into Israeli society and their integration into the Israeli Jewish majority society are realistic. “It is precisely through the impossibility of the Israeli Arab that we are invited to rethink our notions of (ethnic/national) identity and to envision new possibilities of being that are articulated beyond and across current (and prevailing) ethno-national political maps.”²¹⁹ Moreover, *Aravim Rokdim* contains a very high degree of autobiographical elements. In the same interview with the television show *Boeken* Kashua elaborated on his experience at boarding school and stated that at the academy everything was different from his life in Tira: the language, the food, the clothes, the children the music.²²⁰ He goes on to tell about his first week there during which he cried every day because initially he was being teased for his Arab appearance and his lack of knowledge about Israeli society and culture. At the end of his first year he went home to Tira by bus and was taken off the bus at Ben-Gurion airport due to his Arab appearance. This brought the young Kashua to decide to become less ‘suspicious’ to

²¹⁷ Sayed Kashua. “Why Sayed Kashua Is Leaving Jerusalem and Never Coming Back.” *Haaretz*. July 4, 2014. On: www.haaretz.com. Last Accessed August 12, 2015.

<http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/sayed-kashua/premium-1.602869>

²¹⁸ Sayed Kashua. “Why Sayed Kashua Is Leaving Jerusalem and Never Coming Back.”

²¹⁹ Hochberg. “To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab.” 70.

²²⁰ “Interview with Sayed Kashua.” VPRO *Boeken*.

Jewish Israelis. Learning the Hebrew language played an important role in this regard. In other words, Kashua decided to adapt to the cultural norms that his education offered him. From that moment onward, he started to read Hebrew literature and literature that was translated into Hebrew and always brought a Hebrew novel with him when he took the bus in order not to stand out.²²¹ This experience Kashua shared in the interview is almost identical to the experience of the main character in *Aravim Rokdim*. Similarly, the main character, like Kashua, is also from Tira, studies philosophy at the Hebrew University and for a while lived in the neighborhood Beit Safafa in Jerusalem. Due to this, however, it is difficult to view *Aravim Rokdim* as a collective expression of the Arabs in Israel. Rather it is the expression of the experiences of the individual main character, who could be seen as Sayed Kashua, in Israeli society.

²²¹ "Interview with Sayed Kashua." VPRO *Boeken*.

Conclusion

The main research question posed in this thesis was how and why the social and political reality of Israeli society is reflected in the novels of Atallah Mansour, Naim Araidi and Sayed Kashua with a focus on literary critiques of Israeli society. The three novels *Beor Ḥadash*, *Tevilah Katlanit* and *Aravim Rokdim* all depict different time periods and render three different perspectives on the Arab experience in Israel. All three of them, however, deal with the consequences of the historic division of Israeli society into different ethnic, and to an extent religious, groups of citizens and the insurmountable identities that accompany this division.

Mansour's *Beor Ḥadash*, written and published in the 1960s, depicts a time period during which the Kibbutz movement was still highly active and enjoyed prestige within Israeli society. *Beor Ḥadash*, however, shows a different side of the Kibbutz through the life story of Yossi Mizrahi. The story exposes the deceitfulness of the socialist ideology of the Kibbutz movement when it becomes clear that, despite words about a rosy future for all of humanity, the originally inclusive ideology has been adapted to be exclusively applicable to those who are ethnically Jewish. The exclusive Jewish nature of the fictional Kibbutz Har-Or and the opinions of the members of the Kibbutz on their Arab neighbors are a realistic reflection of the Kibbutz movement in Israel during this time period in which the Military Administration of the Arabs in Israel kept the two communities intentionally separate from one another. Moreover, *Beor Ḥadash*, illustrates the irreconcilable differences and tensions between the Jewish and Arab identities and the impossibility of becoming the one if you are considered to be the other.

Tevilah Katlanit, written and published in the early 1990s, presents another perspective of Arab experience in Israel with its focus on the immutable cultural differences between the different Arab communities present within Israel. Moreover, the novel renders the perspective of the special positioning of the Druze in Israel. *Tevilah Katlanit* does not, however, necessarily reflect a specific time period in Israeli society in the way that *Beor Ḥadash* does. The experiences and opinions of the anonymous main character in the novel do, however, reflect the reality of the middle man position of the Druze through the harsh criticisms the main character expresses of both Arab and Jewish societies in Israel. Moreover, the negative social consequences of the main character's conversion to Christianity and his marriage to the Christian Arab Nasrin realistically reflect the classification of all citizens in

Israeli society along the lines of ethnicity and religion and the impossibility of truly separating oneself from such an identity and to exchange it for another.

Aravim Rokdim, written in and published in the early 2000s in the midst of the Second Intifada, depicts a time period during which the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict led to violent confrontations between Arabs and Jews in Israel. This has distanced the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel even further from each other and exacerbated mutual distrust. *Aravim Rokdim* reflects this through explicitly addressing the impossibility of full acceptance and integration of Arab citizens into Israeli Jewish society through the assimilation attempts of its anonymous main character which renders the second class status of Israel's Arab citizens. Moreover, the story *Aravim Rokdim* is situated in a historically correct and therefore realistic depiction of Israeli society as reflected by the numerous references in the novel to historical events and national traditions such as Independence Day or the Intifadas.

From a comparative perspective the three novels show some remarkable similarities. All three deploy the genre of the fictional autobiography and in addition demonstrate a similar writing style of uncomplicated and straightforward use of the Hebrew language. Furthermore, the male main characters of the three novels all attempt to undergo a change in their identity. In all three novels this has negative results and in the end the main characters experience a certain level of uprootedness. Interestingly enough, when placed within the context of the Hebrew literary tradition *Beor H'adash*, *Tevilah Katlanit* and *Aravim Rokdim* all represent the firmly established tradition that considers "Hebrew literature to be a means for examining and grappling with the basic questions of Jewish Israeli existence by exposing the collective tensions in individual characters and fates."²²² The three novels, though of course concerned with Arab Israeli existence, quite clearly attend to the basic questions of the Israeli reality through the exposure of collective tensions within the experiences of the main characters of all three novels. In addition, the stories presented in Mansour and Kashua's novels, though different in some ways, also present remarkable similarities even though there is a interlude of thirty five years between the publication of the two novels. These similarities between the two novels could be viewed as a sign of consistency over time when it comes to the Arab experience in Israeli society. In this sense Araid's *Tevilah Katlanit* is the odd one out, which perhaps is illustrative of his position in Israeli society as a Druze. In both *Beor H'adash* and *Aravim Rokdim*, however, the main characters attempt to assimilate into Israeli Jewish society as an equal to the Jew. They both try to do this by concealing their Arab identity and by

²²² Spicehandler et al. "Modern Hebrew Literature." 706-707.

assimilating to Jewish culture in order to pass as a Jew. The main characters of both novels eventually fail in doing this leading to the conclusion that it is impossible to be accepted into Israeli society as an Arab and that the Jewish and Arab identities are incompatible. Moreover, their attempts of assimilation to the dominant Jewish culture leads to serious disruptiveness with their culture of origin, the Arab culture. In the end they do not belong to either culture anymore.

All three novels contain autobiographical elements although these vary in degree. Araidí's *Tevilah Katlanit* shows the least autobiographical elements. Nevertheless, the setting of the story in the city of Haifa and the preference for Hebrew literature, specifically the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg, as expressed by the main character suggest that the main character's experiences in part could be based on Araidí's own experiences at the university of Haifa. Mansour's *Beor Hādash* is based on the time he spent living at Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim in order to learn the Hebrew language. As such Mansour was not only able to convincingly convey the Kibbutz culture in his novel but was also able to express his dissatisfaction with his experiences there. Kashua's *Aravim Rokdim* contains the most autobiographical elements and entire parts of the story appear to be directly derived from Kashua's own experiences as a native of the village Tira and his time at the Israel Arts and Science Academy and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

With regard to the choice to write literature in the Hebrew language all three authors had different reasons. Mansour has been very explicit about the fact that he wrote *Beor Hādash* in Hebrew to address the Jewish, Hebrew speaking audience in order to tell them they are, or were at the time, racist. The reason he wanted to do so were his own experiences at Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim. Araidí, on the other hand, has made it clear that he writes in Hebrew because he is a product of the Israeli education system although he also produced a significant Arabic language oeuvre. He made a conscious aesthetic choice to write *Tevilah Katlanit* in Hebrew. It remains unclear, however, whether Araidí has written his novel with a specific purpose and audience in mind. Kashua, who exclusively writes in Hebrew and has never published in Arabic, is, like Araidí, a product of the Israeli educational system. He has expressly stated in interviews that his time at the Israel Arts and Science Academy was formative for his love and interest in the Hebrew language. Moreover, he has confirmed that his intentions with *Aravim Rokdim* were to challenge the existing identity construction of the Israeli Arab in order to not only invite his Jewish Israeli audience to rethink the position of Israeli Arabs in Israeli society but also in the hope that one day Arabs and Jews can peacefully coexist in Israel.

Lastly, the novels *Beor Hadash*, *Tevilah Katlanit* and *Aravim Rokdim*, if read on their own accord and in a critical manner, are valuable sources to our understanding of the Arab experience in Israeli society. This is due to a combination of autobiographical elements, the settings and themes of the stories and most importantly the intentions of the authors. Although not all three works can be considered collective expressions of the Arab experience in Israel, only Mansour claims to present a collective expression. The individual expressions presented by Araid and Kashua are just as valuable to our overall understanding of Israeli society. Further analysis of the Hebrew language novels by the Arab authors which have not been discussed in this thesis, would add to our understanding of the experiences of Arabs in Israeli society considerably and is recommended for future research.

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