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Edited by
ÉVA Á. CSATÓ
JOAKIM ENWALL
MATS ESKHULT
CARINA JAHANI
ANETTE MÅNSSON
CHRISTIANE SCHAEFER

Guest editors:
HELLE LYKKE NIELSEN
IRMELI PERHO

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Orientalia Suecana
Editorial Board
Department of Linguistics and Philology
Uppsala University
Box 635
SE-751 26 Uppsala
Sweden

E-mail: orientalia.suecana@lingfil.uu.se

To Kerstin Eksell

Eds. Helle Lykke Nielsen, University of Southern
Denmark & Irmeli Perho, University of Helsinki

Contents

To Kerstin Eksell

| | |
|--|-----|
| Forord, <i>Helle Lykke Nielsen og Irmeli Perho</i> | vii |
|--|-----|

Studies

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Finn Ove Hvidberg-Hansen</i> , Et Tammuz-relief i Mar Jacob-klostret nær Edessa | 1 |
| <i>Lutz Edzard</i> , On the use of the terms “(anti-)Semitic” and “(anti-) Zionist” in modern Middle Eastern discourse | 13 |
| <i>Elie Wardini</i> , Some aspects of Aramaic as attested in Lebanese place names | 21 |
| <i>Karin Almbladh</i> , MS Uppsala O Nova 791 – a rediscovered manuscript of the Arabic translation of and commentary on the Song of Songs by Japheth ben Eli | 31 |
| <i>Heikki Palva</i> , Tale of the magic scarf | 39 |
| <i>Gail Ramsay</i> , What kind of Arabic and why? Language in Egyptian blogs | 49 |
| <i>Helle Lykke Nielsen</i> , E-learning and the dilemma of learner autonomy: A case study of first year university students of Arabic | 89 |
| <i>Jørgen Bæk Simonsen</i> , Johannes Pedersens ophold i Cairo 1920 -1921 | 107 |
| <i>Stephan Guth</i> , Moderne arabisk prosa – en oversikt | 119 |
| <i>Elisabeth Moestrup</i> , Diglossia and the ideology of language. The use of the vernacular in a work by Youssef Fadel | 139 |
| <i>Tetz Rooke</i> , Adonis på svenska – en översättningskritik | 153 |
| <i>Christian Høgel</i> , The Greek Qur'an: Scholarship and evaluations | 173 |
| <i>Irmeli Perho</i> , Magic in the <i>ḥadīths</i> | 183 |

Forord

Arabisk er ikke noget stort universitetsfag, hverken i Danmark eller i de andre nordiske lande: På trods af den stigende globalisering der har betydet at arabisk i dag er det største indvandrersprog i Norden sammen med tyrkisk, at man kan høre arabisk overalt på gader, i busser og indkøbscentre i de større nordiske byer og se arabisk skrevet på alt fra valgplakater til husmure og gravsten i det offentlige rum, er faget målt i forskerstillinger stadig svagt repræsenteret på universiteterne. De små arabiske fagmiljøer ved de nordiske universiteter har til gengæld et godt indbyrdes netværk og har i mange sammenhænge stor faglig glæde af hinanden.

En af de forskere der i de sidste 33 år har bidraget aktivt til at tegne arabiskfaget i Norden, Kerstin Eksell, fratræder pr. 1. april 2013 sin stilling som professor ved Københavns Universitet, og i den anledning vil vi gerne sende en fælles nordisk kollegial tak til Kerstin for hendes indsats, både for faget og for forskningen: få har som hun hjulpet nye nordiske forskertalenter på vej og med stor velvilje udviklet og støttet initiativer der kunne forankre arabiskfaget ved de nordiske universiteter.

Kerstin har været aktiv i det nordiske arabistmiljø, siden hun i 1980 forsvarede sin doktordisputats om *The Analytical Genitive in the Modern Arabic Dialects*¹ – en afhandling der fik mange positive ord med på vejen af den tids professorer: Professor Christopher Toll udtalte fx. at afhandlingen ”vittnar om noggrannhet och beläsenhet och om självständig tankeförmåga, och utgör ett värdefullt bidrag till kunskapen om de arabiska dialekterna och deras utveckling i modern tid”, og professor Heikki Palva fra Göteborgs universitet skrev i sin udtalelse at afhandlingen var

omsorgsfullt utfört och resultaten är vetenskapligt värdefulla. Metoden är adekvat; författarens säkra grepp om de metodiskt svåra frågorna om stil och sociolingvistiska synpunkter är iögonenfallande. Den utförliga och väl underbyggda diakrona sammanfattningen är synnerligen inspirerande och vittnar om förmåga att sätta forskningsresultaten in i ett historiskt sammanhang. [...] Kerstin Eksell är en ambitiös och flitig forskare och lärare med stor intellektuell kapacitet.

Siden blev Kerstin ansat ved forskellige nordiske universiteter: Først som docent ved Göteborgs Universitet (1980-1982) og derefter som adjunkt og lektor ved Københavns Universitet for semitisk filologi (1982-1988). I 1988 kom hun til Stockholms Universitet som professor hvor hun var ansat frem

¹ Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Göteborg 1980.

til 2001, dog med en afstikker til Københavns Universitet hvor hun var lektorvikar fra 1997-1999. Fra 2001 og frem til sin fratrædelse i 2013 var Kerstin professor i semitisk filologi ved Københavns Universitet, og det er den stilling hun nu forlader for at gå på pension.

Kerstins forskningsinteresser vidner om stor faglig bredde. Hun har publiceret og undervist inden for så forskelligartede fagområder som arabisk sproghistorie, herunder sammenligninger af arabiske dialekter og semitiske sprog, arabisk litteratur fra før-islamisk poesi over andalusisk litteratur til moderne skønlitteratur, og kulturmøder i Aleksandria, Bagdad og Toledo. Hertil kommer at hun har oversat en række skønlitterære værker fra arabisk til svensk: romaner af Nagib Mahfuz og Elias Khoury og digter af Mahmud Darwish. Hun har aktivt bidraget med både akademiske oplæg og mere formidlende foredrag specielt om moderne arabisk litteratur. Ved at interessere sig for så forskellige fagområder inden for arabistikken har hun, måske endda uden egentlig at gøre sig det klart, gjort en dyd ud af nødvendigheden: Små universitære fagmiljøer har brug for forskere med bredde, hvis de skal kunne leve op til både de studerendes og institutionernes forventninger om at udbyde forskningsbaserede uddannelser på alle niveauer, og den opgave har Kerstin forvaltet med stor omhu.

Den faglige bredde er dog ikke sket på bekostning af faglig dybde: Kerstin har både i artikler og bøger vist at hun formår at komme dybt ned i sit stof, hvad enten det angår sproglige eller litterære problemstillinger. Gode eksempler på dette er fx "The origin and development of the cursive b-imperfect in Syrian Arabic" i *Change in Verbal Systems* (Frankfurt 2006) og *Descriptions of Water in Jahiliya Poetry* (Stockholm, 1997), men der kunne nævnes mange flere.

Kerstin har aldrig gjort noget stort nummer ud af sig selv – for hende har det altid været faget og forskningen, der stod i centrum. For os der kender Kerstin og har samarbejdet med hende gennem årene, er det imidlertid ikke mindst hendes hjælpsomhed og støtte på det personlige plan der vil blive husket. Enhver universitetskarriere har sine op- og nedture, og Kerstin har altid forstået at bidrage med støtte og hjælp, når det var nødvendigt. Vi er en hele generation af nordiske arabister der skylder hende tak for al den hjælp og det engagement, hun har udvist.

Som gæsteredaktører på dette nummer af *Orientalia Suecana* – som undtagelsesvist foreligger i både digital og trykt udgave – har vi haft den fornøjelse at opleve, hvordan det faglige fællesskab af nordiske arabister og kolleger til Kerstin sammen har løftet en opgave, der på forhånd kunne se

næsten umulig ud: Fra initiativet til et festschrift kom til verden under en togtur fra København til Lund i efteråret 2012, til den færdige publikation forelå i trykt form, gik der blot 5 måneder, og det har kun kunnet lade sig gøre, fordi så mange gode mennesker lagde fælles kræfter i projektet. Det gælder både forfatterne som accepterede korte og under andre omstændigheder ganske urimelige deadlines, over *Orientalia Suecana*s redaktionelle velvilje og tekniske assistance, til Københavns Universitets økonomiske støtte og Syddansk Universitets trykkeri, der professionelt og på rekordtid formåede at transformere alle vores anstrengelser til den trykte udgave. Vi skal hermed takke alle for indsatsen, men understreger at eventuelle redaktionelle brister selvfølgelig er vores.

Kerstin har ikke ønsket at markere sin fratrædelse fra professorstillingen ved Københavns Universitet med noget officiel arrangement – hun vil jo alligevel forske videre i andet regi og oplever således ikke nogen markant forandring i sit faglige arbejde. Vi håber imidlertid at vi med denne publikation kan sende en kollegial tak til Kerstin for et godt samarbejde i den del af hendes forskerkarriere, som hidtil har været knyttet til de nordiske universiteter, og ser frem til de mange gode publikationer og faglige diskussioner som hun vil bidrage med i årene fremover.

Artiklerne i dette nummer

Indholdet af dette nummer af *Orientalia Suecana* afspejler på mange måder de faglige områder som Kerstin enten selv har arbejdet med eller interesseret sig fagligt for. Første del af festskriften indeholder artikler om semistik. Finn O. Hvidberg-Hansen, der er professor emeritus i semitisk filologi ved Århus Universitet, skriver om syrisk ikonografi, mens professor Lutz Edzard, Universitetet i Oslo, tager op brugen af kontroversielle termer som ”sionisme” og ”anti-semitisme” i det moderne Mellemøsten. Elie Wardini, professor i arabisk ved Stockholms Universitet, fokuserer på libanesiske stednavne og betragter dem som kilder til den form for aramæisk, der har været brugt i Libanon. Karin Almbladh, der er bibliotekar på det Kungliga Biblioteket i Stockholm og forsker ved Uppsala Universitet, diskuterer en karaitisk bibelcommentar der er bevaret som manuskript på det Kungliga Biblioteket.

Anden del består af bidrag indenfor arabistik, hvor den første artikel er skrevet af Heikki Palva, der er professor emeritus i arabisk ved Helsingfors Universitet. Hans artikel indeholder en gengivelse og dialektologisk analyse

af en fortælling reciteret af en jordansk informant. Gail Ramsay er professor i arabisk ved Uppsala Universitet, og i sin artikel analyserer hun, hvordan arabisk sprog bruges og udvikler sig blandt internetbrugere. Indlæringen af arabisk er fokus i de næste to artikler: først diskuterer Helle Lykke Nielsen, der er lektor ved Syddansk Universitet, resultatet af et pædagogisk forsøg med e-læringsredskaber. Derefter beretter Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, professor ved Københavns Universitet, om hvordan Johannes Pedersen (1883-1977) oplevede det at lære egyptisk talesprog i Kairo i 1920-1921.

Tredje del indeholder to artikler der behandler moderne arabisk litteratur. Professor Stephan Guth, Universitetet i Oslo, præsenterer først en historisk oversigt af arabisk litteratur fra 1800-tallet op til de helt nye tendenser i begyndelsen af det 21. århundrede. Derefter følger en artikel af Elisabeth Moestrup, studielektor i arabisk ved Århus Universitet og tidligere studerende hos Kerstin Eksell i København. Hun arbejder med sin PhD-afhandling om moderne arabisk litteratur, og hendes bidrag til Festschriftet er en diskussion af sprogvarianter og deres betydning hos den marokkanske forfatter Youssef Fadel.

Oversættelse fra arabisk er genstand for diskussion i fjerde del, der ligeledes indeholder to bidrag. Det første er skrevet af Tetz Rooke, der er professor i arabisk ved Göteborgs Universitet. Han diskuterer oversættelsesproblematikker i forhold til arabiske digte af Adonis, og hvordan oversættelsen til svensk har påvirket digitene. Det andet bidrag er Christian Høgels artikel om den græske oversættelse af Koranen. Christian Høgel er lektor i klassisk filologi ved Syddansk Universitet, og i sin artikel fremhæver han at den græske Koran kan fungere som dokumentation af tidlig koranfortolkning.

Den sidste artikel i dette nummer behandler islam, hvilket ikke hører til Kerstin Eksells kerneområder men viser bredden i hendes kontaktflade blandt forskere. Irmeli Perho, der er docent i arabisk og islamstudier ved Helsingfors Universitet, diskuterer i sit bidrag begrebet magi, og hvordan det tidlige muslimske samfund forholdte sig til magi og magikere.

Givet de stramme tidsfrister som dette nummer af *Orientalia Suecana* har været underlagt, har det ikke været muligt for alle kolleger der måtte ønske det, at bidrage med artikler. De sender derfor i stedet deres bedste hilsner til Kerstin Eksell i en *tabula gratulatoria*:

Leena Ambjörn, professor i arabisk, Lunds Universitet
Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, professor i arabisk og islamstudier, Helsingfors Universitet
Bo Holmberg, professor i semitiske sprog, Lunds Universitet
Stig Rasmussen, mag. art., tidl. Forskningsbibliotekar ved Det Kongelige Bibliotek, København
Jan Retsö, professor i arabisk, Göteborgs Universitet
Joshua Sabih, lektor, Københavns Universitet

Odense Helle Lykke Nielsen
København og Helsinki Irmeli Perho

Et Tammuz-relief i Mar Jacob-klostret nær Edessa

Finn Ove Hvidberg-Hansen¹
Professor emeritus, Aarhus Universitet

Abstract

I et ruinkompleks kaldet Deir Yakup, ca. syv km. sydvest for Edessa (Sanliurfa), som både rummer resterne af et mausoleum og et kloster for en syrisk Mar Jacob, befinner sig et relief, hvis motiv er en liggende skikkelse, flankeret af omridset af en kvinde af den velkendte fönikisk-syriske type: ”den sørgende Venus”. Med baggrund i kulten for Balti (Venus)-Tammuz, der ifølge syrisk litteratur blev dyrket langt op i kristen tid, peger reliefsmotiv på at ruinkomplekset Deir Yakup en gang var scene for en lokal edessensk Tammuz-kult.

Keywords: førkristen-kristen sakral arkitektur, førkristen syrisk kult og ikonografi, tidlig kristen syrisk litteratur, Tammuz-kult.

*Se, i vort land begræder man Tammuz, og dér æres Stjernen.
I vore dage dækker vi bord for Lykke-guderne oppe på tagene...*

Således lyder hos Isaac fra Antiochia (d. ca. 460) den polemiske omtale af samtidens hedenske kulter i den ældste syriske kristenhed i det område, hvis vigtigste steder var byerne Amida (nu Diyarbakir), Edessa (Urfá), Harran, Nisibis (Nusaybin) og – som den sydligste – Antiochia-ad-Orontes (Antakya).² En af de lokaliteter, mod hvem Isaac fra Antiochia især retter sin vrede, er Beth Hur, en lille lokalitet i nærheden af enten Amida eller Nisibis, og som ifølge Isaac var grundlagt af Harran.³ Et ødelæggende angreb på Beth Hur, først ved persiske soldater, senere ved arabere, tolker han som Guds straffedom over den hedenske kult her: ”Thi lige som perserne erobrede den, selvom den dyrkede Solen lige så vel som de, således indtog også araberne den, dyrkende Balti sammen med dem. Perserne frelste den ikke, selvom den ligesom de ærede Solen, ej heller forlod araberne den, der – ligesom de – ofrede til ‘Uzza’”.⁴

¹ E-mail address: fohh@privat.dk

² Bickell 1873, II: 210 (l. 128-130), jfr. Klugkist 1974: 355. – Om Isaac fra Antiochia, Segal 1970: 168; Klugkist 1987: 237-238; Greatrex 1998: 290-291.

³ Om Beth Hurs beliggenhed, Klugkist 1987: 239, identificerer det udfra arabiske geografiske kilder med Tell Hur, nær Amida, medens Greatrex 1998: 288, lokaliserer det nær Nisibis. – Om Beth Hur som grundlagt fra Harran, Isaac fra Antiochia, Bickell 1873, I: 209, jfr. Drijvers 1980: 37.

⁴ Bickell 1873, I: 2 (l. 98-101).

Især retter Isaac sin polemik mod byens kvinder, som udøver hedensk kult for derved at tiltrække sig deres mænds opmærksomhed: ”Dagligt lader de sig forføre til ofringer og libationer til Stjernen [...] hvem er det, der lærer dem disse dårskaber om Stjernen?” En randbemærkning til ”dårskaberne” i den syriske teksts linje 413 gør det klart, hvem Stjernen er: ”de lader drik- og brændofre stige op til Afrodite”, Stjernen altså identisk med Balti-Venus-’Uzza, gudinden for kærlighed og frugtbarhed.⁵ Men heller ikke de kristne kvinder i Beth Hur går ram forbi: ”Med den samme mund, hvormed man i det allerhelligste drikker af vor Frelsers bæger, stiger man op på taget og bønfalder Stjernen, at (deres) skønhed må vokse.”⁶

Men Beth Hur var ikke ene om disse ”dårskaber”. Således udøser Ephrem Syrer fra Edessa (ca. 306-373) sin vrede over sin fødebys hedenske kult. Når han i et af sine *Carmina Nisibena* lader Nisibis udbryde: ”På marken ofrer Solens tilbedere mine sønner, i byen slagter Ba’als dyrkere min okser, mine får og mine børn – en hylen på mine agre, i mine boliger en sørgeklage [...]”, er det naturligvis en polemik rettet Nisibis, men indirekte lige så meget vendt imod hans hjemby Edessa og mod Harran.⁷ Og når Ephrem i en af sine *Sermones* lader byen Ninives indbyggere skue ind i profeten Jonas’ hjemland, ser de den kult for Tammuz og Venustjernen, som de altfor godt kendte fra deres egen by: ”Altre på bjergene og små helligsteder på højderne”, og fremdeles ”deres offerkager på tagene, i haverne deres lykke-guder [...].”⁸

Også Harran dadles for sin hedenske kult: således in *The Book of the Cave of Treasures*, et værk som har været tilskrevet Ephrem Syrer, men nu anses for værende af senere dato. Her nævnes foruden Tammuz og Balti også Ba’alshamen.⁹ Men mere udførlig i sin omtale af de hedenske guddomme er Jacob fra Serugh (451-521). Som født i den gamle Serugh-region, ca. 46 km sydvest for Edessa, hvor han nogle år studerede ved den berømte Skole i Edessa, var han velbekendt med det syriske områdes hedenske kulter, som han omtaler i sin homili *On the Fall of the Idols*: in Antioch Apollo, in Edessa Nebo and Bel, and in Harran Sin, Ba’alshamēn and Bar Nemrē (dvs. ”Son of the Panthers”), further

⁵ Bickell 1873, I: 244 (l. 409-419 med margin-note til l. 413), jfr. Klugkist 1987: 241, n. 16. – Balti-Afrodite (’Ashtarte)-Venus-’Uzza i Syrien, jfr. Wellhausen 1897: 40-41; Drijvers 1980: 185; Klugkist 1974: 358-359 ibid. 1987: 243-246.

⁶ Bickell 1873, I: 244 (l. 440-441).

⁷ Beck 1961: 27 (*Carmen IX*, 6-7). De hedenske kulter i Harran og Nisibis: Niehr 2003: 316-317, jfr. n. 2 ovf.

⁸ Beck 1970: 32 (stanza 1739-40 og 1749-50).

⁹ Wallis Budge 1927, xi: 153, daterende den til senest 6. årh.; jfr. også Gündüz 1994: 139.

My Lord with his Dogs (Heracles/Nergal) and the Goddesses Tar'atha (Atargatis) and Gadlat (Goddess of Fortune).¹⁰

Jacob af Serugh blev i 519 valgt til biskop over Serugh-regionen, residerende i Batnae, og førte både før og efter sin udnævnelse en omfattende korrespondance med sin samtids presbytere og abbeder. Til en af de sidstnævnte kender vi en epistel, stilet til en vis ”Mar Jacob, leder af Klosteret med Gravene” (*rēsh dayrā dnaphshāthā*), i det følgende tituleret ”Mar Jacob, presbyter og klosterleder for Urhays (Edessas) hellige bolig, kaldet ”Gravene” (*naphshāthā*)”.¹¹ Jacobs epistel er den tidligst litterære omtale af det højtplacerede ruinkompleks, der nu om dage er kendt under navnet Deir Yakup, af lokale folk også kaldet ”Nemruts Trone”, beliggende i bjergområdet Nemrut Dagh, ca. 7 km sydvest for Edessa, og som kan ses viden om i regionen (fig. 1). Jacob-klostret opregnes blandt de klostre, hvis monofysiske munke ifølge Johannes af Efesus (lever omkring 585) under kejser Justinian I (483-565) blev fordrevet af Edessas biskop, Asclepios.¹² Og ifølge Bar-Hebraeus’ *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* blev en vis abbed Johannes fra Serugh i år 1164 udnevnt til abbed for ”Mar Jacobs kloster i Edessas bjerg, som han genrejste efter at det lange havde ligget i ruiner, og gjorde det beboeligt for munkene”; senere, i 1164, udnevntes han til Maphrian, dvs. leder af den jakobitiske kirke i Østkirken.¹³

Den udførligste omtale af Jacob-klostret i den syriske litteratur finder vi i *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens* fra omkring 1187-1237, hvis anonyme forfatter muligvis var hjemmehørende i Edessa. I en oversigt over kirker og klostre i og omkring Edessa kan man læse denne beskrivelse:

[...] og den prægtige kirke (*hayklā*) for Mar Jacob af Gravene, inde midt i bjergene, hvor der var opført et stort hedensk alter, der endnu i vore dage står inde i klostret, og kirken (*hayklā*) for Guds Moder, inde i bjerget syd for Mar Jacobs kloster.¹⁴

Det hellige sted for Jomfru Maria kendes allerede i det 8. årh. fra *The Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Pseudo-Dionysius fra Tell-Mahrē) som navnet på ”et kloster syd for byen (dvs. Edessa), som kaldes Guds Moders Kirke” (*bēt de-yaldat*

¹⁰ Martin 1875: 110 (l. 50-55); oversættelse i relation til Drijvers 1980: 143-144; om identificeringen af Bar Nemrē: Martin 1875: 131, n. 3, citerende Assemani, *Bibliotheca orientalis I*: 327-328 (*filius tigrium*), og af ”Min Herre med sine hunde” (*marē dkalbāw*): al-Salihi 1971: 113-115; al-Salihi & Segal 1973: 65-69.

¹¹ Olinger 1937: 143.

¹² Land 1868: 293, linje 11, jfr. Pognon 1907: 103.

¹³ Abbeloos & Lamy 1874, II: 532; ibid. 1877, III: 359, jfr. Sachau 1882: 152.

¹⁴ Chabot 1953: 181 (syrisk); ibid. 1965: 143 (oversættelse), jfr. Pognon 1907: 103; om datering og relation til Edessa: Abouna & Fiey 1974: VII-VIII.

*d’alāhā).*¹⁵ Hvilken Jacob det såkaldte Jacob-kloster skylder dets navn, vides ikke med sikkerhed, men som C. E. Sachau bemærker, er det nærliggende at tænke på den fra Det nye Testamente velkendte apostel Jacob, Alpheios’ són, hvem Bar Hebraeus i sin oversigt over Kristi apostle omtaler som død i Serugh, og hvis fødselsdag ifølge en antik martyriologi æredes *in Persida*.¹⁶

Bygningskomplekset som vi i følge den stadig levende tradition kalder Jacob-klostret, blev første gang genstand for europæiske rejsendes opmærksomhed i 1830’erne, hvor det besøgtes af den senere tyske general H. von Moltke, der omtaler en græsk-syrisk grav-indskrift som hans landsmand Sachau senere (1882) kopierede og kommenterede. Og i 1905 gav H. Pognon en kort oversigt over de syriske kilders omtale af Jacob-klostret og en korrigende læsning af såvel den græske som den syriske part af indskriften.¹⁷ Senest er den syriske tekst udgivet (1999) af H. J. W. Drijvers and J. F. Healey, der daterer den til antagelig det sene 2./tidlige 3. årh. e.Kr.¹⁸ I 1977 publicerede F. W. Deichmann og U. Peschlow *Zwei spätantike Ruinenstätte in Nordmesopotamien* og opfyldte således Sachaus ønske, ”dass einmal ein Architekt, der die Bauart des Orients kennt, diese Ruine untersucht”.¹⁹

Jacob-klostrets bygningsmasse domineres dels af det kompakte sydøstlige gravtårn, dels og især af det nordøstlige bygnings-parti, som Deichmann/Peschlow kalder ”das grosse Komplex”, hvis østligste del består af to stokværk, kronet af en stor, tøndehvælvet niche, der ses viden om i regionen. Gravtåret har på østsiden en græsk-syrisk grav-indskrift, hvis navne: ”Amashamash, hustru til Sharedu, són af Ma’nu” gør det meget sandsynligt at gravtåret oprindeligt er bygget for en ikke-kristen familie fra Edessa. Flere af indskriftenes syriske bogstaver har klar affinitet til palmyrensk skrift, og indskriften kan som nævnt dateres til sene 2./tidlige 3. årh. e. K., og sammen med gravtåret understreger den de nære kulturelle relationer mellem Edessa og Palmyra.²⁰

Hvad ”das grosse Komplex” angår, antager Deichmann/Peschlow at dets underste del var et kloster. Hørende til dette var der oven over klostret et

¹⁵ Chabot 1952: 219 (syrisk); Hespel 1989: 170 (oversættelse). Autor er sandsynligvis en munk fra klostret i Zuqniin, nær Amida, og ikke patriarken Dionysios fra Tell-Mahrē (nær det syriske Raqqah), jfr. Hespel 1989: IX-XX; Witakowski 1996: XVII ff.

¹⁶ Sachau 1882: 152-153 med reference til Bar-Hebraeus: Abbeloos & Lamy 1872, I: 34 med note 1, hvor den antikke martyriologi, som tilskrives Hieronymus, citeres (PL, tom. XXX: 463); Pognon 1907: 103-105; pl. XXVI.

¹⁷ Pognon 1907: 105-107, pl. XXVI.

¹⁸ Drijvers & Healey 1999: 137-139, pl. 46.

¹⁹ Deichmann & Peschlow 1977: 41-63; Tf. 16-24; Sachau 1882: 151.

²⁰ Om indskriftenes før-kristne karakter, se foruden Sachau 1882: 146-152 og Pognon 1907: 105, også Segal 1970: 5-6 og Drijvers 1980: 23, som begge understreger de kulturelle relationer mellem Edessa og Palmyra. – Om indskriften og dens skriftformer, jfr. også Drijvers & Healey 1999:157-159.

oratorium eller en lille kirke, hvis alterparti sandsynligvis udgjordes af den tøndehvælvede niche; det arkitektoniske udstyr peger på tidlig kristen tid, ca. 5.-6. årh. Med andre ord drejer det sig sandsynligvis om det kloster, som Jacob fra Serugh omtaler.²¹ Nogle skydeskår i ”das grosse Komplex” og en trappe i gravtåret viser at hele bygningskomplekset senere, efter arabernes erobring af regionen, blev omdannet til en befæstning med gravtåret som vagttårn.²²

Gravtåret er imidlertid ikke det eneste ikke-kristne eller hedenske relikt på dette sted: På ruinfeltet sydvest for gravtåret kan spores en kvadratisk bygning, hvor væggen mod syd er bygget sammen med det vestlige hjørne af gravtåret. Denne kvadratiske bygning, som har været i to stokværk, definerer Deichmann og Peschlow som et mausoleum på grund af et kvadratisk grav-relief der viser en liggende skikkelse. Den findes nu uden for selve bygningen, ca. 5 meter øst for bygningens nordvæg.²³

En tredje grav-bygning og muligvis også en bygning ca. 20 m nord for gravtåret kan ifølge Deichmann og Peschlow have været et mausoleum. På grund af bygningens tre indgange har den dog næppe været et egentligt mausoleum, men har formentlig tjent som grav-bygning for klosteret i lighed med andre spredte grave i området omkring hele bygningskomplekset.²⁴ Resultatet af Deichmann og Peschlows undersøgelse bekræfter under alle omstændigheder rigtigheden af det navn, som de citerede syriske tekster tillægger stedet: *dayrā dnaphshāta*, idet det aramæisk-syriske *nphš* i den hellenistiske periode enten kan betyde ”funeral monument” eller ”a stele upon the tomb”, endvidere ”a portrait of the deceased” eller betegne ”the complete tomb itself” – disse betydninger er alle kendt fra Palmyra og relevante her, jfr. den palmyrenske karakter af indskriften på gravtåret.²⁵

Blandt de citerede syriske tekster angående Jacob-klostret bemærker man denne passage i *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*: ”[...] inde midt i bjergene, hvor der var opført et stort hedensk alter, der endnu i vore dage står inde i klostret”. Det må anses for ganske sandsynligt, at dette refererer til den bygning, som Deichmann og Peschlow – med henvisning til det fornævnte grav-relief – kaldte ”a mausoleum”. Dette relief skal nærmere beskrives i det følgende.

På en rektangulært tilhugget sten, der ligger blandt andre bygningselementer i feltet nogle få meter nord for Deichmann og Peschlows ”grosse Komplex,” ses en figur liggende udstrakt på en løjbænk (*klinē*) (fig. 2). Som beskrevet af J. B.

²¹ Deichmann & Peschlow 1977: 48-60.

²² Deichmann & Peschlow 1977: 52-56.

²³ Deichmann & Peschlow 1977: 45; Abbild. 9; Tf. 20, 2.

²⁴ Deichmann & Peschlow 1977: 45-46; Abbild. 9, til venstre.

²⁵ Hoftijzer & al. 1995: 748, jfr. også Ingholt 1934: 39-40; Gawlikowski 1970: 33-43, og n. 19 ovf.

Segal, er ”the stone too weatherbeaten to allow us to distinguish the details clearly”. Dog ses den liggende figurs hoved tydeligt løftet op, hvilende på en pude. Segal tror på den liggende skikkelse at se ”a high head-dress of a priest or a noble” – en detalje som jeg efter min besigtigelse af reliefet i 2009 og igen i 2010 må anse for tvivlsom.²⁶

Til venstre for den liggende skikkelse ses omridset af en siddende kvinde med løftet højre arm og hånd. Deichmann/Peschlow tolker med rette figuren som en klagende kvinde; til højre for hende ses i midten af reliefet hvad der synes at være et stiliseret træ med en gren, der rækker hen over den liggende figur.²⁷ Vi finder samme motiv på et anthropoidt sarkofag-relief fra omegnen af Tyrus: en på en løjbænk (*klinè*) liggende figur med hovedet hvilende på en pude, og flankeret af to klagende kvinder, der med højre arm og hånd frembyder den samme sørgende gestus (fig. 3). Ifølge H. Seyrig er dateringen vanskelig at bestemme på dette relief, som han dog trods dets arkaiske, ægyptiserende elementer henfører til hellenistisk tid. Som Seyrig bemærker, henter reliefet klart sit mytologiske forbillede i ægyptiske reliefers gengivelser af gudinderne Isis og Nephtys, der begræder den døde Osiris. Reliefets ægyptiserende karakter må formentlig ses på baggrund af den nære relation mellem kulten for henholdsvis Adonis og Osiris, velkendt især fra Byblos.²⁸ Illustrerende er således et relief fra sen ptolemaisk tid (Ptolemæus II Philadelphos 285-246), relateret til Osiris-mysterierne i Isis-templet i Philae (fig. 4).²⁹ Tyrus-relieffets ægyptiserende elementer må naturligvis ses i sammenhæng med de nære kultiske relationer mellem Adonis og Osiris som vi i hellenistisk tid kender, især fra Byblos.³⁰

Den mest slående parallel – såvel ikonografisk som kronologisk – til reliefet i Jacob-klostret er imidlertid en palmyrensk tessera, der viser en skikkelse liggende på seng med hovedet hvilende på en pude. Under figuren læses ”Tammuz”. På aversen af tesseraen ses busten af en kvinde med nøgent bryst og udslættet hår – den velkendte semitiske sørge-gestus (fig. 5-6).³¹ Den sørgende kvindes identitet forklares af to andre tesserae, som på forsiden har indskriften ”Tammuza”, på bagsiden ”Balti”; med andre ord: gudinden Balti-Aphrodite-Stjernen-’Uzza-Venus, hvis kult de citerede syriske tekster fordømmer.³² Som den sørgende gudinde (*Venus lugens*) omtales hos Macrobius (395-423 AD) *Venus*

²⁶ Segal 1970: 29; 55 og Pl. 39a.

²⁷ Deichmann & Peschlow 1977:45, note 8 og Tf. 20, 2.

²⁸ Seyrig 1940: 120-122; fig. 5 og pl. XIX. – The reliefet har inventar-nr. DGA No. 22544; mål: 71 x 74 x 9 cm. I want to thank Curator of the National Museum, Beirut, Mrs. Anne-Marie Afeiche for her help for giving me the information.

²⁹ Wallis Budge 1911, II: 45.

³⁰ Jfr. Lucian, *Dea syria*, ch. 7, se Soyez 1977: 12-16, 77-85 og Atallah 1966: 295-297.

³¹ RTP, 342, pl. XVIII, jfr. Mesnil du Buisson 1962: 299-300, pl. XXXIX-XLI.

³² Saturnalia I: 21, jfr. Soyez 1977: 32.

Archaitides (dvs. Arca-Caesarea i Libanon, ikke langt fra Tripolis): ”Venus finder man på et bjerg i Libanon: med tilsløret hoved, sorgmodigt udseende, støttende ansigtet på sin venstre hånd, som hun holder skjult under sin kappe”; ikonografisk bekræftes motivet både af et relief fra Qassouba, nær Byblos, og af mønster fra Caesarea i Libanon, slæede under kejser Elagabal³³. Relieffet fra den lille hedenske helligdom ved Jacob-klostret gengiver således Tammuz, hvis død gudinden Balti-Aphrodite-Venus begræder, helt overensstemmende med den velkendte kult for Tammuz-Adonis i Syrien og Fønikien – her illustreret ved et monument fra Damaskus, der viser den unge gud på en seng ved siden en sorgende kvinde.³⁴ Relieffet ved det højt beliggende Jacob-kloster illustrerer således kulten, som Ephrem Syreren fordømmer i sin anden *Sermon*: ”Tammuz, som forsvandt fra vort land, hvorledes begrædes han her – Stjernen, vi fornægtede, hvorledes tilbedes den her...?”³⁵

Som steder for den hedenske kult nævner Ephrem Syreren i den ovenfor citerede Sermon: ”Altre på bjergene og offerkager på tagene”, og det synes at være et karakteristisk træk at kvinnernes rituelle klage over den døde gud henlægges til bjerge eller andre højtliggende steder. På tagene holder kvinderne i Athen kultisk klage over Adonis ifølge Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* (4. årh. f. K.), i forbindelse med plantning af adonishaverne; kvinder som på græske vasemalerier ses bærende adonishaver op ad en stige, illustrerer muligvis denne skik.³⁶

Som udførligt beskrevet af bl.a. den arabiske Ibn al-Nadīm (ca. 987) og hans samtidige, al-Bīrūnī (972-1048), fortsatte kulten for Balti og Tammuz i Edessa-regionen, hos sabærne i Harran. Således ifølge Ibn al-Nadīm om Tammuz: ”In the middle of the month (Tammuz-July) there is the Feast of *al-Buqāt*, that is, of the weeping women. It is the *Tā-ūz*, a feast celebrated for the god *Tā-ūz*”.³⁷ Også for hans følle, Venus holdtes ifølge al-Bīrūnī adskillige fester på forskellige steder, heriblandt nævnes the ”Feast of *dayr al-djabal* and the Feast of Balti, i. e. *az-zuhrā*”. De to navne på den samme kultiske begivenhed på den fjerde dag i måneden Kanūn II (Januar), ”the Feast of the Shrine of the Mountain” and the ”Feast of Balti,” peger i retning af at festens deltagere har begivet sig op

³³ Soyez 1977: 32-33; 60-62; pl. IX (Qassouba); p. 80; 83 og pl. XIV, jfr. Ronzevalle 1930:144 og pl. XXVII, 4-6 (mønster fra Arca-Caesarea ad Libanum); terracotta-lampe visende samme motiv: Seyrig 1959: 39-40; pl. VII, 3.

³⁴ Monumentet fra Damaskus-regionen: Seyrig 1950: 229-236, jfr. også note 57 ndf. – Den fønikiske Adoniskult, generelt: Lipinski 1995: 90-105. – Man bemærker, at i omtalen af kvinnernes gråd over Tammuz, Ezekiel 8, 14, gengiver den græske Septuaginta-version *Qmg* den hebraiske teksts ”Tammuz” ved ”Adonis”, jfr. von Baudissin 1911: 95.

³⁵ Beck 1970: 44 (strofe 1823-1826).

³⁶ Således ifølge Weil 1966: 664-674; yderligere illustrationer: Atallah 1966: fig. 39-40 og 44-48. Om Adonishaverne, idem: 211-228.

³⁷ Dodge 1970, II: 758; Gündüz 1994: 53-154.

på et bjerg eller højdedrag uden for byen. Således foregår ifølge al-Bīrūnī også en anden fest for ”*Tarsa, the idol of Venus*” i Batnae, uden for byen Harran.³⁸

De syriske kulter med deres gråd over Adonis-Tammuz på bjergene fortsatte – som vi har set – langt op i tiden, men som de mytologiske tekster fra Ras Shamra/Ugarit viser, har de også rod langt tilbage, i al fald helt til 1400-tallet f. Kr. Her beskrives hvordan guden Ba‘als fælle, Jomfruen ‘Anat, og solgudinden Shapshu begræder og begraver Ba‘al i jorden, oppe på højderne af bjerget Safôn, hvor Ba‘al havde sit tempel.³⁹ En erindring om denne gamle semitiske – men i Ephrem Syrerens øjne hedenske – kult finder vi ved Mar Jacob-klostret midt inde i bjergene, udenfor Edessa.



Fig. 1: Jacob-klostret (foto: forfatteren)



Fig. 2: Relief ved Jacob-klostret (foto: forfatteren)

³⁸ Gündüz 1994: 144, 175, 177; al-Bīrūnī’s tekst: Sachau 1879: 316-317 (oversættelse); ibid. 1878: 319-320 (arabisk).

³⁹ KTU 1. 6, I, 1-18, og Caquot, Sznycer &Herdner 1974: 253-254.



Fig. 3: Sarkofag-relief fra Tyrus (Seyrig 1940: pl. XIX)

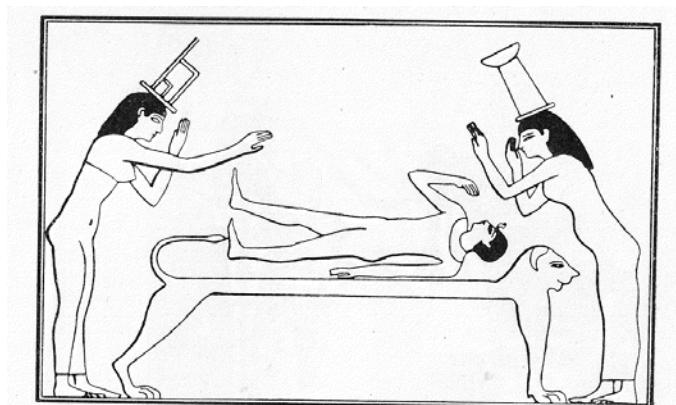


Fig. 4: Isis og Nephtys begræder Osiris (Wallis Budge 1911, II: 65)



Fig. 5: Tammuz. Tessera fra Palmyra (RTP, no. 342: pl. XVIII)



Fig. 6: Sørgende gudinde. Tessera fra Palmyra
(RTP, no. 342: pl. XVIII)

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Abstract

In the mountains ca. 7 km southwest of Edessa (Sanliurfa), there is a complex of ruins called Deir Yakup, containing a mausoleum and a monastery of Mar Jacob. Among the ruins, there is a relief showing the shape of a lying person flanked by a woman of the well-known Phoenician-Syrian motif: "The Mourning Venus." According to Syriac literature the cult of Balti (Venus)-Tammuz continued long into the Christian era and the motif of the relief clearly suggests that the ruins at Deir Yakup were a scene of a local Tammuz cult.

Keywords: Pre-Christian sacral architecture, pre-Christian Syrian iconography, early Syro-Christian literature, Tammuz cult.

On the use of the terms “(anti-)Semitic” and “(anti-)Zionist” in modern Middle Eastern discourse

Lutz Edzard¹

University of Oslo

Abstract

Just as political and cultural discourse in general, modern Middle Eastern discourse is at times characterized by a great deal of hostility, not only between different states or religious denominations, but also state-internally among various ethnic, political, or religious groups. This short article focuses on the use of the attributes “Semitic” and “Zionist,” as well as their negative counterparts “anti-Semitic” and “anti-Zionist,” respectively, in examples of both Arabic and Israeli critical to hostile discourse. The focus of the discussion will lie on how the original meanings of these terms, especially in their negated forms, tend to be distorted in engaged political and cultural discourse.

Keywords: Semitic, Anti-Semitic, Zionist, *lā-sāmī, sahyūnī, 'anṭi-šemi, siyyōn*

The term “Semitic”

Brief overview of the term “Semitic”

As is well known, the term “Semitic” derives from the name of one of the sons of Noah, Shem,² and was suggested for the language family in question by the encyclopedic German historian and polymath August Ludwig von Schlözer in 1781.³ In linguistics context, the term “Semitic” is generally speaking non-controversial. Together with Ancient Egyptian, as well as the language families Berber, Cushitic, Chadic, and possibly Omotic, the Semitic language family is part of the larger Afroasiatic macrofamily (formerly also referred to as “Hamito-Semitic”).⁴ This usage of the term “Semitic” must be kept apart from the usage of the term in the compound adjective “anti-Semitic,” a term only coined in 1879 in a pamphlet by the journalist Wilhelm Marr (if not already in 1860 by the bibliographer and Orientalist Moritz Steinschneider), referring to prejudices against or hatred of Jews. The historian Bernard Lewis, in a book

¹ E-mail address: l.e.edzard@ikos.uio.no

² Gen. 5:32, 6:10, 10:21.

³ Cf. e.g. Baasten 2003. The precise source is the “Repertorium” (Leipzig 1781), vol. viii, p. 161, edited by Schlözer’s pupil Karl Friedrich Eichhorn.

⁴ As Paul Newman (1984: 164) convincingly states, “[the term] ‘Hamito-Semitic’ must be firmly rejected because it keeps alive the term ‘Hamitic,’ with all of its linguistically inaccurate and culturally racist connotations.” Cf. also Hayward 2000: 84.

dating from 1986, devotes some reflection to the ethnic, religious, and linguistic aspects of the term “Semitic” but in the very title of the book, *Semites and anti-Semites*, somewhat misuses the ambiguity in the term “Semitic” for his own political purposes. As an ethnic term, “Semitic” should best be avoided these days, in spite of ongoing genetic research (which also is supported by the Israeli scholarly community itself) that tries to scientifically underpin such a concept.⁵

Use of the term in modern Arabic context

The term سامي sāmī ‘Semitic’ as referring to a language family (لغات سامية luqāt sāmīya ‘Semitic languages’) is non-controversial among educated Arabs. One also finds some degree of identification with the term as referring to cultural and/or ethnical adherence, even though the association of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural features, as proposed in the second half of the 19th century by Ernest Renan and others, tends to be frowned upon these days, for good reasons. Stefan Wild (1985) discussed the political complications that arose due to this semantic ambiguity in connection with attempts to translate Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* into Arabic, the main issue being that Arabs who also identified with the concept sāmī should not be alienated by negative associations with the term that were earmarked for Jews in this irrational and polemical pamphlet. The negative calque form لاسامي lā-sāmī ‘anti-Semitic’ likewise is accepted in educated Arabic.

Use of the term in modern Israeli context

The linguistic use of the term שמי šemi ‘Semitic’ in the label שפות שמיות śafot śemiyot ‘Semitic languages’⁶ is equally non-controversial in Israeli context. The definition (or accepted use) of the term in an ethnic and cultural sense is a more complicated matter, as intimated above, especially against the canvas of the term יהודי yehudi ‘Jewish’⁷ and the term ישראלי yisre’eli ‘Israeli’,⁸ and not necessarily all Jews and Israelis can relate to or do identify with the term.⁹

The form of the negative term is אנטישמי ’anti-šemi, in its traditional sense

⁵ Cf. e.g. Hammer et al. 2000.

⁶ The transcription of modern Hebrew terms is oriented at the style sheet for the upcoming *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*.

⁷ 2 K 16:6, 25:25; Jer. 32:12, 34:9, etc.; Neh. 1:2, 3:33, etc.; 1 Chr. 4:18.

⁸ Lev. 24:10; 2 Sam 17:25.

⁹ Cf. the useful *Wikipedia* entry “Semitic.” The standard modern Hebrew reference dictionary *Milon Even-Šošan* (s.v. שמי) actually defines שמי šemi ‘Semitic’ in both ways:
מבני שם, מגוע שם בן נח: היהודים והערבים הם שמיים, עברית, ארמית, ערבית הן לשונות Semitic. מילים ממוקור שם.

mi-bne šem, mi-geza' šem ben noax: ha-yehudim, ve-ha-'aravim hem šemiyim, 'ivrit, 'aramit, 'aravit hen lešonot šemiyot. milim mi-maqor šemi. ‘From the sons of Shem, from the pedigree of Shem ben Noah: the Jews and the Arabs are Semites, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic are Semitic languages. Words of Semitic origin.’

of prejudice against if not outright hate of the Jewish people. There is broad consensus that true anti-Semitism is a despicable phenomenon. In modern polemical discourse, though, this term can also be (mis-)used for stigmatizing critical voices *within* the Jewish community. While there has been a long tradition – ever since the publication of Theodor Lessing’s book *Der jüdische Selbstaß* in 1930 – to label progressive political attitudes as held by self-critical Jewish voices as שנאה עצמית יהודית *śin'a 'aṣmit yehudit* ‘Jewish self-hatred’, the hostile reference to such attitudes as אנטישמיות יהודית *'anti-šemiyut yehudit* ‘Jewish anti-Semitism’ or even אוטואנטישמיות *'oto- 'anti-šemiyut* ‘auto-anti-Semitism’ appears to be a more recent phenomenon. All of these hostile terms yield frequent “hits” on the internet and also are reflected in recent Hebrew Wikipedia entries.¹⁰

The polemical use of the term “anti-Semitic” is, of course, not restricted to Hebrew itself, but also occurs frequently in “Western” languages like English.¹¹ To give an example taken from a polemical website run by Jewish extremists, which denounces scholars (e.g., Noam Chomsky), artists (e.g., Daniel Barenboim), journalists (e.g., Akiva Eldar), and even politicians (e.g., Shimon Peres), who are perceived as disloyal to the Jewish cause:¹²

Daniel Barenboim is the pro-terror anti-Semitic orchestra conductor who likes to wave his little baton for Palestinian audiences. He has a long history of bad-mouthing Israel. But conducting on behalf of terror is not his own pastime. He also co-authored a pro-terror anti-Israel ‘book’ with Edward Said, the professor of terror at the Columbia University Madrassah.

This polemical internet outlet even regularly refers to critical Jewish voices as “capo” or “Judenrat”, i.e. Jews pressed to collaborate in concentration camps under the Nazi regime.

On January 25th 2013, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz featured a report about the Jewish American comedian Jon Stewart (Jonathan Stuart Leibowitz), in which the latter debunked the position of conservative American and Israeli politicians to the effect that any critique of Netanyahu(‘s policies) amounted to an “anti-Israeli” attitude, his main point being that about 50% of Israelis themselves

¹⁰ For the latter term, cf. “אוטואנטישמיות” (*'oto- 'anti-šemiyut*) in *Wikipedia*

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 188: “Anyone who criticizes Israeli actions or says that pro-Israel groups have significant influence over U.S. Middle East policy stands a good chance of getting labeled an ‘anti-Semite’. In fact, anyone who says that there is an Israel lobby runs the risk of being charged with anti-Semitism, even though AIPAC and the Conference of the Presidents are hardly bashful about describing their influence and the Israeli media themselves refer to America’s ‘Jewish lobby’ [a term that Mearsheimer and Walt deliberately do not use themselves, LE]. In fact, the lobby both boasts of its own power and frequently attacks those who call attention to it.”

¹² Cf. the Kahanist “Jewish S.H.I.T. List” (“S.H.I.T.” being an acronym of “Self-Hating [and/or] Israel-Threatening [Jew]: <http://www.masada2000.org/list-B.html>

had not voted for Netanyahu and his ideological associates.¹³

The term “Zionist”

Brief overview of the term

As mentioned in the second book of Samuel, chapter 5, verses 6ff., the term *ṣiyyōn* first referred to the Jebusite castle on the Southern part of the Eastern hill of Jerusalem, then in a *pars pro toto* sense to the hill as a whole and ultimately to the city as a whole.

The terms “Zionist” and “Zionism” were coined in 1890 by Nathan Birnbaum. The latter term can be defined essentially as “the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel” (so, for instance, the *Jewish Virtual Library*¹⁴). As regards the further development of the term, two main lines of thought emerged: the “political Zionism” associated with Theodor Herzl, and the “cultural Zionism” associated with ’Ahad ha-’Am (Asher Ginsberg). What is important for the following is that both of these thinkers advocated peaceful coexistence with the Arabs, contrary to popular belief also in some Western left-wing circles. Thus, the terms “Zionism” and “Zionist” should not be construed as implying *eo ipso* a hostile attitude towards Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular.¹⁵

Kutscher cites different semantic shades of the term “Zionism,” among them also the idea of “idle smooth talk about Zionist ideals not backed up by deeds.”¹⁶

Use of the term in modern Arabic context

In Arabic context, the term شهويونی *ṣahyūnī* (or *ṣihyawnī*) ‘Zionist’ is often used as a de facto synonym of the terms يهودي *yahūdī* ‘Jewish’ and/or إسرائيلي *’isrā’īlī* ‘Israeli’ in contexts such as العدو الصهيوني *al-’adūw aṣ-ṣahyūnī* ‘the Zionist enemy’ or الاحتلال الصهيوني *al-iḥṭilāl aṣ-ṣahyūnī* ‘the Zionist occupation.’ It tends to be used in a negative way, and often occurs in conjunction with the attribute عنصري *’unṣurī* ‘racist.’ Even in semi-official context, Israel has been labeled الكيان الصهيوني العنصري *al-kiyān aṣ-ṣahyūnī al-’unṣurī* ‘the racist Zionist entity’ and the like.¹⁷ The first two syllables of the adjective *ṣahyūnī* are sometimes

¹³ “‘Circumdecision 5773’ Jon Stewart mocks Israeli election outcome.” Haaretz January 25th 2013.

¹⁴ “Zionism,” *Jewish Virtual Library*.

¹⁵ The Arabic dictionary and encyclopedia *al-Munjid* (s.v.) soberly and non-polemically defines *ṣahyūnīya* as حركة المطالعين بوطن قومي لليهود في فلسطين *harakat al-muṭālibīn bi-waṭan qawmī li-l-yahūd fi filasṭīn* ‘the movement of those who strive for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.’

¹⁶ Kutscher 1982: 238. Cf. also Edzard 2006: 135f.

¹⁷ For references, cf. e.g. Edzard 1996: 42ff. and Edzard 1998: 65.

صهيونية أمريكية *sahyū-* ‘Zio-,’ as in terms like مخططات مهاترات *muḥaṭṭatāt sahyū-* *amrīkīya* ‘Zio-American schemes.’ I could not find the negative form لا-صهيوني *lā-sahyūnī* ‘anti-Zionist’ on the internet or elsewhere, but one would assume positive connotations for the term.

Use of the term in modern Israeli context

Not surprisingly, the term *ṣiyoni* ‘Zionist’ is used with overwhelmingly positive connotations by modern Israelis (with the exception of a radical fringe within the ultra-orthodox Jewish community, the members of which disapprove of the concept for religious reasons). The term can have two meanings, either designating a person who supports the principles of Zionism or a person historically associated with the Zionist movement.¹⁸ Thus the negative use of the term, *’anti-ṣiyoni* ‘anti-Zionist,’ can be expected to carry overwhelmingly negative connotations.

In a Haaretz article dating from January 11th 2013, the Israeli journalist Yossi Verter cites the famous Israeli author Amos Oz as follows regarding the contemporary (end of 2012/beginning of 2013) Likud-Beiteinu politics, but also criticizing the current Labor leadership:¹⁹

ממשלת נתניהו היא הממשלה האנטי-ציונית ביותר שהיתה לישראל מיום הקמתה
memšelet Netanyahu hi() ha-memšala ha- ’anti-ṣiyonit be-yoter še-hayta le-Yišra’el mi-yom haqamat-ah

the Netanyahu government is the most anti-Zionist government Israel has ever had since its foundation.

What Oz obviously had in mind is that “Zionism” in ’Ahad ha-’Am’s or Theodor Herzl’s understanding entails the readiness to peaceful coexistence with the Jewish state’s Arab neighbors. Thus, his criticism refers to the circumstance that a

¹⁸ Cf. Milon ’Even-Šošan (s.v.): ציוני ():

1. אדם התומך במטרות הציונות שעקריה: בסופה של המדינה היהודית בארץ ישראל, שאיפה לנכון רוב פזרי הגולה בתוכה, סיווע למדינת ישראל לשמש מרכז מדיני ורוחני לכל יהודי הגולה שעידן לא עלו לארץ. 2. שקשרו לציווית או למי שמאמין בה.

1. *’adam ha-tomex be-maṭarot ha-ṣiyonut še- ‘iqare-ha: bisus-ah šel ha-medina ha-yehudit be- ’ereṣ Yišra’el, še-’ifa le-kinus rov pezur ha-gola be-tox-ah, siyu ‘ li-mdinat Yišra’el le-šameš merkaz medini ve-rugani le-xol yehude ha-gola še- ‘adayin lo() ’alu.* 2. *še-qasur la-ṣiyonut ’o le-mi še-ma’amin b-ah.* ‘1. A person who supports the goals of Zionism, whose principles are: the establishment of the Jewish state in ’Ereṣ Yišra’el (Palestine), the desire to gather most of the dispersed in the diaspora in it, and help to the State of Israel to serve as a political and spiritual center to all those Jews who have not yet immigrated (“come up”). 2. [A person] who is [historically] connected to Zionism or to someone who believes in it.’

¹⁹ Verter 2013.

continued occupation, let alone annexation, of Arab territories is much more likely to endanger the desired Jewish identity of the state of Israel due to the “demographic problem” than a just and peaceful territorial solution to the conflict would do. Politicians like Benyamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman, and political analysts as Moshe Arens would, of course, strongly disagree with Amos Oz’s statement (supposed they would bother to comment on it in the first place) and argue to the effect that it is rather their own political attitude that represents genuine “Zionism.”

Conclusion

Both the positive (non-negated) and the negated forms of the adjectives “Semitic” and “Zionist” are polysemic in modern Arabic and Hebrew, as well as in European languages. To a certain degree, there seems to be a renaissance of the term “Semitic” in an ethnic and even genetic sense in modern Israeli scholarship. In “Western” context, though, it is preferable to restrict the use of the non-negated form “Semitic” to linguistic (as opposed to ethnic or cultural) context. In the case of the term “Zionist”, one is well advised to avoid any polemical use, which does not conform to the original peaceful intentions of the intellectual founders of Zionism.

Dedication

Kerstin Eksell is a scholar who has always paid careful attention to linguistic and philological detail. These short notes are cordially dedicated to her on the occasion of her upcoming retirement in 2013.

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Some aspects of Aramaic as attested in Lebanese place names

Elie Wardini¹
Stockholm University

Abstract²

Place names are one of the few sources of information about the Aramaic used in the region of Lebanon for more than two millennia. Therefore a comparative and diachronic study of Lebanese place names is of the utmost importance. The present study is based on a sample of 1724 place names from the regions of Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon. Four features of Aramaic as attested in place names are discussed briefly: two from phonology and two from morphology. The preliminary conclusion one can arrive at is that the Aramaic used in Lebanon is clearly, and as expected, of the Western type. It has a complex development which in some cases is parallel to, yet often distinct from, the development of its Modern West Aramaic cousins.

Key words: Toponymy, place names, Lebanon, Aramaic, onomastics

1. Aramaic in Lebanese place names

Aramaic is a language that has been part of the linguistic landscape in the region of Lebanon from as early as the late 1st millennium BC³ to the 17th-18th century AD. Remnants of this type of Aramaic survive to this day in Maaloula, Jibadin and Bakhaa, in Syria on the Anti-Lebanon. There is nevertheless very little direct textual evidence of the Aramaic used in Lebanon. Aramaic inscriptions from the region are very few.⁴ This leaves place names as our major source for information about the Aramaic used in Lebanon.

The present article is based on my study *Lebanese Place-Names (Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon): A Typology of Regional Variation and Continuity*, first published by Peeters in 2002 and republished by Librarie du Liban Publishers in 2007. The study encompasses 1724 place names from Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon based on the *Répertoire alphabétique des noms géographiques français-arabe*, 1970, of the Lebanese Army.

Based on the material studied, the Aramaic used in Lebanon is clearly of the Western type. The use of Syriac, on the other hand, came to Lebanon with the

¹ E-mail address: elie.wardni@orient.su.se

² It is a pleasure and an honor for me to dedicate this article to my colleague Prof. Kerstin Eksell.

³ Briquel Chatonnet 1991.

⁴ Briquel Chatonnet 2001, 2005; Greenfield 1985: 699; Naccach 1989.

Maronite Church and remains a central part of its liturgy. Aramaic as attested in Lebanese place names exhibits a complex and diverse development. In many cases it exhibits a development that is parallel to the developments in the Modern West Aramaic variants of Maaloula, Jibadin and Bakhaa. Nevertheless, I intend to show in the present study that the Aramaic used in Lebanon seems to be a distinct variant.

Toponymic research is in itself demanding. It is even more so, when one adds to it the delicate intricacies of etymology. Therefore, identifying the Aramaic features attested in Lebanese place names is hardly a straightforward undertaking. In my study, I have attempted to distinguish between features that are Aramaic and Aramaic-internal developments, and features that are Aramaic, yet display changes that are due to Arabic influence. In most cases, the Aramaic features attested in Lebanese place names are adapted to Lebanese Arabic phonology. In a few cases they are adapted to Lebanese Arabic morphology.⁵

The table below presents the different languages attested in Lebanese place names. The 1724 place names studied contain 2647 constituent lexical items distributed on 1157 different words. An Aramaic etymology is claimed for approximately 36% of the total number of place names.

| | N° of attestations | N° of words |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Lebanese Arabic: | 1266 (47.8% of 2647) | 473 (40.8% of 1157) |
| Aramaic: | 955 (36.1%) | 390 (33.7%) |
| Canaanite: | 156 (5.9%) | 80 (6.9%) |
| uncertain: | 119 (4.5%) | 115 (9.9%) |
| several etym.: | 86 (3.2%) | 50 (4.3%) |
| standard Arabic: | 36 (1.4%) | 28 (2.4%) |
| Greek: | 10 (0.4%) | 8 (0.6%) |
| Latin: | 10 (0.4%) | 4 (0.3%) |
| French: | 4 (0.2%) | 4 (0.3%) |
| Turkish: | 3 (0.1%) | 3 (0.2%) |
| Italian | 2 (0.1%) | 2 (0.1%) |
| SUM | 2647 | 1157 |
| Arabic: | 1302 (49.1%) | |
| Non-Arabic (old): | 1131 (42.7%) | |
| Non-Arabic (new): | 9 (0.3%) | |
| Uncertain: | 119 (4.5%) | |

⁵ For a discussion on these issues, see Wardini 2007.

It can be noted that English is not attested in the data covered by the present study, yet it is becoming quite a popular source for new Lebanese place names. The items *new* and *hill* are very often used even in combination with ancient names: e.g., *Nyu Batrūn* ‘New Batrūn’, *Batrūn Həlz* ‘Batrūn Hills’, *Nyu Biblos* ‘New Byblos’, *Nyu Faytrūn* ‘New Faytrūn’, and interestingly, *Nyu Jdayde* ‘New Jdayde’! When written with the Latin alphabet, these items are spelled as in the source language, and in the Arabic alphabet they are spelled as نيو and هيلز respectively. French names are also more common than attested in our data, e.g. *Belvu* ‘Belle Vue’, *Bufor* ‘Beau Fort’ (the latter coined during the epoch of the Crusades) etc.

2. Phonology

I have earlier discussed the phonology of Lebanese place names more thoroughly⁶ and will here confine myself to two phonological phenomena: $-\bar{a} > \emptyset$ and $g > \dot{g} / j$

2.1. $-\bar{a} > \emptyset$

In the data analyzed in this study, there are some 447 cases of change in word-final vowels. Here I will concentrate on changes involving final $-\bar{a}$ ($n = 389 = 87.0\%$ of 447) which are distributed as follows:

| | | | | | |
|------------|---|-------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| $-\bar{a}$ | > | $-a$ | 241 | Aramaic | 231 |
| | | | | Canaanite | 4 |
| | | | | Standard Arabic | 3 |
| $-\bar{a}$ | > | $-e$ | 106 | Aramaic | 105 |
| | | | | Canaanite | 1 |
| $-\bar{a}$ | > | \emptyset | 42 | Aramaic | 41 |
| | | | | Canaanite | 1 |

In the majority of cases (347 of 389), the change of final $-\bar{a} > -a / -e$ represents an adaptation to Lebanese phonology complying with the well documented correspondence $-\bar{a} \approx$ Lebanese Arabic $-a / -e$. E.g. Standard Arabic *'anā* ‘I’ \approx Lebanese Arabic *'ana* (also *'ane* and *'ani*) and Standard Arabic *dunyā* ‘world’ \approx Lebanese Arabic *dənye*.

There are, nevertheless, 42 cases where final $-\bar{a}$ is deleted. Aramaic is involved in 41 cases, while one case possibly involves Canaanite (*Mdayrəj*

⁶ Wardini 2007: 513-541.

‘foothold in the rock, mountain thoroughfare’ < Canaanite **m̥drg* (Hebrew *madrēgā*). The deletion of final -ā is most clearly evident in the cases where Aramaic fem. plur. det. -ātā is attested as -ēt in Lebanese place names. E.g. ‘aynēt ‘the springs’ compared to ‘aynēta (cf. Lebanese Arabic ‘yūn) as well as ‘elmēt ‘young girls’ (compared to ‘elmēn and ‘alma), *Hēlēt* ‘maternal aunts,’ *Qalhēt* ‘the pots, the cauldrons,’ etc. compared to *Bəq̥ēta* ‘the fields,’ *Hūrēta* ‘white poplar trees,’ *Kəlbēta* ‘bitches, she dogs’ etc. The deletion of final -ā, though primarily represented in the Aramaic fem. plur. det. suffix -ātā, is also attested in the Aramaic masc. plur. det. -ayyā most prominently in *Ba'lšmay* compared to variant *Ba'lšmayya* ‘The Lord of Heaven,’ but also in many other cases such as *Kfərtay* ‘the village of the Muslims,’ *Bməhray* ‘the place of dowries’ (compare *Bməhrayn* and *Məhrīn*), etc. compared to *Qəbrayya* ‘the tombs,’ *Qərnayya* ‘the horns, hills,’ *Gəšrayya*, the bridges’, *Rāmayya* ‘The hills,’ *Tərzayya* ‘royal wardrobes, armories’ (compared to *Tərza*), etc. There is no indication that this deletion is due to Lebanese Arabic phonology. One could argue that this feature is due to an analogy between Aramaic fem. plur. det. -ātā and Lebanese Arabic fem. plur. -ēt, were it not also attested in other suffixes such as the Aramaic masc. plur. det. -ayyā. One could also argue that the suffix -ay (as in *Bməhray* and others) reflects the Aramaic masc. plur. det. -ōya attested in Jibadin,⁷ were it not for the clear attestation of the Aramaic masc. plur. det. -ayyā in Lebanese place names (see below) and the short -a- in the attested suffix -ay compared to Jibadin -ōya. One would still need to explain the deletion of final -a. At present, I have no explanation for why the final -ā is at times deleted and at times retained.

2.2. *g* > *g̡* / *j*⁸

Changes pertaining to the phoneme /g/ as attested in Lebanese place names are part and parcel of the development of the /bgdkft/ phonemes. For example Semitic /p/ as attested in Lebanese place names has completely > [f] as is the case in Arabic and many variants of Aramaic. Non-Semitic /p/ is, as expected, in general attested as [b]. Semitic /b/ has remained unchanged as [b] with no clear-cut signs of a fricative, contrary to many variants of Aramaic. Modern West Aramaic has [p] and [b].⁹ From Arabic sources mentioning Lebanese place names we can deduce that the fricative of /t/ is attested, e.g. *Batrūn* is attested as *btrwn*, and *Mḡīṭe* is attested as *mgyth*.¹⁰ This feature cannot be other than Aramaic-internal and is not due to Arabic influence. On the other hand, one could argue that the

⁷ Arnold 1990: 289.

⁸ See Wardini 2007: 515-517. See also Arnold & Behnstedt 1993: 9.

⁹ Arnold 1990: 12.

¹⁰ Helou 1986: 56, 57, 265, 355.

disappearance of this fricative in modern day Lebanese place names is due to the general move of Lebanese Arabic from a rural variant with fricatives to an urban variant where fricatives have become plosives. There is no clear-cut evidence for the fricative of the phoneme /d/. As for the phoneme /k/, both plosives and a few fricatives are attested: e.g. *Kfar Nabrah* ‘the village of the pond’ \sqrt{brk} and *Hafše* ‘a type of vessel’ or ‘ungraceful woman’ $\sqrt{kpš}$.¹¹

As for the non-Arabic phoneme /g/ (as opposed to the Arabic phoneme /j/), it is attested 89 times in the data analyzed in this study. This phoneme, contrary to /p/, undergoes a transition in two different directions in Lebanese place names: /g/ > [g̡] and /g/ > [j]. This dual transition appears to be completely independent of the position of the phoneme in the word and equally independent of the language of the word attested. Note the following table where the attested cases are listed in order of frequency:

| <i>g</i> > <i>j</i> | 51 | Aramaic | |
|----------------------|----|-----------|--|
| <i>j-</i> | 16 | | - <i>Jdaydət el Jūme, Jēnīn, Jārnēya</i> |
| <i>-j-</i> | 10 | | - <i>Barja, Hjūla, Bəjjé</i> |
| <i>-j</i> | 4 | | - <i>Btūrētīj, Tartəj, Əhməj</i> |
| | | Canaanite | 19 |
| <i>j-</i> | 13 | | - <i>Jəbla, J‘īta, Jəddēyəl</i> |
| <i>-j-</i> | 6 | | - <i>Əjbə‘, jaltūn</i> |
| <i>-j</i> | 1 | Greek | 1 - <i>Jūnye</i> |
| <i>-j-</i> | 1 | Latin | 1 - <i>Tallət el Lajjīne</i> |
| <i>g</i> > <i>g̡</i> | 38 | Aramaic | 22 |
| <i>g̡-</i> | 15 | | - <i>Ğəšrayya, Ğūma, Ğarfīn</i> |
| <i>-g̡-</i> | 7 | | - <i>Bargūn, Fğēl, Šēgūr</i> |
| | | Canaanite | 15 |
| <i>g̡-</i> | 12 | | - <i>Ğīne, Ğbēle, Wēde el Ğēbūr</i> |
| <i>-g̡-</i> | 3 | | - <i>Ag̡be, Fēlūğā, Bədgēn</i> |
| <i>-g̡-</i> | 1 | Latin | 1 - <i>Ğəsṭa</i> |

I was not able to detect any clear patterns in the geographical distribution of this feature, nor any distribution relative to the language of origin. Even the very same lexical item could be attested with either [g̡] as in *Ğbēle* ‘border, hill,’ *Bargūn* ‘little tower, little turret,’ *Ğūma* ‘depression,’ etc. compared to [j] as in *Jbayl* ‘border, hill,’ *Barja* ‘tower, turret,’ *Jūme* ‘depression,’ etc. This seemingly

¹¹ See Wardini 2007: 523.

random distribution of /g/ > [g̡] / [j] complicates any attempt at a neat diachronic description of the development of the phoneme /g/. Due to the restricted amount of data, all one can say here is that at some point the change /g/ > [g̡] has been lexicalised (randomly?!) parallel to a continued use of [g], probably in a fluid period when lexicalisation was not yet fixed. With the introduction of Arabic, [g̡] changes to [g̡] and [g] to [j]. One can also conclude that the phoneme /g/ in Lebanese place names behaves more in line with, but not identical to, Modern West Aramaic variants.

3. Morphology

I have dealt earlier with the morphology of Lebanese place names more thoroughly,¹² and I shall discuss only two phenomena here: the Aramaic masc. plur. det. form and the shaphel.

3.1. Aramaic masc. plur. det.

A more or less complete paradigm of the declension of nouns in the Aramaic used in Lebanon is attested in Lebanese place names. Note the following table:

| | abs. | const. | det. |
|-------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| masc. sing. | <i>Məjdəl</i> | <i>Kfər Hatna</i> | <i>Majdla</i> |
| masc. plur. | <i>Darīn</i> | - | <i>Darayya</i> |
| fem. sing. | <i>‘alma</i> | <i>Mart Mūra</i> | <i>Dləbta</i> |
| fem. plur. | <i>‘elmēn</i> | - | <i>Kəlbēta</i> |

Concerning the masculine plural determined state, there are at least 22 clear-cut cases of Aramaic masc. plur. det. -*ayyā* in the data analyzed for this study: ‘*arayya* ‘the laurel trees,’ *Bəkfayya* ‘place of the rocks,’ *Darayya* ‘the dwellings,’ *Ğəšrayya* ‘the bridges,’ *Kəfrayya* ‘the villages,’ *Qəbrayya* ‘the tombs,’ *Qərnayya* ‘the horns, hills,’ *Rāmayya* ‘the hills,’ *Tərzayya* ‘the royal wardrobes, armories’ (compared to *Tərza*), etc. There is, therefore, no doubt in my mind that -*ayyā* was the productive masc. plur. det. suffix for the Aramaic used in Lebanon. This is not surprising, given that this is the common masc. plur. det. suffix for West Aramaic. What is of interest here is that the Aramaic used in Lebanon, as attested in Lebanese place names, differs from the variants of Modern West Aramaic where masc. plur. det. suffix is -*ō* and, in the case of Jibadin, -*ō(ya)*.¹³ To note though, I have interpreted the suffix -*ēya* in Lebanese place names as the adjectival suffix -

¹² Wardini 2007: 542-560.

¹³ Arnold 1990: 289.

āy + masc. sing. det. *-ā*, as in *Jərmnēya* ‘the bony one,’ *Məjd़lēya* ‘one related to *Məjd़al*,’ *Səlfēya* ‘one related to a sister’s husband,’ *Saydnēya* ‘one related to *Saydūn*,’ etc. One could nevertheless argue that the suffix *-ēya* is identical with Jibadin masc. plur. det. suffix *-ō(ya)* and therefore should be evidence of a similar development in Lebanon. E.g. *Məjd़lēya* compared to *Məjd़layya*. However, while a dual and maybe parallel development of the Aramaic masc. plur. det. suffix in Lebanon is a possibility, I am inclined to consider *-āyā* as an adjectival suffix due to the clear attestation of the *-ayyā* suffix.

3.2. *Shaphel*

The shaphel is well attested in Aramaic, though not very productive and not very common. In the Lebanese place names analyzed in the present study, three cases¹⁴ exhibit a shaphel:

Baštūdār ‘place of revolution’: *ba* + *štūdār* ‘revolution’ < Aramaic ’štdwr ‘revolution’

Bəštlīde ‘place of birth’: *bə* + *štlīde* seemingly < unattested t-shaphel of √*yld* ‘to be born’

Bšə’qēb ‘place of protection’: *b* + *šə’qēb* seemingly < unattested shaphel of √*qb* ‘to protect’

What is of special interest here is that the shaphel, which apparently is not attested in Modern West Aramaic, seems to have been productive in the Aramaic used in Lebanon. This can be deduced from a probably once productive shaphel in the Aramaic substrate of Lebanese Arabic. Note the following evidence:

| Lebanese Arabic | Root | Standard Arabic | Aramaic |
|---|------|-----------------|---------|
| <i>qalab</i> ‘flip something’ | qlb | ” | — |
| <i>qələb</i> ‘fall’ | ” | — | — |
| <i>qallab</i> ‘flip something repeatedly’ | ” | ” | — |
| <i>šaqlab</i> ‘cause something to fall’ | ” | — | — |
| <i>tšaqlab</i> ‘stumble’ | ” | — | — |

Note also the following Lebanese lexical items:¹⁵

šabraq ‘dress up, enjoy oneself’ < √*brq*

tšabraq ‘dress up, enjoy oneself’ < √*brq**

¹⁴ For a thorough discussion of the lexicon of Lebanese place names, see Wardini 2007: 562-571.

¹⁵ See Frayha 1973: 89-103.

$\check{s}aflah$ ‘expose to cold, draft’ < \sqrt{lfh}
 $\check{s}ahraq$ ‘get burned, dry up’ < \sqrt{hrq}
 $t\check{s}ahraq$ ‘get burned, dry up’ < \sqrt{hrq}^*
 $\check{s}ahla$ ‘wear vulgar clothes’ < \sqrt{hl}
 $t\check{s}ahla$ ‘wear vulgar clothes’ < \sqrt{hl}^*
 $\check{s}alfat$ ‘get burned’ < \sqrt{lft}
 $\check{s}alqah$ ‘lie down’ < \sqrt{lqh}
 $t\check{s}alqah$ ‘lie down’ < \sqrt{lqh}^*
 $\check{s}aqdraf$ ‘send from place to place’ < \sqrt{qdf}
 $\check{s}aqram$ ‘break the tip off’ < \sqrt{qrm}

*The t-forms may be secondary formations based on the shaphel forms.

Compared to Arabic form X:

$sta'jar$ ‘to rent’ < $\sqrt{j'r}$
 $sta'mal$ ‘to use’ < \sqrt{ml}

As further evidence of a strong Aramaic substrate in Lebanese Arabic, note also the many cases of -r- infix (also cases of -l-, -n- etc. infix) in Lebanese Arabic lexical items:

$barhaš$ ‘search, dig up’ < \sqrt{bhs}
 $barqah$ ‘to stain’ < \sqrt{bqh} / bq'
 $\check{h}ardab$ ‘to be hunchback’ < \sqrt{hdb}
 $\check{s}arbak$ ‘get entangled’ < $\sqrt{\check{s}bk}$
 $\check{h}armaš / \check{g}armaš$ ‘scratch’ < $\sqrt{hmš}$
 $\check{s}arhat$ ‘drag someone’ < $\sqrt{\check{s}ht}$

4. Desiderata

As can be seen from the present brief discussion, there is still a great need for further research on the type of Aramaic that was used in Lebanon. Place names are a promising field of research in this respect. One could specify that not only thorough toponymic research is needed, but studies in comparative, diachronic and areal linguistics are also a must. Moreover, serious efforts should be made to carefully record the attestations of Lebanese place names in all the available sources in order to establish a chronology for the topomymic and linguistic data. Such a chronology, relative or/and absolute would be of tremendous value for a diachronic study of the linguistic developments in the region of Lebanon.

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MS Uppsala O Nova 791 – a rediscovered manuscript of the Arabic translation of and commentary on the Song of Songs by Japheth ben Eli

Karin Almbladh¹
Uppsala University

Abstract

In this paper I discuss the translation and commentary on the Song of Songs by the Karaite Japheth ben Eli (died *ca* 1005). The point of departure is the manuscript Uppsala O Nova 791, which was used by Paul Achilles Jung, the father of Carl Gustav Jung, as the basis for his dissertation in 1867 and later acquired by Uppsala University Library in 1982.²

Keywords: Japheth ben Eli, Karaites, medieval Arabic Bible translations

In 1867 Paul Achilles Jung (1842-1896) published his dissertation *Ueber des Karäers Jephet arabische Erklärung des Hohenliedes* in Göttingen.³ Jung based his edition on a manuscript that was at the time in the possession of Heinrich Ewald (1803-1875), professor of Oriental languages in Göttingen, but since 1982 the manuscript has been at the Library of the University of Uppsala Carolina Rediviva. It is a dissertation typical of the period: a short introduction on the Karaites and on Japheth ben Eli and his commentary followed by the edition, in Arabic script, of chapter 1:2-15 and a translation into German of chapter 1:2-6. It is one of the first editions ever of any of Japheth ben Eli's works, only preceded by the publication by Jean Joseph Bargès of excerpts of his commentary on the Psalms in 1846, the edition by Bargès of his translation of the Psalms in 1861, and the edition of the commentary on chapter 30 of Proverbs by Zachariah Auerbach in 1866.⁴

The editor Paul Jung was a pastor of the Swiss Reformed Church in Basel and is today mostly remembered as the father of Carl Gustav Jung.⁵ For Jung, the commentaries by Japheth ben Eli were important from two points of view: first of

¹ E-mail address: Karin.Almbladh@lingfil.uu.se

² An earlier version was read at the 15th international conference of the Society for Judeo-Arabic studies in Cambridge, 2011.

³ Paul Achilles Jung 1867.

⁴ Jean Joseph Bargès 1846, Jean Joseph Bargès 1861, Zacharias Auerbach 1866.

⁵ For discussions of possible implications of the dissertation of Paul Achilles Jung for the psychology of Carl Gustav Jung, see Battye 1994: 169-170, and Ryce-Menuhin 1994. Whatever such implications, it is well known that the Song of Songs was of great importance for Carl Gustav Jung and his psychology.

all to understand Karaite exegesis, but also to enhance knowledge of the views of Saadiah Gaon, whom Japheth ben Eli is said to have quoted in his commentaries. And, according to Jung, his commentaries are all the more important as a Rabbinic commentator like Ibn Ezra (died 1167 in England) quoted him by name in his commentary on Exodus.⁶

The Karaites

The Karaites, *qarā'īm* or *bənē miqrā'*, represent Judaism's oldest surviving sect. They derive their name from the Hebrew word for Scripture and their identity from their scriptualist interpretation. Denying the authority of Rabbinic tradition and the Talmud, they emerged in Iraq of the 8th century, and they were perceived as a deadly enemy to normative Judaism in the Islamic East until at least the 12th century. In the 12th century, Byzantium became their new centre, and from there groups settled in the Crimea. Although originally Arabic-speaking, they adopted the languages of their host-countries, and so there emerged a Turkic-language speaking group, *Karaim*. A tiny remnant community of Karaim still lives in Lithuania while the Arabic-speaking Karaites who once lived in Egypt now have settled in Israel.⁷

In the second half of the 10th century, Jerusalem emerged as their spiritual and intellectual centre when several Karaites moved from Iraq to Jerusalem. Calling themselves *āvēlē Siyyōn*, "Mourners for Zion,"⁸ *maškilīm*, "teachers,"⁹ *shə'ērīt Yisrā'ēl*, "the remnant of Israel," *təmīmē derekh*, "the Perfect of Way," and *shōshānīm*, "lilies,"¹⁰ they moved to Jerusalem as they were convinced that they were living in the End of Days and were eager to await the imminent advent of the Messiah there. But the Messiah did not come and, instead, the Karaites in Jerusalem were massacred when the city was conquered by the Crusaders in 1099.¹¹

In Jerusalem, the Mourners for Zion produced a large body of Judeo-Arabic literature, including translations of Scripture, commentaries, codes, and grammatical works, in order to encourage their co-sectarians and persuade their Jewish opponents. The Bible commentaries are complex and multi-layered, embodying prefaces, complete Arabic translations of the Biblical text, verse-by-

⁶ Paul Achilles Jung 1867: 6.

⁷ Polliack (ed.) 2003 provides an excellent summary of the history of the Karaites and for the state of current research.

⁸ From Is. 61:3.

⁹ Ps 74:1.

¹⁰ Song of Songs, and the headings of Psalms 44, 69, 80.

¹¹ Frank 2004: 1-32 (for a sketch of the medieval history of the Karaites), Gil, 1992: 777-837 (for the history of the Karaites in Jerusalem).

verse explications, and excursuses on a variety of topics. The surrounding Islamic environment and Arabic culture naturally provided the models for them, but these models were fused with Jewish literary tradition. The Karaites were not the first ones to introduce these genres into Jewish literature: the translations and commentaries by Saadiah Gaon (died 942) – an ardent defender of Rabbinic tradition and a staunch opponent of the Karaites – predate the works of the Jerusalem Karaites by half a century. But while Saadiah Gaon's *oeuvre* in these genres seems to be partly lost, substantial parts of the Karaite corpus have survived in manuscripts, awaiting publication and analysis.

A palaeographic peculiarity among the Jerusalem Karaites is the occasional use of Arabic script, not only writing Arabic but also Hebrew. As is well-known, Jews generally prefer using Hebrew script, not only for writing Hebrew and Aramaic, but also other languages including Arabic. Further, there are several Hebrew and Aramaic loan-words in these languages creating a cluster of Jewish varieties of different languages. There is a substantial corpus of Arabic script manuscripts of Karaite provenance, above all in the Firkovitch collections in the Russian State Library in St Petersburg, which remains to be explored. However, the preference of Arabic script among the Jerusalem Karaites has not yet been satisfactorily explained, nor is it clear why they seem to have abandoned the script around 1100. After that date, texts were transliterated into Hebrew script, which, by now, is how they are most commonly transmitted.¹²

Japheth ben Eli and his translation and commentary of the Song of Songs

Japheth ben Eli (Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Lāwī al-Baṣrī) belonged to the Mourning for Zion. He was active ca. 960–1005, and he seems to have been the first Jew to translate and write commentaries on all books of the Jewish Bible. Most of his *oeuvre* has survived – a search in the database of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts (IMHM) in Jerusalem gives more than 800 hits.

The Song of Songs has always posed problems for Jews and Christians alike.¹³ Its assumed Solomonic authorship assured it a place in the canon, but its overt eroticism has posed several problems in interpreting it. Jews early discovered a parable for the historical relationship between God and Israel, but

¹² The best discussions of the use of Arabic script among the Karaites remain Khan 1992, and Khan 1993. The transformation of Karaite texts when transliterated into Hebrew script is discussed in Wechsler 2002 and Wechsler 2003.

¹³ The medieval Christian interpretation of the Song of Songs is discussed in Matter 1990. The only comprehensive discussion of the medieval Jewish interpretation is, to the best of my knowledge, Salfeld 1879 (non vidi), but time is no doubt ripe for new discussions.

interpretation was still required. The traditional Rabbinic interpretation understood the Song as an allegory of the history of Israel from the exodus from Egypt and the revelation at Sinai, via the conquest of Canaan, the building of the Solomonic temple and its destruction, to the rebellion of the Macabees and the rule of the Sanhedrin. The final two chapters they understood as a prophecy of the advent of the Messiah in a distant and unknown future. This interpretation can already be seen in the Targum, and it remained the dominant Rabbinic interpretation throughout the centuries.

For the Mourners for Zion and thus for Japheth ben Eli, the Song of Songs was central. Japheth ben Eli's introduction to the Song centres on its first verse. He begins with a survey of the Solomonic corpus, its generic classification, and the modes in which it was revealed. After that, he takes up the Song itself starting with a tripartite classification of *shīr*, "song". The first category consists of the exoteric songs, exemplified by Ex 15:1-19, Deut 32:1-52, Jud 5:1-31, and the psalms which have the heading *shīr*. Then follow songs that are parables with their own interpretative keys, exemplified by Is 5:1-7. The third and final category is the esoteric songs. It is in this third category that Japheth ben Eli places the Song. Not a word of it should be taken exoterically; rather, it should be interpreted as condensed speech, rich in meaning, and be understood only through the prophetic books. According to Japheth ben Eli, it was composed as a parable in response to the prophecies of Ezekiel, in which the relationship between a man and a woman is depicted negatively, and the people's abandonment of God is deplored. In the Song, by contrast, the people's return to God is celebrated through the female-male relationship. As for the Song's Solomonic authorship, Japheth ben Eli stresses emphatically that the text is not autobiographical but prophetic. Solomon recited it, we are told, with reference to the community of Israel and their leaders, the Perfect of Way, i.e. the Karaites, and the Messiah. Of all the Prophets, God revealed the Song to Solomon, because his reign was the most glorious in Jewish history, only to be surpassed by the Messianic period, of which the Song prophesizes.¹⁴

In his commentary on 1:2, Japheth ben Eli writes:

This song contains four types [of discourse]: (1) the address of the congregation of Maškilim to the Lord, describing His deeds and beneficence to their ancestors and them, and beseeching Him to fulfil His promises; (2) the complaint of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning their condition, their rehearsal of God's deeds as a stimulus to serve Him, and their request that He fulfil His promises; (3) the words of the people to each other concerning their affairs, e.g. the passage "We

¹⁴ Japheth ben Eli on Song of Songs 1:1. See also Frank 2004:155.

have a little sister” (8:8); and (4) the Creator’s response to the Maškilīm concerning their petition and desire as well as an account of their excellence and beauty when they serve Him, and their ranks, as we will explain in every section.

As in the Rabbinic interpretation, Japheth ben Eli has thus discovered a parable for the historical relationship between God and Israel – but from the standpoint of the Mourners for Zion. Hence, its distinctive focus on the End of Days, which is identified with the present. Emblematic appellations are furthermore isolated and explained in detail. To this is added a vigorous polemic against Islam, which is identified with the fourth kingdom in the book of Daniel, and an ardent stance against their Rabbinic opponents.¹⁵

MS Uppsala O Nova 791 and its history

The MS which forms the basis of Jung’s edition and which is now kept in Uppsala, consists of 169 folios, 19 x 13, 9 cm and is written in Hebrew script, i.e. it represents the text as a transliteration from Arabic into Hebrew script. The manuscript is not complete: the first folio is missing, and it is not dated. This means that a possible title page is missing. Today, the binding is loose. As for date and provenance, the ligature *alef* and *lamed* indicates Syria and Palestine as the area of origin, whereas it may date from the 16th century or later.¹⁶

As to the manuscript’s early modern history, it passed into the possession of Carl Mützelfeldt, a pastor in Hannoversche evangelisch-lutherische Freikirche in Rabber in Niedersachsen at some time in late 19th century. After his death it was inherited by his son, Karl Mützelfeldt, who was also a Lutheran pastor. Karl Mützelfeldt was married to a lady from a Jewish family, and in 1934 the family left Germany for Adelaide in Australia. The son of Karl Mützelfeldt, Bruno Muetzefeldt (1918-2002) who was active in the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva in Switzerland, brought the manuscript to Europe and the home-land of Paul Jung after World War II. In 1980, Bruno Muetzefeldt was to return to Australia and through the good offices of a Swedish colleague, the rev. Ebbe Arvidsson, also active in the Lutheran World Federation, the manuscript was offered to Uppsala University Library. In an annotation from July 1981 it is mentioned that the late Professor Helmer Ringgren, Professor of Old Testament Studies in Uppsala, investigated the manuscript, expressing his interest in it. In 1982 it was included in the collections of Uppsala University Library.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Karaite interpretation of the Song is discussed in detail in Frank: 2004: 144-164.

¹⁶ Beit-Arié, Malachi, 1987.

¹⁷ I am indebted to the staff at the manuscript department of Carolina Rediviva for supplying me with the correspondence related to the acquisition of the manuscript.

It is of interest to observe that all the early modern owners were Protestants as was Paul Jung. It is well known that Protestants took a keen interest in the Karaites from the 17th century onwards, no doubt hoping to find a more “authentic” interpretation of the Scriptures and for missionary purposes.¹⁸ It is, however, also interesting to note that Jung does not voice any such ideas, only mentioning that the Karaites reject the Talmud. In a memorandum from 1907, written on New Year’s Eve that year, Carl Mützelfeldt mentions that Professor Heinrich Ewald thought that the manuscript could be of interest for the establishment of a revision of the Biblical text. This no doubt reflects changing perspectives of scholarship.

A search in the database of IMHM in Jerusalem gives 18 hits for the translation and commentary of the Song. One of them is MS British Library Or. 2554. The MS is written in Arabic script, and was copied while Japheth ben Eli was still alive. Unfortunately, the MS – as well as most of the other MSS – is not complete: the oldest MS with the complete text seems to be a Hebrew script MS from 1331, also in British library, just as another complete Hebrew script MS from the 15th century is there as well. In 1884, Jean Joseph Bargès published *Rabbi Yapheth Abou Aly in Canticum canticorum commentarium arabicum* from MS Bibliothèque National Paris 293 that is a third complete Hebrew script MS, copied in 1626. Like Jung’s edition, it is an edition typical of the period, i.e. a transliteration of the Arabic text into Arabic script with a translation, this time into Latin.¹⁹ A comparison between the Uppsala MS and Bargès’ edition indicates that the first ten lines of the introduction are missing in the Uppsala MS. In 2010 Joseph Aloabaidi published a re-edition of the text in the Paris manuscript in *Old Jewish commentaries on the Song of Songs. I, The commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, providing the text in Hebrew script, an English translation and some comments on the text.²⁰ Still, however, an edition taking its departure from the oldest MS but also taking into account the whole spectre of manuscripts is a *desideratum*. In such an edition the Uppsala MS has a natural place.

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¹⁸ For a Swedish example of this from the 17th century, see Csató 2007.

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Tale of the magic scarf

Heikki Palva¹

Professor emeritus, University of Helsinki

Abstract

The motif of the tale is how the innocence of the bride brought from a distant village and the honesty of the servant who fetched her, are proven. In the plot, the magic scarf plays a central role. Linguistically, the text is an example of the use of two different types of dialectal Arabic in Jordan. In the narrative, a conservative form of the local rural dialect is used, whereas the poetic passages display a variety of the Bedouin-type language of the so-called Nabati poetry.

Keywords: Arabic dialect, Jordanian, folkloric narrative, bedouin poetry, Nabati poetry, magic scarf.

Introduction

During my visit to el-Karak in October-November 1976 it was my intention to collect dialect material based on free discussions and systematic inquiries with male and female inhabitants of different ages. I supplemented the material in January 1979 and December 1981, and published the results as an article in 1989.² I also wished to find a storyteller, and with the kind help of my Karaki hosts, Nōfa Frēḥa and Ilyās Madānāt, I found an excellent singer, *rababa* player and storyteller, Mḥammad l-iMbēḍīn, whom I visited in the neighbourhood of the Crusader castle in the south-eastern corner of the town. From him I succeeded in recording several hours of tapes, mainly *qasidas* sung to the accompaniment of the *rababa*; a few short historical stories told by him were published as sample texts in my 1989 article.

The most promising local expert whom I was due to meet, was an elderly man called l-uQṣūṣ, who was familiar with the history and traditions of the town, and who had also learnt about the people and their problems over a period of several decades while writing letters and official papers, and filling in forms in front of the post office. Nōfa and Ilyās had informed him about my visit and invited him to their home. He appeared to be a most pleasant and jovial person, an ideal interviewee. But when I turned on my tape recorder, he determinedly refused to say anything. Eight years ago he had given lots of information to Peter Gubser,

¹ E-mail address: heikki.palva@luukku.com

² Palva 1989.

“who in his book had written it down all wrong.”³ Therefore he had decided not to help any Western writer any further.

Naturally, I was disappointed and so were Nōfa and Ilyās. When l-uQṣūṣ had left, Nōfa said, Let’s record, *xallīna nsaḡgil, ʔihna*. Indeed, until 1976 I had not had an opportunity to meet any female storyteller in Jordan. Now I had, admittedly, not a trained performer of narratives and songs, but a person who in spite of that had a large repertory of stories and poems. Most of them she had learned from her first husband Yūsif Ṭarīf, a collection of whose narratives I had recorded at Ṣāfūt a few weeks before his death in 1965.⁴ After her new marriage with Ilyās Madānāt she had moved to el-Karak, where the couple lived in the Christian quarter of the town. At the time of the recording she was about 60 years of age.

Nōfa started her stories with *Guşsit ʕAli w-Mayy*, The Tale of Ali and Mayy, which I for practical reasons changed to The Tale of the Magic Scarf. Nōfa narrated fluently, only expressing some confusion with personal names. In the transcription, I marked the erroneous names with an asterisk and corrected them in the translation. During the narration, Nōfa spontaneously explained some details; these notes are included in the transcription and translation, indicated by a different style.

The text

1. *hāda fī – yā stād hekki – fīh wāhad ʔismuh... ʕali – w-wahade ʔisimha mayy – w-hadōl b-iblād bīde ʕan baʕadhum – ʕali b-balad bīde – mimša tisʕin yōm – rōḥ u-ğayye – ʕa-ğahr il-xēl.*

Look, Ustadh Heikki, there was a man called Ali, and a girl called Mayy, and they lived far away from each other. Ali lived in a distant country, at ninety days’ distance there and back on horseback.

2. *bugūm birsil tāriš – bismaʕ b-sīṭha w-hī btismaʕ b-sīṭu – birsil tāriš – min ʕind – iṭ-tāriš šū? raġil yañni – bugullu yā ʕali**⁵ *– bitrūħli ʕala mayy u-btaʕiħha hāy ir-risāle – w-bidgħibli radd iğ-ġiwāb.*

Once Ali sent a messenger - he had heard of her, and she had heard of him - he sent a messenger from... - *what’s a tāriš? It’s a man you see.* - He said to him, ‘Look, would you go on my behalf, find Mayy and give her this letter and bring me the answer.’

³ Gubser 1973.

⁴ Palva 1992.

⁵ The particle *yā* in *bugullu yā ʕali* could also be interpreted as specifying the subject, i.e., ‘He—that is Ali—said to him’. However, a few words later, the story continues *birkab ʕali* ‘Ali mounted’.

3. *birkab ɻali* ... ɻa-l-faras – w-bisāfir – lamma bisāfir la-hināka bīgi arbañīn lēle w-hū ɻa-t-ṭarīg – baṣal hināka – bīgi w-inn ha-l-banāt ha-ṣ-ṣabāya bigasslin ityābhīn ɻala l-mayye – ɻala ɻēn nabiʃ.*

The messenger mounted... He mounted his horse and left. The journey took about forty nights. He arrived there. When he came, he found some young girls washing their clothes at the edge of the water, at a spring.

4. *lamma baṣal ɻindhin burudd is-salām – yōm burudd is-salām – bugūl:*

*?iğīt ɻēn l-imgēri maʃ ad-daha
w-ila ṣ-ṣabāya ygasslin ityābha
tarah̄t is-salām u-saddin la-wara
siwa ḡarīrtin laffat ɻalayyi ltāmha.*

When he came to them, he saluted them. Saluting them, he said:

I came to the spring of el-Mgēri⁶ in the morning,
and look, the girls were washing their clothes.
I saluted them, and they drew back,
except a bashful girl who covered herself from my eyes.

5. *gālat:*

*mnēn yā badawi mn-ayya badīde⁷?
mnēn yā xāṭiri mhabhib irčābha?*

She said:

Where are you from, you Bedouin, from which tribe?
From where are you spurring on your horse, my guest?

6. *gultilha:*

*?ana ṣawāfi w-ṣawāfi mhammad
w-irsāltin yā mayy min ɻali ruddi ġiwābha.*

I said to her:

I am Sawafi, Sawafi Muhammad.
Listen, Mayy: I have a letter from Ali, answer it.

⁶ The spring of el-Mgēri southwest of el-Karak is one of the traditional watering places of the Karaki clans of the Tarāwne and the Nawāyše. Musil 1908: 88 and 101; Oppenheim 1943: 264f.

⁷ *badīde, bidīde* is a Bedouin term used when the affiliation of a person is enquired; “*fa-yagūlūn: ‘min ɻayy bidīda, ɻay min ɻayya ɻaṣīra hū?’*”; al-ṢAbbādī 1985: 258f.

7. *gālatluh*

... stannāni šwayy lamanni rūh aḡib malābsi w-arḡaṣ – bugūl:

yā surṣa ma rāhat yā surṣa ma lifat

libset xalāxilha w-bāgi ṭyābha

xallētilha ṭaraf irčāb u-lawwahat

tgūl⁸ ṣbāwītīn⁹ mā yinhawābha

rašagt ana šāšī fōgī w-fōgha

– ?iš-šāš¹⁰ šuhū? ?iš-šāš ḡabā šāšu – raššagu ḡalēha u-ḡalē –

min xōf la nigaṣ b-fēhtin bi-ṣadābha

– ?ahsan ma nās ixuṭfūha minnu ?aww yistabḡu b-iši ṭāni.

She said,

‘Wait for me a little while, I’ll go and take my clothes and be back.’

He said:

How quickly she went, how quickly she came back!

She put on her anklets and the rest of her clothes.

I offered the flank of my mount to her, and she jumped on its back.

She was like a young girl with whom no one had fallen in love yet.

I put a muslin cloak over myself and also over her

-what’s the šāš? The šāš is a muslin gown. He threw it over her and over himself -

out of fear that we get into trouble in the open desert.

-Lest people would kidnap her from him or wish to do something else.

8. *lamma wuṣl iblādu – ɻōğah ḡala garitu – gāl:*

dūnič ya mayy hađīč iblādna

w-dūnič taʃāfī... dūnič fađādīn il-hana b-iğrābha

dūnič ya mayy hađīč dārna

w-dūnič dār ḡali yā mayy halli gbālha

dūnič yā mayy dār ḡali

w-dūnič taʃāfīḥ ha-đ-dahab b-ibwābha.

When he came to his country he directed his mare towards his village, saying:

Look, Mayy, that is our country!

Look, pairs of oxen¹¹ in their fields, how lovely!

Look, Mayy, that is our house!

Look, Mayy, that is Ali’s house, opposite to it!

⁸ ‘You would say’ = like, in Bedouin poetry usually *tigil*.

⁹ A poetic synonym of *ṣabīya*, formed of *ṣibā* ‘youth’ + adj. -ī, -wī.

¹⁰ Dozy 1845: 235-240.

¹¹ The line is somewhat confused. When I asked Nōfa about the meaning of *fađādīn il-hana*, she explained: *bagar, yañni būħurżu*. Repeated questions did not give an answer to how *il-hana* ‘happiness’ is to be understood here.

Orientalia Suecana LXI Suppl. (2012)

Look, Mayy, that is Ali's house!
Look, there are the golden apples at its gates!

9. *hāda wuṣil – bugūl nawwaxt il-... bāb il-bēt u-nādāk*¹² *yā ſali – gālli:*
hayya r-rafiq alli min il-buṣd ḡābha.

The messenger arrived and said, ‘I let the mount kneel at the gate of the house and shouted, “Ali!”’ Ali said to me:

Long live the friend who brought her from a distant country!

10. *baṣdēn ištakk bīh gallu:*
wuš-lī biha min baṣid tisṣīn lēla
xamsīn maṣ arbaṣīn itkammil ihsābha.

Then Ali started suspecting him, and said:

What do I have in common with her, after ninety nights?
Fifty and forty together make that number.

11. *gallu:*
lah lah yā ſali – w-hayāt in-nabi w-zāyrīn l-in-nabi
ma-dri ſan mayy ſa-wēš tilbas ityābha
siwa lēltin hīgilha min rīgilha
tagg mirčabi – tagg ib-rükubtu yañni – hakṣat il-faras w-tagg ib-
rükubtu –
siwa lēltin hīgilha min rīgilha
tagg mirkabi¹³ b-lēltin ḥalma taṣāwī diyābha.

The messenger said:

No no, Ali, by the Prophet's life and those who visit his *maqām*,
I don't even know which clothes Mayy had on,
except one night when an anklet of hers
hit my saddle - *it hit his knee you see, when the mare was startled, the anklet hit his knee -*
except one night when an anklet of hers
hit my saddle in a dark night, when wolves were howling.

12. *gām ziṣil ſali* w-rawwah – ſugub faṭra ṭawīle – rağāf ſali* ta-yüşūf mayy –*
yüşūf šu ṣār maṣ iğ-ğamāṣa – lamma rağāf – fāt ſalēha – w-innha bitmašṣiṭ

¹² Probably a kind of “-k of courtesy”.

¹³ When repeating the line after the gloss, the reciter uses a phonetically levelled form.

šáčarha – gāmat ſalēh raſgitu la-giddām – ǵat̄ta ſatar ſalēha min tūl šáčarha – šáčarha la-riǵlēha min tahit.

Now the messenger took offence and went off. After a long time he came to see Mayy and see what had happened to all of them. When he came back, he went in to her, and found her combing her hair. When he came, she stood up and threw her hair forward. It covered her, protecting her; her hair was that long. Her hair reached down to her feet.

13. ɻaǵat ṭal̄it mahramitha taylasān¹⁴ – w-raſgitha ſa-ǵuyūnu – ɻinǵáma – ?illi ǵābha – ɻinǵáma – ma btaǵarfūš ɻinnu hū lli ǵabha hāda ſawāfi mhammad – fakkarat ɻinno raǵil tāni fāt ſalēha.

Now she drew out her *taylasan* scarf and threw it into his eyes. He became blind - *the man who brought her became blind*. She didn't recognize him, she didn't know that he was Sawafi Muhammad, the man who had brought her. She believed that another man had come to her.

14. ſugub fatra tuwīle ſaǵalit ſannu – gālha walla hadāka maſma – ṭal̄at in-nahār ſala ɻarīg il-huǵgāg – gālha yalla ya mayy xallīna niṭlaſ ſa-ɻarīg il-huǵgāg – nitfarrāg.

After a long time Mayy asked about Sawafi Muhammad. Ali said to her, 'Well, he has become blind.' When the sun rose on the pilgrims' route, he said to her, 'Listen, Mayy, let us go out, to the pilgrims' route, to have a look.'

15. ṭal̄at – yōminnha ɻaǵat ſala ſāhibha hāda lli ǵabha min hadīk l-iblād – winnu fārid il-mahrame w-gaſad biſhad – ſa-ɻarīg il-huǵgāg – gāl ſārfitu¹⁵ yā mayy manū – gālat la? – gāl hāda ſawāfi mhammad illi ǵabič min hadīct¹⁶ l-iblād.

She went. When she came to the man she was looking for—*the man who had brought her from that country* - she saw that he had spread out the scarf on the ground and sat there begging on the pilgrims' route. Ali said, 'Look, Mayy, do you recognize who he is?' Mayy said, 'No.' Ali said, 'He is Sawafi Muhammad, the man who brought you from that country.'

¹⁴ The magic power of the *taylasān* scarf in this story seems to be etymologically connected with the verb *talas*, cf. Lane 1863-93, s.v. *talas* 'to obliterate, take away, to destroy', *ṭalīs* 'having the eye blinded'; *taylasān* 'an oblong shawl'; Dozy 1845: 254-262 and 278-280.

¹⁵ Note the lengthening of the vowel of the feminine morpheme of the verbally used active participle when followed by an object suffix, probably in analogy to the 2nd p. sg. f. /-tī/ in the perfect.

¹⁶ A kind of pseudo-construct state, used in direct discourse; cf. *hadīk l-iblād* a few lines before.

16. *gāmu ṫalu maṣāri w-haṭṭūlu – gālat ibtaṣrif inni ʔana lli ʔaṣmētu hāda*¹⁷? – *gālha kēf? – gālat ʔaġa ḥalayyi nhār w-anā mšallaha – w-rašagt šaṣri ḥalayyi min xōf la-yšūfni – ramēt mahramit ṭaylasān ḥala wiġħu w-inṣama.*

Now they took forth money and gave it to him. She said, ‘Do you know that it was me who made this man blind?’ He said to her, ‘But how?’ She said, ‘He came to me one day when I was undressed, and I covered my body with my hair lest he saw me. I threw the *taylasan* scarf into his eyes and he became blind.’

17. *gāmat – gām – w-gālatlu raġġu – raġġu ḥa-d-dār – ʔaxadu w-raġġaṣu ḥala d-dār – lamma raġġaṣu ḥala d-dār hināk ġābat mahramit iṭ-ṭaylasān – b-ard halli kān ḫarbatu fīha – w-raddat mashatu ḥalaf u-gāl – mashat ɻuyūnu winnu mfatteh – w-raġġaṣu ɻindu – w-salāmtak yā mister hekki.*

She got up, and he got up. She said, ‘Take him back home.’ Ali took him and brought him back home. When he had brought him back home there, she brought the *taylasan* scarf - *that happened in the country in which she had hit him with it*. Now she again swept the scarf over his eyes - he swore and said the *basmala* - and when she swept his eyes, his sight was restored, and Ali took him back to his house. And peace be upon you, Mr. Heikki.

Notes

The scene of the story is typically Transjordanian. The only fixed point is the spring of el-Mgēri near el-Karak, east of the Dead Sea. Mayy lives here as a villager, in close contact with the neighbouring Bedouin. Ali is also a villager, living in a house surrounded by a garden and patches of fields. The villages are separated from each other by a vast desert, “forty days on horseback”. In a Bedouin story the messenger would most probably have ridden a camel.

Analysed according to the scheme developed by Labov and Waletzky,¹⁸ sections 1 to 9 may be called the orientation, in which the characters are introduced and the scene and setting of the action are presented. It is followed by the complication (sections 10 to 13): after the long trip, the messenger’s honesty and Mayy’s virginity are suspected, the messenger takes offence and disappears. In sections 12 and 13 it appears to the listener that Mayy really does not even recognize the messenger, not to mention closer relations with him. Section 14 starts the third component, the resolution, which ends in climax (section 17): the

¹⁷ The demonstrative pronoun is epexegetically used, without the preposition as in the Northern Syrian and Iraqi dialects that make use of an anticipatory pronominal object plus *li-* plus epexegetical object.

¹⁸ Labov & Waletzky 1967: 12-44.

restoration of the messenger's sight by the magic power of Mayy's *taylasan* scarf proves her and the messenger's honesty.

Linguistically, in the prose sections the narrator speaks her own sedentary Balgāwi dialect with only a few Bedouinizing devices typical of narrative style. Thus, having used the form *ṣugub faṭra ṭawīlē* 'after a long time' in section 12, in 14 she pronounces it in the Bedouin way *ṣugub faṭra ṭuwīlē*. In the prose section 12, she uses the interrogative pronoun *šu* of her own idiolect (*šu sār* 'what had happened'), whereas in the poetic part 10 she naturally uses the Bedouin equivalent *wuš* (*wuš-lī biha* 'what do I have in common with her?').

The language of the poetic passages follows the structure traditionally used in the so-called Nabaṭi poetry, related to the North Arabian Bedouin dialects of the ḪAnazi and Šammari types. In this style, one of the most marked syntactic features is the use of the *tanwīn* in certain positions.¹⁹ In this text it appears three times in an indefinite correlate followed by an asyndetic relative clause: *garīrtin laffat ḥalayyi lṭāmha* 4 'a bashful girl who covered herself from my eyes'; *ṣbāwītin mā yinhawābha* 7 'a young girl with whom no one had fallen in love yet'; *lēltin ḥiġilha min riġilha tagg mirċabi* 'one night when an anklet of hers hit my saddle'¹¹; in two cases in an indefinite substantive followed by a prepositional phrase: *w-irsāltin ... min ḥali* 'a letter from Ali' 6; *b-fēhtin bi-ṣadābha* 'in an open desert with its perils' 7; and in one case in an indefinite substantive followed by an adjectival attribute: *b-lēltin ḫalma* 'in a dark night' 11. The stylistic difference is sharply marked: in the prose passages there are no cases of the *tanwīn*, whereas in the poems it is used systematically.

Also lexically, the poetic passages are of Bedouin type. Thus, *lifa* 'to come' 7 and *w-ila* 'and look, there was' 4 (which corresponds to the Cl.Ar. *?idā*) are Bedouin items, while the vowel of the initial syllable in *siwa* 4 and *alli* 9 follows the Bedouin type. The same holds true of *ḡiwābha* 6, which might have called forth the Bedouin form *ḡiwāb* 2 (instead of *ḡawāb*) also in prose. Also *mimša* 1 in the first prose section follows Bedouin vocalism. The word *ṭāriš* 'messenger' 2 is a Bedouin term, and in the same context the narrator uses the verb *arsal* 'to send', which does not belong to the local sedentary dialect.

It might seem surprising that *badawi* 5 is used in the poem, instead of the Bedouin form *bduwi*. It has, however, to be borne in mind that the Bedouin syllable structure CVCVCV- → CCVCV- is a purely synchronic process which does not surface in poetry.

¹⁹ Palva 1992: 140-142. The feature is also well known from many substandard Middle Arabic texts, see Blau 1981: 167-212.

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What kind of Arabic and why? Language in Egyptian blogs

Gail Ramsay¹
Uppsala University

Abstract

This article strives to set in motion comprehensive research on the ways in which Arabic is evolving in Arabic blogs and computer mediated communication (CMC). By combining media studies, sociolinguistics and literature it examines code choice, content and mode of representation in five top ranked Egyptian blogs. We distinguish between MSA, ECA and mixed varieties and establish that all three codes may be employed. We argue that bloggers make deliberate choices regarding code, and that code-switching in CMC may function as frames for familiarizing or officialdom. We conclude that bloggers with an activist agenda tend to use ECA and a mixed variety, and educational blogs tend to use MSA and a mixed variety. Both activist and educational bloggers may employ a Bakhtinian carnivalesque mode of representation.

Keywords: Arabic blogs, code choice, the carnivalesque

Introduction

This article is part of a larger project situated in the field of media studies in which the top ten most well-linked and visited Arabic and English language blogs in Lebanon, Egypt and Kuwait are studied during the pre-revolutionary period of April 2009 - April 2010.² One of the questions investigated in this research is the ways in which blogs challenge the linguistic norms of written Arabic discourse. By combining lessons learned from studying the Arabic blogosphere in media studies with sociolinguistic and literary theory, the present article aims to shed light on how five top ranked Arabic language bloggers from Egypt choose to express themselves in their posts. To this end we set out from the vantage point that blogs constitute a domain for expression in a variety of codes, albeit being communicated in writing, electronically.³ We ask which factors prompt the choice of linguistic code by Egyptian bloggers and how they express themselves in their

¹ E-mail address: gail.ramsay@lingfil.uu.se

² Riegert and Ramsay 2009.

³ These codes have been defined as follows: (1) MSA (Modern Standard Arabic), corresponding to Charles Ferguson's (1959) High variety (H); (2) ECA (Egyptian Colloquial Arabic), corresponding to Charles A. Ferguson's (1959) Low variety (L) and (3) Mixed varieties: (a) basically ECA, (b) basically MSA, (c) MSA with insertions from ECA, (d) ECA with insertions from MSA and (e) a mixture of MSA and ECA (Bassiouny 2006: 27). In 2009 Bassiouny applied her classification in gendered Saudi, Lebanese, Egyptian and Syrian contexts (Bassiouny 2009: 162-185). Cf. Mejdell 2008: 121.

posts. Ultimately, this article strives to set in motion in-depth as well as broad and comprehensive research on the ways in which Arabic is evolving in blogs and CMC (computer mediated communication). Furthermore, establishing valid theories and efficient methods for studying the Arabic blogosphere with respect to linguistic code is a substantial task yet to be carried out. Considering that the question of language variety in the Arabic speaking world has far reaching implications ranging from politics and religion to gender and class, coming to terms with this problematic is all the more urgent.

Blogging is often an expression of a personal vision, thoughts, opinions and local interests and calls to mind a more relaxed presentation than that which we would expect in a piece of Arabic writing which traditionally requires Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).⁴ I have elsewhere demonstrated that electronic communication over the internet may combine features from oral expression with those of writing and has blurred the borderline between speech and writing in Arabic.⁵ Therefore, not surprisingly, many Arab bloggers tend to write in their spoken varieties of Arabic, their dialect, or mix dialect with MSA.⁶ As observed by Gunvor Mejdell: “The younger generation employs the vernacular (and other languages) in blogs and other web productions.”⁷ It should also be pointed out that Mejdell positions MSA as the dominant variety for writing Arabic and that “vernacular trends are at least not yet in a position to dethrone the beautiful language” (of MSA).⁸

While acknowledging that there exist at least “three different varieties of Arabic in each Arab country”, as expressed by Reem Bassiouney, we will in this article distinguish broadly between Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Egyptian dialect/Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) as distinct code levels.⁹ In addition, we will speak of mixed variety/mixed variety without further distinguishing between the mixed varieties as specified by Bassiouney.¹⁰

In the vein of Bassiouney’s findings I argue that Egyptian bloggers make strategic and deliberate choices regarding whether to express themselves in ECA or in MSA, the last mentioned usually with insertions of dialect (mixed variety).¹¹

⁴ Douai 2009: 133-149.

⁵ Ramsay 2007: 185-189 and Ramsay 2010.

⁶ Riegert and Ramsay 2012.

⁷ Mejdell 2008: 121.

⁸ Mejdell 2008: 122.

⁹ Reference is here made to Bassiouney’s wording that the unspecified term “Arabic” may mean Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which is normally used in newspapers and literature, the language of the Koran which is often referred to as Classical Arabic or one of the spoken varieties, the dialects which are the mother tongues of the inhabitants of the Arab countries (Bassouney 2009: 1). Cf. Bassouney 2006: 24.

¹⁰ Bassouney 2006: 27.

¹¹ Cf. Bassouney 2006: 234: “I argue that the speaker is the one who chooses the code to use ... I... place the emphasis on the speaker.”

Bassiouney also found that code-switching in literature does not reflect reality but rather, re-defines and reconstructs the identity of the protagonist as well as of the author. This observation is significant for our discussion on the Egyptian bloggers with respect to how they view themselves and frame their narrative.¹² The ways in which bloggers challenge what is thought to be acceptable public representation will be discussed against the backdrop of Mikail Bakthin's concept of the carnivalesque.¹³

As far as Egyptian bloggers are concerned they have been accustomed to encountering the spoken variety in print literature since the middle of the last century, something which may have a bearing on the apparent ease with which ECA is an acceptable code in a majority of the blogs.¹⁴ This situation has a bearing on Hoda Elsadda's findings. She studied social transformation and political mobilization among women bloggers in Egypt and described how three popular blogs by Egyptian women were picked up by the publishing house Dar al-Shorouq (*Dār ash-Shurūq*) in Cairo and republished and distributed as novels.¹⁵ This resulted in a cross-over from the electronic to the print medium while retaining the literary representation and linguistic code in which the original, computer-mediated blogposts were rendered.

Bassiouney's and Mejdel's findings on code-switching (CS) and mixing of varieties in speech and Jannis Androutsopoulos' observations on CS online in CMC and computer-mediated discourse (CMD), will also be considered here.¹⁶ This means it is the speaker who selects the code rather than being the question of the situation calling for which variety to use.¹⁷ Drawing on this observation, Bassiouney found that media negotiates the relationship between MSA and ECA and creates "sites for the negotiation of identities" by bringing public content into the privacy of the home and taking private content to the public view to both local and global audiences.¹⁸ She concluded that "code-switching is used by both men and women as a linguistic device to leave the utmost effect possible on the audience."¹⁹ The code of the private sphere is a spoken variety. The blog, however, is a medium which makes the private public (if the blogger so chooses)

¹² Bassiouney has observed that "... the use of vernacular in literature is more than just a construction of an identity of a protagonist, it also reflects the attitude, political affiliations, and ideologies of an author." (Bassiouney 2010: 104, 107-108).

¹³ Bakhtin in Morris (ed.) 1994: 198-199, 203, 212-213, as applied by Thompson 2009: 213-232.

¹⁴ Bassiouney 2006: 13.

¹⁵ Elsadda 2010: 312-315, 328.

¹⁶ Bassiouney 2006 and 2009 esp. 10-27 and 2020; Mejdel 2008: 108-124; Androutsopoulos 2011: 1, 3.

¹⁷ Bassiouney 2006: 13, 234.

¹⁸ Bassiouney 2009: 171.

¹⁹ Bassiouney 2009: 185.

and the question which arises is what impact this situation may have with respect to code in CMD in blogs.²⁰

Mejdell treats factors challenging John Eisele's four "cultural tropes" of unity, purity, continuity and competition which call for the use of MSA referring to "[A] new source of corruption: *lughat ash-shabāb*". This "source of corruption" entails "the uses of shortened mixed codes on SMS texts and chat, as well as a new jargon spreading among urban youth... a new language in their conversations on the net and the mobile..."²¹ Mejpell's findings on code-switching and mixing of varieties largely coincide with those of Bassiouney and include the following observation which has a bearing on our analyses of CMD in blogs:

...even highly educated Egyptian academics with a high level of linguistic competence, when talking to an audience on cultural and social matters, prefer strategies of code-switching and mixing of varieties, to regular standard Arabic...²²

Androutsopoulos conducted research on CS in CMC in various modes of production including blogs, E-mail, forums, chats and Internet Relay Chat (IRC) (synchronous) and languages such as German/Greek, Turkish/German and standard German/dialect. He suggests that CS is conceived as a contextualization cue, a resource used by the participants in a CMC to frame their interpretations of what is being said.²³ Androutsopoulos' findings on CS support the observations of Bassiouney and Mejpell that the bloggers may be prompted to use specific codes in their blogs to enhance and adapt their message to the intended audience in order to attract its attention. Relevant to the blogosphere is also that the lack of visual signals such as those of a speech situation, i.e. "ordinary contextualization cues" such as prosody, gaze and posture may be delegated to other signals one of them being CS.²⁴

To be sure, blogs are aimed at a reading/viewing audience and are therefore reminiscent of a more traditional written CS than CS in synchronous CMC such as IRC, chatrooms and Instant Messaging. In this article we take the inclusive stance developed by Androutsopoulos that blogs may be considered as sites for bilingual, "non-conversational discourse". To be precise, internet communication, among which are blogs, are situated in a vaguely delimited sphere between the spoken word, such as telephone conversations and the written, "non-

²⁰ This question awaits further investigation. One of the questions posed in the interviews conducted with the bloggers was: "The Social media have prompted debates about where the boundaries between the public and the private are drawn. What are your thoughts as a blogger, on these blurred boundaries?"

²¹ Mejpell refers to John Eisele in 2008: 109-110. For citation, see Mejpell 2008: 115.

²² Mejpell 2008: 121.

²³ Androutsopoulos 2011: 7.

²⁴ Androutsopoulos 2011: 3.

“conversational discourse” such as letter-writing and diaries.²⁵ Hence, the blogposts which will be discussed in this article have been typed with a keyboard, edited and published by a single author, the blogger. They have been diffused electronically on the internet, and they are intended for broad but specific audiences.²⁶

In June 2009, when Bruce Etling *et. al.* identified some 35,000 blogs in the “Arabic blogosphere” they found that “several thousand” mix Arabic, English and French.²⁷ Whether this is due to easier availability of computer technology in English, hopes for greater visibility (especially with NGOs and human rights organizations), or bloggers’ occupations or socio-economic status, requires further investigation.²⁸ Speaking primarily of the choice between Arabic and English or French, Aziz Douai goes as far as to propose that the linguistic styles of expression in Arabic blogs constitute an “intractable source of friction”. His observation that the bloggers’ choice of language is connected to the “issue of the primary audience they wish to target,” corresponds to Bassiouney’s line of reasoning regarding code-switching in speech which emphasizes the conscious act of the speaker who may accommodate the code to the audience.²⁹ With this said, it may be noted that a recent trend among the Egyptian and Kuwaiti bloggers which have been analyzed in the larger project on which this article is based, is

²⁵ Androutsopoulos 2011: 4. Lenze 2012: 59; Ramsay 2007: 185-189.

²⁶ Androutsopoulos 2011: 4. Lenze has elaborated on this situation: “Without an editor or copy-editor, every writer decides individually which variety of language to use and how important it is to stick to conventions of grammar, spelling and diction... even reposted stories are left uncorrected in spelling and grammar ... that creates an impression of immediateness and urgency (2012: 59).”

²⁷ Etling *et. al.* based their social network and link analysis on the 6,451 “most connected” blogs and made note of the fact that 16,7% in the cluster they call the English ‘bridge’ were Arabic-speakers living outside the Arab world. Notably, the majority living inside the region still used English as their main language (2009: 3, 20). Amna Al-Arfaj studied two women bloggers in the Persian Gulf and found that the preferred mode of linguistic expression was “a combination of languages - English (British), transliterated Khaleeji Arabic, and Modern Standard Arabic (Al-Arfaj 2010: 100).” With “transliterated Arabic” Al-Arfaj refers to a popular variety in CMC which is Arabic with Latin letters combined with numbers to make up for the Arabic phonemes for which there are no Latin letter equivalents. This variety, “Arabish”, is especially designed for computer use and facilitates writing transliterated Arabic. See Palfreyman and al-Khalil 2003. For the popularised Latin script used for Arabic in electronic text messaging and CMC see entry “Arabic Chat Alphabet” in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_chat_alphabet and for “Arabish” see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabish>. Last retrieved January, 2013.

²⁸ Riepert and Ramsay 2012: 2. Focusing on a problem she formulates as “The minimal use of the Arabic language by Egyptian Internet users” and the “problem of lack of Arabic content on the Internet”, Rasha A. Abdullah points out a number of factors inhibiting the creation of Arabic content online, one of which is that “...students may become familiar with the Latin-character keyboard as they do their programming assignments... (Abdullah 2009: 132, 134-135).” Douai makes reference to this same situation: “... the use of English is not very surprising since the Internet has been predominantly English language tilted (2009: 147).” Cf. Warschauer *et al.* 2002: 8-10. Warschauer *et al.*, who studied language choice online among Egyptian professionals aged 24-36 summarized the reasons for the use of English under four principal points: (1) Dominance of English in professional milieux, (2) lack of Arabic software standards, (3) computer and internet use learned in English environments and (4) early adopters of online habits were fluent in English.

²⁹ Douai 2009: 147. “... the use of English is not very surprising since the Internet has been predominantly English language tilted. Cf. Bassiouney 2006: 13, 234.

that bloggers who were previously blogging in English have switched to blogging in Arabic.³⁰

The Egyptian top bloggers discussed here use Arabic script whatever code they express themselves in. As far as the print media and daily newspapers are concerned, Julia Ashtiany proposes that we speak of a “journalese” variety of MSA as proper for Arabic massmedia, a style which largely adheres to MSA grammatically but which stylistically and lexically is adapted to factors such as national, political realities and global influence.³¹ This is a reflection of Karin Ryding’s observation that MSA is useful for journalistic expression since it has a flexible word order, is open to loan translations from western languages and creating compound words and complex concepts with the *idāfa*.³² This may have some bearing on the choice of code for three of the Arabic language bloggers included in this study, all of whom have relationships to news organizations: ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Maḥmūd was one of the prominent young Muslim Brotherhood bloggers during our period of study and left the organization when he was hired by Al-Jazeera as a producer in January 2011. World renowned blogger Wael Abbas (*Wā'il Abbās*) has freelanced for Western newspapers and worked for the German news agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa) and Nawara Negm (*Nawwāra Najm*) has worked as a translator for Egyptian state television and writes a column for the daily *al-Dustour (ad-Dustūr)*.

Blogs may be designed and personalized in a vast number of ways the limits being set by the given layout structures in the blog platform used by the blogger and the blogger’s fantasy. As a consequence, the discussions and analyses of the blogposts in this article have not been streamlined according to a single, specific pattern. Rather, the discussions have been shaped by the format of the blog, the blogger’s way of presenting posts, the content and in some cases, the comments section has been considered for further illustration. We are also guided by remarks made by the bloggers in interviews with them. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured and contained a set of 25 open questions to which the bloggers could respond, elaborate on and give their own background and analyses. In this article, the answers given to the interview question, “What language do you prefer to use in your blog? Why?” is of particular interest. In short, the setting of the

³⁰ Egyptian blogger Mahmoud Salem (Sandmonkey) blogged in English in his blog “Rantings of Sandmonkey” (sandmonkey.org) as did Kuwaiti blogger Reem Alshammari (Chillout Kuwait) in her blog “Q80-ChillGirl” (chilloutkuwait.blogspot.com) at the time of collecting the blogs. Both have switched to blogging in Arabic.

³¹ Ashtiany 1993: esp. 54-61.

³² Ashtiany 1993: 3; Ryding 2005: 5-9. Bassiouney refers to Ryding and elaborates saying that “the journalistic style of MSA has more flexible word order, coinage of neologisms and loan translations from western languages” (Bassiouney 2009: 12).

blog and preferences of the blogger regarding presentation of the posts have guided the structure of our analysis. It may also be noted that all personal statements and remarks given by the bloggers and presented in this article refer to these interviews if not stated otherwise.³³

As little editing as possible has been carried out in the Arabic language quotations from the blogposts presented in this article. I have limited myself to comments on code and only inserted *sic* followed by a corrective between brackets after spelling errors when required for clarity. In translations to English of Arabic quotations my aim has been to convey the Arabic as straightforwardly and clearly as possible while setting aside literary elegance.

As far as transcription is concerned, I have largely followed the conventions used for transliterating Arabic into English in literary studies and omitted the glottal stop of *hamzat al-qat'* in the beginning of a phrase or when located in the beginning of a single, lexical item. Based on the discussions on theory above, I have primarily followed three guidelines when describing the linguistic style and code choice in blog posts: (1) The pronounced choice of the bloggers (as given in the interview); (2) The context (the Egyptian blogosphere); (3) The blogosphere as constituting a domain in which MSA, ECA and Mixed varieties are acceptable and; (4) Lexical items, grammar and phrase structures denoting MSA or ECA.

The selection of posts from which examples have been drawn is represented by every 10th post during April 2009 – April 2010.³⁴ Beginning with the earliest post in the selection they have been examined for illustrative examples rather than systematically coded. The blogs were from major blog aggregators such as the albawaba portal (albawaba.com) and The Egyptian Blogs Aggregator (omraneya.net) as well as blog rolls of active blogs in these aggregators. An initial collection of personal, non-commercial blogs resulted in a list of 293 blogs. These were subjected to a Link Impact Search with LexiURL searcher in order to establish which blogs attracted the highest number of domains linking to them.³⁵ The most well-linked blogs were compared with Alexa.com ranking for number of page-views. By comparing the 30 most visited blogs with the 30 most linked-to, a list of top ten blogs, five of which were in English and five of which were in Arabic, was established. In this article we will consider posts from the five highest ranked Arabic language blogs during the afore-mentioned period.

³³ For full names of these bloggers, title of blog, its web-site, number of in-linking domains and place and date of interview, see Appendix at the end of this article.

³⁴ The blogs were identified during 2010 by Egyptian renowned social media activist, blogger, micro-blogger and medical doctor Mina Zekri, to whom we express our gratitude and appreciation for his professional assistance. Zekri has also conducted the searches for blogs and their popularity ranking for the larger project on which it is based.

³⁵ Thelwall 2009.

The bloggers

The bloggers whose texts are studied here are still active in various social media platforms. They have, however, either started new blogs, switched to micro-blogging, created their own web-based sites for news or literary creativity or communicate with their networks through a combination of social media portals such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr and Pinterest.

All five present various types of criticism of Egyptian society from perspectives colored by their ideology, background, social environment and personalized layout techniques. Wael Abbas is an activist of long standing and blogs for human rights, freedom of speech and processes of democratization in his blog *al-Wa'y al-Misrī*, on the website misrdigital.blogspirit.com.

Nawara Negm is a pan-Arab nationalist activist with criticism directed towards the Mubarak regime, its Western supporters and Israel, and her blog, *Jabhat at-tahyīs ash-sha'bīyya*, is located on tahyees.blogspot.com.

Taking on the role of an entertainer and educator in his blog, *Late Night Stories – Ḥakāwī Ākhar al-Layl*, on the website shokeir.blogspot.com, Ahmed Shokeir (*Aḥmad Shuqayr*) calls himself liberal and criticizes the corruption of governmental organization and bureaucracy.

In his blog *Anā Ikhwān*, on ana-ikhwan.blogspot.com, former Muslim brother Abdel Moneim Mahmoud ('Abd al-Mun'im Maḥmūd) aims to familiarize the readership with the Muslim Brothers. He strives to educate the reader about the ideas, standpoints and actions of the Brothers while indirectly criticizing the Mubarak regime and State Security apparatus for mistreating Brotherhood members.

As for Ashraf al-Anany (*Ashraf al-'Anānī*), he is a Bedouin from Sinai whose express aim is to educate the readers about the Bedouin and their circumstances in this region, the maltreatment and injustice they have experienced under the hands of the Egyptian government and make known their plight to the readership. His blog, *Sīnā' haythu anā* (Sinai is where I am), has been made inaccessible on the internet.³⁶

Of these five top ranked Egyptian Arabic language bloggers during April 2009 – April 2010, Wael Abbas and Nawara Negm were occasionally posting video clips, images or texts in their blogs up to the end of 2012. In the following, we will refer to the bloggers according to how they are best known on social media platforms and the way in which their names often are rendered on the

³⁶ In an e-mail dated July 17th 2012 Ashraf al-Anany informed the present author that he had closed his blog after the Revolution of January 25th 2011 in order to devote himself to writing and publishing poetry.

internet in Latin script: Wael Abbas, Nawara Negm, Ahmed Shokeir, Abdel Moneim Mahmoud and Ashraf al-Anany.

Wael Abbas in *al-Wa'y al-Misrī* on misrdigital.blogspirit.com

A blogger since 2004, Wael Abbas is one of the pivotal Egyptian bloggers and media activists who led the way towards the method of cooperation between mainstream media and activist bloggers in the buildup towards the Revolution of 25 January 2011, also referred to as the Lotus Revolution.³⁷ His posts are known to include video clips and images such as photos, posters and cartoons while texts may function as captions or a request to comment on the imagery.

With a university degree in English language and literature, having worked as the Middle East correspondent for Deutsche Presse-Agentur and having written a column for the Egyptian opposition paper *al-Dustour*, as well as op-ads for electronic as well as print papers, Wael Abbas commands MSA with ease. Nonetheless, he makes a point of using ECA in his posts.

When asked, “Do you write in Egyptian Arabic?” Wael Abbas responds, “Yeah, yeah.” He explains that his readership is “from all over the Arab world. They are either Egyptians working and living there or they are Arabs... just reading the blog.” Above all, his blog is directed towards his fellow Egyptians: “... my target audience is Egyptians, young Egyptians, university students, school students. These are people I’m seeking to interact with.” As for citizens of other Arab countries, “...the rest of the Arab world, they can read Egyptian Arabic, so it’s not a problem for them.”

Wael Abbas sees his use of the Egyptian spoken variety in his posts as an act of resistance in as much as that “Classical Arabic” is “the language of the elite, the intelligence... It’s the language of the Koran...” To Wael Abbas, the situation of diglossia has a negative impact on the process of democratization, since only the educated elite commands the “high” variety of the language:

...that’s one of the justifications that I’m using ... Egyptian Arabic, because I always attack the people who use Classical Arabic, especially when they use very sophisticated language with expressions that are rarely understood in the street. So, the common people don’t understand...

Drawing a parallel between Arabic literary expression and blogs, similarly to Arab authors who may employ MSA or a dialect as a “political statement” or to create a certain atmosphere or feeling in the reader, Wael Abbas intentionally lets

³⁷ Ramsay 2009: 57-58; 2010 and Khatib 2013: 129-130.

ECA color his text.³⁸ He also is known to use indecent words and expressions of indecorousness which may reflect a lack of respect for linguistic norms affiliated with print texts. This strategy emerges as “a symbolically meaningful mode of representation with a long tradition in literary and folk culture – what Mikhail Bakhtin described as the carnivalesque”. It includes the “low” language of the marketplace with its billingsgate and vulgarities.³⁹

Wael Abbas blogs for political modernity including democracy, secular society and human rights and is known as an activist who is critical of conservative trends of Islamization. He uses ECA and a mixed variety in order to fulfill his aim which is to be read by a broad spectrum of the Arab readership in his country and outside.⁴⁰ This being the case, he carries his argument for choice of code further while proposing that the “Islamists are successful because they are speaking the language of the masses. They are speaking this language in the mosque and people can understand them easily...” In other words, Wael Abbas, in his capacity as an Egyptian blogger, challenges the boundaries defining diglossia in the Arab world as specified by Ferguson in 1959, striking from two sides.⁴¹ He, himself, uses ECA or a mixed variety in his posts because he wants to reach the broadest audience possible. But he also reproaches the same “elite” of which he is critical and who command the “language of the Koran” of doing the same, orally, in “the mosque.”

Consider the following excerpts from from Wael Abbas’ post on August 20th 2009.⁴² The title of the post is *at-Tuhma biyidawwin* meaning “The accusation is he blogs” in ECA, with *biyidawwin* reflecting the aspectual/mood marker *b* affiliated with a number of Arabic dialects of which Egyptian dialect is one. Beneath the heading is a photo of a laptop followed by a text in which Wael Abbas explains that his laptop has been confiscated by State Security:

³⁸ Bassiouney 2010: 111. In her analysis of Bahā’ Tāhir’s *al-Hubb fī al-manfā* (Love in Exile) Bassiouney demonstrated that the author uses MSA as a detachment device “to reflect the feelings of exile and nostalgia that dominate the novel”.

³⁹ Thompson 2009: 214. Cf. Morris 1994: 203-204 and Riepert and Ramsay 2012: 8. An illuminating example is a tweet from January 15th 2013 in which Wael Abbas scolded one of the activists for behaving foolishly: “My dear young activist, as long as you don’t know what to do, you ass, don’t do anything stupid like you!!!” In a followup tweet he continued: “...it’s enough shit already.” Cf. the popular Lebanese blogger Hummus Nation who is known for his carnivalesque style and who has named the section in his blog in which he proposes to treat politics “Siyāsa wa-’akl kharā (*sic* سخراً)” (Politics and eating shit). <http://www.hummusnation.net>. Last retrieved in January 2013.

⁴⁰ When asked how he goes about writing in ECA taking into account that there is no single standard for this variety he responded: “I’m making my own standards.” Cf. Bassiouney 2010: 107-108.

⁴¹ Situations in which the “High” language of MSA (H) is regarded as appropriate, include written texts, news broadcasts, sermons in a mosque, speech in parliament and political speech. (Ferguson 1959: 329).

⁴² <http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com/archive/2009/08/index.html>. Last retrieved in January 2013.

I'd just recently bought it [it was] new, not more than a number of months ago.
 كنت لسه شاريه جديد ما بقاليش كام شهر

His new laptop, only a few months old, he continues, is now

crouching in some corner in one of the State Security investigation centers after the minions, thieves and swindlers of the Customs Authority sequestered and stole it on the authority of the State Security bastards, claiming that they were going to display it in the Technical Section as the first of its kind in Egypt... despite this the Technical Section flatly denies that they have received my computer from the Customs Authority...

لاب توبى الذي يقع في مكان ما في أحد مقرات مباحث أمن الدولة بعد أن
 قام دلائل وحرامية ونصابين مصلحة الجمارك بمصادرته وسرقته بأوامر
 من خولات أمن الدولة بزعم عرضه على المصنفات الفنية في سابقة هي
 الأولى من نوعها في مصر... وعلى الرغم من ذلك تنفي المصنفات الفنية
 تلقيهم لجهازى من الجمارك نهائيا...

After this explanatory caption for the photo of his laptop, the rest of this post is a poem about the “Dark-skinned lad who was arrested on the accusation ‘He blogs’” by Mayāda Midḥat, herself a longstanding blogger in her blog *Muwāṭina Miṣriyya* (An Egyptian Citizen).⁴³

The introductory line which has been translated as “I'd just recently bought it (it was) new, not more than a number of months ago” gives us an idea of Wael Abbas' code. We make note of the lexical items of *lissa* (here interpreted as “just recently”) and common in several dialects, *mā ba ’alīsh* (here interpreted as “not more”), an expression usually affiliated with the Egyptian dialect and *kām* (here interpreted as “a number of”) which in MSA would be rendered *kam*. This introductory phrase is in its entirety a personal reflection on the situation at hand – one of numerous similar narratives to which Wael Abbas' readers have become acquainted throughout the years. Throughout his blog the narratives of his posts are posited on the two basic foundation stones of familiarization and officialdom, the first attracting the reader's sympathy and the second prompting his or her indignation.

In the following passage we make note of the lexical items “my laptop” – *lāb tūbī* and “minions” – *dalādīl* which are not usually affiliated with MSA. Clearly, this longish passage with Wael Abbas' standards is not heavily strewn

⁴³ <http://mmedhat24.maktoobblog.com>. Last retrieved in January 2013.

with typical ECA items. This is also in keeping with the framing of the narrative since Wael Abbas is “giving a report” of the misconduct, not to say abuse acted out by a state authority, and a more official tone is therefore in place. This strategy is similar to that of the Lebanese blogger Hummus Nation who uses MSA “and the authority that comes with it to mock and criticize Lebanese officialdom and society.”⁴⁴ This concise “report” of state misconduct gives rise to the reader’s indignation. It also comes across as ironic in a phrase such as “...claiming that they were going to display it in the Technical Section as the first of its kind in Egypt”. We may take this to hint at the backwardness of the “Technical Section” of Egypt’s Customs Authority who either has not heretofore seen a laptop such as this one, or who believes that the Egyptians have not seen a laptop like this before.

A few introductory stanzas from the poem by Mayāda Midhat read:

They detained the dark-skinned lad.
The accusation was ‘he blogs.’
He said, yeah, its keyboard is
stubborn
and the screen supplies provisions –
ideas from foreign lands,
and beauty of foreign lands
which charges our people.

جزوا الولد الاسمر
والتهمة بيدون
قال ايه كيبورده عند
وشاشاته بتمون
أفكار بلاد بره
وجمال بلاد بره
وفي شعبنا بيشن

The final stanzas read:

What are you accused of, my son?
I am accused of blogging.
And who is she, too, my sister?
They took her while she was
blogging!
What a pit of hellish injustice.
But keep on – blog!

ايه تهمتك يا ابني
انا تهمتى مدون
ودى مين كمان ياخلى؟
! ظبطوها بتدون
غور يا جحيم الظلم
ويار زمان .. دون

⁴⁴ Riegert and Ramsay 2012: 12.

Arabic poetry of today may either be expressed in MSA or be created and delivered in a spoken variety.⁴⁵ Notably, the leftist Egyptian poet Ahmed Fouad Negm (Ahmad Fu'ad Najm), who is the father of one of the bloggers, included in the selection which we are studying, Nawara Negm, is one of the famous dialect poets of today. This is not, however, the place to delve into a literary analysis of the poem “The accusation is he blogs” by Mayāda Midhat. It may suffice here to point out that her poem is communicated in Wael Abbas’ blog in ECA, it expresses the urgency of the situation in the blogger’s society with regard to the lack of freedom of speech, a situation that is especially grave for bloggers since they may be arrested “while blogging”. Despite the “hellish injustice” reigning in society, the importance of activism is underlined and bloggers are challenged to keep on blogging.

Wael Abbas’ blog also confirms the suitability of a “journalese” variety of MSA for Arabic mass media, a style which largely adheres to MSA grammatically and to which we have made reference above. This is also a variety affiliated with officialdom. On 22 January 2010, Wael Abbas’ post constitutes a lengthy statement aimed at making public the rough treatment that a number of bloggers and social media activists, including himself, received at the hands of the State Security apparatus on January 15th and 16th 2010. This group of 29 human rights activists had travelled to Nag Hammadi. Their intention was to show their support for and extend their condolences to the Coptic community there which had lost six members, when they had been targeted from the back-seat windows of cars on January 7th 2010.⁴⁶ This post is headed by a photo from inside a prisoner transport vehicle with barred gaps for windows and the caption *Bayān al-ā'idūn* (*sic!*) *min Nag' Hammādī*, meaning “Statement by those returning from Nag Hammadi.” A short introduction in MSA explains the purpose of the post:

In the name of all of the male and female activists and bloggers who were abducted and arrested in Nag Hammadi in the morning of Friday, January 15th 2010, we publish this statement in order to clarify the facts.

باسم كل الناشطين والناشطات والمدونين الذين تم اختطافهم واعتقالهم في
نبع حمادي صباح الجمعة 15 يناير 2010 نصدر هذا البيان أيضاً للحقائق.

This post is delivered in a form resembling an official statement and therefore, according to the index of suitability established by Ferguson and confirmed by

⁴⁵ Cf. the increasingly popular colloquial *Nabaṭī* poetry prevalent in the Gulf states which is an example of a revival of a traditional cultural expression of the region.

⁴⁶ <http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com/archive/2010/01/index.html>. Last retrieved in January 2013.

others, the suitable code would be MSA.⁴⁷ That Arab news media usually requires MSA, may have inspired the blogger to hyper-correct the active participle in the caption – *al-‘ā’idūn* – “those returning”. Being in the construct state here this item should have been rendered *al-‘ā’idīn* – in the oblique (genitive) case. This type of error may also be referred to the fact that the blogger functions as both author and editor, implying that spelling and grammatical mistakes easily make their way into a blog post.

Abdel Moneim Mahmoud in *Anā Ikhwān* on ana-ikhwan.blogspot.com

There are two conceptual pivots upon which the linguistic style of Abdel Moneim Mahmoud’s blog texts turn, the first being that of his goal to “express what the Muslim Brotherhood is about,” and the second, to do so in a manner of solidarity with the progressive, younger generation of the Brethren.⁴⁸ His blog is *Anā Ikhwān*, which can be interpreted as “I am a Brotherhood (member)”. He introduces himself as

An Egyptian journalist, graduate of the school of the Muslim Brothers who loves Egypt dearly, and who hates corruption and despotism.⁴⁹

صحفي مصرى ابن مدرسة الإخوان المسلمين دايب فى حب مصر وبيكره
الفساد والإستبداد.

This text, constituting the blogger’s brief introduction of himself, is positioned in the profile frame “About me” offered by Google’s platform for blogs. It is therefore meant to be a more personal piece of communication than the reports of the “official business” of the Brethren. Similarly to the familiarizing text snippets by Wael Abbas, this information is positioned within the blurred boundaries of the written print media calling for MSA on the one hand, and that of the personal, introductory chitchat in a blog in which the blogger may choose a spoken variety on the other.

⁴⁷ “Discourse which openly challenges the ‘dominant regime of authority’ and promotes the status of ‘Āmmiyya (the spoken variety, present author’s remark), is still rarely found in the media” (Mejdell 2008: 116). Cf. Bassiouney 2009: 13 and Ashtiany who says “The basic vocabulary and syntax of Media Arabic are the same as those of Modern Standard Arabic” (1993: 3).

⁴⁸ To the question “When did you start your blog and why?” and “How would you describe your own blog?” this blogger responded: “2006, I was in prison. I began the blog after I was released from prison to express what the Muslim Brotherhood was about. I was imprisoned because of people in a Muslim Brotherhood meeting that were arrested. After this I began my blog to express the opinion of the Muslim Brothers. It’s only to express my personal views.”

⁴⁹ <http://www.blogger.com/profile/01407648611374280177>. Last retrieved in January 2013.

On the whole, Abdel Moneim Mahmoud's posts channel questions of concern for the Muslim Brothers and function as a sort of news bulletin about the activities of the organization and their leadership. On April 4th 2011, he posted a picture of a lock and bolt with the caption "On the Parting of *Anā Ikhwān*". In this post he explained his reasons for having started the blog initially. He related that he had started his blog in order to present an alternative picture of the Muslim Brothers, and he had terminated it because he was satisfied that it, by now, had delivered a rather more complete picture of the Brotherhood. He has since then established a new blog, called *Afkārī* (My thoughts) on afkarmonem.blogspot.com.

The posts are intended as official, explanatory information about the religiously colored and conservative political organization of the Muslim Brethren. They are directed to Arabs in different parts of the Arab world and while interviewed, the blogger explains that he only writes in MSA and that his readership is found in countries across the Arab world from Morocco to Saudi Arabia. His posts offer essays and articles about the work and intentions of the Brethren framed in a sense of personal gratitude and respect on the part of the blogger. MSA is the language of officialdom, Islam and unity and connects the Muslims with a glorious past. It is, in other words, an appropriate variety for a blog such as *Anā Ikhwān*.

Nevertheless, the reader of this blog will find expressions such as the blogger's presentation of himself, referred to above, as a person who "loves Egypt dearly" and which is rendered *dāyeb fī Maṣr*, which we take to be a dialectal variant of the phrase "*dhā'ib fī Miṣr*" in MSA. We interpret this expression as "melting with love for Egypt", in other words, to "love Egypt dearly". In the same introductory profile the reader will find the expression *wa-biyikrah al-fasād*, meaning "and he hates corruption", which is expressed with the aspectual/mood marker *b* denoting dialect. Furthermore, as Mejell has demonstrated, even educated Egyptian academics with a good grasp of MSA may prefer a strategy of code-switching and mixing of varieties, since a less formal linguistic mode would render them as "modern, cultivated and liberal-minded". This, it is thought, facilitates the communication with the intended audience.⁵⁰ It also falls in line with Wael Abbas' observation in our interview with him that the "Islamists are using the simple language, the slang." In other words, despite the fact that we would regard MSA as a suitable variety for a blog offering information on behalf of the Muslim Brothers, the blogger may CS and mix MSA and ECA for a variety

⁵⁰ Mejell 2008: 121.

of reasons such as familiarization, facilitation and creating a sense of solidarity with the author.⁵¹

With this said, it should be emphasized that the posts in this blog to a large degree constitute articles which have been published in mainstream media newspapers such as *al-Dustour*, and they are therefore expressed in MSA. The reversed order is also true, the blogger explains that he may put down his thoughts in his blog and later rewrite the post as an article. Whatever the case in this respect, the posts mostly constitute reports about procedures within the Muslim Brotherhood, interviews with prominent Brotherhood members or other political personalities and articles published in mainstream media. That his posts mostly reflect the style of a well-educated person being able to express himself in MSA, is illustrated in the following examples.

The initial post in the selected corpus for this blogger is dated May 16th 2009. In its critical stance towards Egyptian State Security and the Mubarak administration, it coincides with the content in posts by his fellow bloggers such as previously discussed Wael Abbas. This post constitutes a lengthy text presented under the heading: “Accusations towards representatives and members of the Guidance Office of the Brothers...”.⁵² The reader learns that

The security apparatus is addicted to fabricating new accusations in order to hamper the activities of the Brothers and to distort its image, especially abroad.

أدمن الجهاز الأمني في مصر تلفيق تهم جديدة لتعويق نشاط الجماعة وتشويه صورتها لدى العالم الخارجي خاصة.

On July 19th 2009, the blogger lets the daughter of a prominent Muslim Brotherhood personality of the inner circle Dr ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abū l-Futūḥ, express her concern that there exists a plan to assassinate her father by prohibiting the physicians from monitoring his condition.⁵³ This is reported in a dry, matter-of-fact, “journalese” style in the heading:

Daughter of Abū l-Futūḥ: There is a plan to assassinate my father by prohibiting the physicians from monitoring his condition.

⁵¹ Bassiouney 2009: 13; 2010: 101.

⁵² http://ana-ikhwan.blogspot.se/2009_05_01_archive.html. Last retrieved in January 2013.

⁵³ http://ana-ikhwan.blogspot.se/2009_07_01_archive.html. Last retrieved in January 2013.

ابنة أبوالفتوح: هناك مخطط لقتل والدي بمنع الأطباء من متابعة حالته.

The first paragraph of this news item posted in the blog reads as follows:

The daughter of Dr ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abū l-Futūḥ, General Secretary of the Arab Doctors Union, warned of the existence of a plan to assassinate him at the French Kasr El Aini hospital by imposing a heavy guard on him and the strict intransigence of the security forces imposed on Abū l-Futūḥ at the hospital.

حضرت ابنة الدكتور عبد المنعم أبوالفتوح، الأمين العام لاتحاد الأطباء العرب، من وجود مخطط لقتله بمستشفى قصر العيني الفرنسي في ظل فرض الحراسة المشددة عليه والتعنت الشديد من قبل قوات الحراسة الملازمة لأبوالفتوح بالمستشفى.

Muslim Brotherhood leaders involved in internal strife are discussed in the post of 27 September 2009 under the following heading:

Leaders in the second circle of the Brethren warn Akef from breaking away from the group, should the conservative movement try to prevent El-Erian from reaching the Guidance Office.⁵⁴

قيادات بالصف الثاني داخل الإخوان تحذر عاكف من الإنشقاق عن الجماعة إذا حاول التيار المحافظ من تصعيد العريان لمكتب الإرشاد.

In a print media style which we recognize from daily newspapers, the post goes on to relate how the General Guide (often translated as “chairman”) and former head of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Akef (*Muhammad Mahdī ‘Ākif*) is warned not to break away from the Brothers, should the conservative branch stop him from appointing the prominent Brotherhood representative Essam El-Erian (*Iṣām al-‘Iryān*) to membership in the Guidance Office in place of former head of the Brotherhood, Muḥammad Hilāl. The names and moves of a number of prominent Brotherhood members are discussed, and the post exposes the rift in the Muslim Brotherhood between reformists represented by Akef on the one hand and the conservatives on the other. It also makes mention of the fact that the

⁵⁴ http://ana-ikhwani.blogspot.se/2009_09_01_archive.html. Last retrieved in January 2013.

Muslim Brothers youth group supported the appointment of Erian on their Facebook site:⁵⁵

Reliable sources inside the Muslim Brotherhood have related that a number of leaders in the second and third circles inside the group have decided to speak to the General Guide, Mahdi Akef, and the Guidance Office to upgrade Essam El-Erian to membership in the Office in order to succeed Muhammad Hilāl, and this according to how Mohamed Morsi was upgraded to membership in the Office in 2004...⁵⁶

قالت مصادر مطلعة داخل جماعة الإخوان المسلمين أن عددا من قيادي الصف الثاني والثالث داخل الجماعة يعتزمون مخاطبة مهدي عاكف المرشد العام لمطالبه ومكتب الإرشاد بتصعيد عصام العريان عضوا بالمكتب خلفاً لمحمد هلال وذلك كما تم تصعيد محمد مرسي لعضوية المكتب في 2004...

A final example from this blog is from February 21st 2010, in which the blogger, Abdel Moneim Mahmoud, posts a photo of Muhammad al-Baradei under the heading:

Al-Baradei to *al-Dustour* in the first talk with him in Cairo: I will never accept any official position far away from appointment for the presidency⁵⁷

البرادعي للدستور في أول حوار معه بالقاهرة: لن أقبل بأي موقع رسمي بعيداً
عن الترشح للرئاسة

The core of this post can be summarized as an accusation directed towards the Mubarak administration. The message is that it will never permit any party to compete with it politically. To this end it uses its security apparatus to attack the largest, independent and united body in Egypt which is the Muslim Brothers.

The photo depicts the former Director General of IAEA relaxing in a sunlounger in the well-trimmed garden of his home in a gated community in Cairo with a caption inserted in the photo saying: “Exclusive photo by *al-Dustour* from the home of al-Baradei”. The gist of al-Baradei’s message as reported in the post is that “the Egyptian people are longing for change and for a better future”. He makes a point of the fact that the crowds were waiting to receive him at the airport

⁵⁵ Akef's official term ended on 14 January 2010 and at present, Muhammad Badie (Muhammad Badī') is the eighth General Guide of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Consult Khalil al-Anani in *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 28 January - 3 February 2010, Issue No. 983, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/983/op32.htm>. Last retrieved in February 2012.

⁵⁶ http://ana-ikhwan.blogspot.se/2010_02_01_archive.html. Last retrieved in January 2013.

⁵⁷ http://ana-ikhwan.blogspot.se/2010_02_01_archive.html. Last retrieved in January 2013.

on his return to Egypt, and that this must be taken as “a message to the ruling administration that the people need change.” The blogger emphasizes that:

Baradei requested of the people to move in order to amend the constitution.

وطالب البرادعي الشعب بالتحرك لتعديل الدستور

No doubt, a symbolic message on the struggle for freedom with roots in the famous poem *Irādat al-ḥayāh* (Will to life) is brought to mind to most Arab readers in this post.⁵⁸ Al-Baradei is quoted as having pronounced the following phrases alluding this poem by one of the loadstars of modern Arabic poetry, the Tunisian romantic nationalist poet Abul Qasim ash-Shabbi (*Abū al-Qāsim ash-Shābbī*) (1909-1934) in this post:

The people, if they want change they must move... for example, if different groups of people collect signatures for this purpose... the government must grant them their wish.

الشعب إذا أراد التغيير يجب أن يتحرك، فمثلاً طوائف الشعب المختلفة لو
قامت بتجميل توقيعات من أجل هذا الهدف ... عندها لابد للحكومة أن تستجيب.

These lines bring to mind the famous stanza by ash-Shabbi which also constitutes the opening lines of the Tunisian national anthem:

If the people, one day, want life, destiny must meet their wish.⁵⁹

إذا الشّعب يوماً أراد الْحَيَاةَ فَلَا بُدَّ أَنْ يَسْتَحِيْبَ الْفَدَار

In his final post, before closing his blog, this blogger declared that he had met nothing but good at the hands of the Brotherhood:

in which I had not found anything but all the best in as much as that the Brotherhood gave me more than they took from me. And the best of them, who loved their fatherland and their religion and worked with all sincerity for the revival of the nation, raised me...⁶⁰

⁵⁸ This is interpreted as an instance of intertextuality along the lines of Gérard Genette and Jonathan Culler in Genette 1997: 5-10, 51-52 381; Culler 1981: 103, 115.

⁵⁹ The American-Egyptian correspondent Ashraf Khalil refers to these same lines by ash-Shabbi: ‘Who will be the first to learn the lessons from Tunisia, the rulers or the ruled? As the Tunisian poet Abul Qasem Al-Shabi once wrote, ‘If the people decide to live, destiny must obey’. Khalil 2012: 123-124.’

⁶⁰ <http://ana-ikhwani.blogspot.se/2011/04/blog-post.html>. Last retrieved in May 2011.

الذي ما رأيت فيها إلا كل خير حيث أعطتني الجماعة أكثر ما أخذت مني...
ورباني فيها الأخيار الذين أحبوا وطنهم ودينهم وعملوا بكل اخلاص لنهضة
الأمة.

Clearly, the appropriate code in a blog such as *Anā Ikhwān* emerges as MSA, or Ashtiani's "journalese", in the shape in which this variety would normally appear in traditional print-press.⁶¹ Abdel Moneim Mahmoud's posts may be positioned in both online and offline media and are not fore-mostly intended as accounts of personal affairs. The blogger's sympathy with the Muslim Brethren is not primarily reflected through subjective standpoints but in the fact that he, personally, has taken upon himself to "explain and clarify" the aims of the organization in which he has met nothing but "all the best". The studious inclusion of a quote paraphrasing a piece of high literature in the form of the well-known opening lines of the Tunisian national anthem, filled with romantic, Arab nationalist associations underpins the formality and literariness of the text, something which usually calls for MSA.

Ashraf al-Anany in *Sīnā' haythu Anā – Sinai is where I am*

Sinai is a piece of heaven left to itself, far away. The poet Ashraf al-'Anānī's blog

سيناء قطعة السماء المتروكة على حالها بعيداً. مدونة الشاعر أشرف العناني

One of the top ten Egyptian bloggers during our time period is a Bedouin from Sinai, Ashraf al-Anany (*Ashraf al-'Anānī*), whose blog has the full title *Sinai is where I am* followed by the subtitle *Sinai is a piece of heaven left to itself, far away (The poet Ashraf al-'Anānī's blog)*. In July 2012 this blogger explained that "After the Revolution accomplished its tasks, or this is what I thought, I decided to stop writing in the blog to devote myself full-time to writing poetry."⁶² Born in October 1964, he presents himself as "the poet Ashraf al-Anany" and describes Sinai metaphorically as "a piece of heaven left to itself, far away". He has explained that the main purpose of his blog is to educate his readers about the character of the Sinai population and to create a bridge between Sinai society and other Egyptians. He believes that people have had a chance to acquaint

⁶¹ Ashtiani 1993: 54-61.

⁶² E-mail correspondence from Ashraf al-Anany, July 27th 2012. Ashraf al-Anany's blog *Sīnā' haythu Anā* and none of his blogposts in it can be accessed on the internet. The present author collected the material during 2010 while he was still blogging in this blog.

themselves with the Sinaites with the help of the internet, and that he personally has played a role in this process.

From the poor living circumstances and failing administration of the towns in Sinai to criticism of the Mubarak regime, a wide range of topics fill this blog. Ashraf al-Anany's texts are part of a more transnational trajectory than that of his fellow bloggers, in as much as that he not only speaks about the Sinaites but brings to light aspects of Bedouin, tribal organization and customs broadly while criticizing expressions of globalization. In the process of doing so, he reveals a set of personal interests which may be summarized as (1) Egyptian neglect and misrule of the Bedouin in Sinai leading to their humiliation and degradation; (2) critique of globalized consumer society and; (3) regaining dignity (*karāma*) for Egypt and the Sinaites.

This blogger prefers to use MSA and “also some Bedouin terms”. He explains that he writes “for Egypt and for Arab leaders to understand the people of Sinai.” Although there are stylistic differences of expression affiliated with personal choice and individual preferences, Ashraf al-Anany, Abdel Moneim Mahmoud and, to some extent, Ahmed al-Shokeir have in common that they define their blogging identities as educators and social critics. This is why they choose to let their cyber personas speak with the voice of the educated at the same time being intent on reaching the broad but, nevertheless, literate strata of society. It may be of interest to note that a comment by one of the readers of Ashraf al-Anany's post, May 9th 2009, who writes under the pen-name *Rā'i an-Nāqa*, meaning “Sheperd of the She-Camel”, delivers a number of verses from the Quran. These verses are rendered with all diacritical marks in place which corresponds to the (high) style, usually termed Classical Arabic (CA), required when quoting from the Quran:

What is the life of this world but play and amusement? But best is the Home in the Hereafter, for those who are righteous. Will you not then understand?
(The Cattle: 32).⁶³

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعْبٌ وَلَهُوَ وَلِلَّادُرُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ
(الأنعام 32)

This means that the linguistic style which this blogger applies in his posts, may well attract readers who not only command MSA but who also find prestige and satisfaction while expressing themselves in the high variety of CA. This blogger's

⁶³ The entire comment by *Rā'i an-Nāqa* (Sheperd of the She-Camel) constitutes Quranic verses from the following suras: *The Cattle*, *Yūnus*, *The Believer* and *The Prophet*.

command of a high, literary MSA is corroborated by his selected title in his Facebook page in which he introduces himself as “The Poet Ashraf al-Anany” (*ash-Shā’ir Ashraf al-‘Anānī*). This indicates that his linguistic skills measure up to the demands of composing poetry – a literary genre usually demanding high skills in MSA. The following excerpts from posts shed light on this blogger’s choice of code and mode of representation, including some of his poetic techniques of metaphor and symbolism.

On April 21st 2009, Ashraf posts a text with the title “Bless me: I have won 4 million six hundred thousand Euros”. This post exemplifies one aspect of the blogger’s critical view of globalized society. He is aware that the internet has assisted him with publishing information about the Bedouin in Sinai, but like other internet users he has also experienced some of the drawbacks which the inattentive internet user may be exposed to. He contacts the party issuing this lot which states that he is the winner of four Million, Six Hundred Thousand Euros and uncovers the fraud. This post is introduced as follows:

Certainly, all of us have gotten accustomed to these messages, with which I became familiar at an early stage, from the beginning of my relationship with the internet. But I decided to take on the adventure and go along with them in order to learn exactly how they appropriate people’s money through trickery...⁶⁴

من المؤكد أننا جميعاً تعودنا على تلك الرسائل التي تعرفت عليها مبكراً منذ بداية علاقتي بالانترنت، لكنني قررت الدخول في المغامرة ومسايرتهم حتى أعرف بالضبط كيف يستولون بالنصب على أموال الناس...

The blogger does not like such those aspects of modernity which he regards as decadence and inferior morals, even as dangerous for humanity, all of which comes to view in his post from May 9th 2009. The title of this post is “The Art of Desire” (*Handasat ar-raghba*), the essence of his critique in it is the cynicism of commercialization, when “human pain is turned into a piece of news only”. Globalization is the backdrop to the ills of society and the opening lines read as follows:

Life moves on with the force of a stone rolling down into the depths from the top of the mountain ... It is as if life grows old, as if it loses its virginity...⁶⁵

⁶⁴ <http://alanany.wordpress.com/2009/04/>. Last retrieved in April 2012.

⁶⁵ <http://alanany.wordpress.com/2009/05/>. Last retrieved in April 2012.

الحياة تتحرك – بقوة حجر ينحدر من قمة جبل إلى الواقع... لأنها تشيخ الحياة
لأنها تفقد عذريتها...

The blogger goes on to argue in favor of conservative ideals and is critical of globalization and democracy:

Many find that life has become nicer on the pretext of democracy, human rights and freedom *etc.* But with a small amount of sense, we find that all of this is an illusion and you will find those who speak to you about the dictatorship of the majority, the power of group pressure and the miserable life in the most democratic countries – even racism – it is not possible to deny that it exists there.

كثيرون يرون أن الحياة صارت أجمل بدعوى الديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان والحرية الخ ، لكن بقليل من العقل سنكتشف أن كل هذا وهم وسترى من يحدثك عن ديمقراطية الأغلبية وقوة جماعات الضغط وبؤس الحياة في تلك الدول الأكثر ديمقراطية ، حتى العنصرية لا مجال لإنكارها هناك.⁶⁶

The post says that many people are of the opinion that life has gotten more beautiful democracy, human right and freedom. But with little effort one realizes that all of this is an illusion. Moreover, you will find those speaking of the dictatorship of the majority, power of pressure groups and life's misery in the democratic countries.

Essential pieces of criticism are directed towards a tendency in global news media to capitalize on “human pain” when sufferings of individuals turn into “a mere piece of news”:

Globalization, here, might become a curtain or backdrop for a scene, but in the forefront the elements appear harsher when human pain turns into a mere piece of news, when the news and satellite sites feed on the horrors of the human spirit for the sake of entertaining the dear viewer...

العلمة هنا ربما تكون ستار⁶⁷ أو خلفية المشهد لكن في الصدارة تبدو العناصر أكثر قسوة، عندما يتحول الألم الإنساني لمجرد خبر، عندما تتغذى الواقع الخبرية والفضائيات على أهوال هذه الروح الإنسانية لتسليمة المشاهد العزيز...

⁶⁶ <http://alanany.wordpress.com/2009/05/09/desire-engineering/>. Last retrieved in May 2012.

⁶⁷ We refer to this grammatical error as a typo.

The message of the post is enhanced by footage in the form of a photo collage of women, two of whom seemingly have been brutally murdered, disjoined and abused, and an image of what appears as a swirling dervish in a woman's dress the caption of which reads:

Madonna: Distortions of desire, or its deviation, or art. All of these ways lead to such horrors.

مادونا: تشوهات الرغبة أم انحرافها أم هندستها: كل الطرق تؤدي إلى الأهوال ذاتها

In old times, the blogger explains, people would go against things they called moral taboos. Presently, the blogger warns, a “catastrophe” will sweep humanity “towards a harsher destiny.” Closing this post he says:

I do not know, but of one thing I am certain, there is a real catastrophe at hand. And that we will be swept, with great force, towards a harsher destiny the moment the spirit of humanism and its ability to make distinctions is lost, something which makes us sense these horrors as mere surmises.

لا أدرى لكن ما أنا متأكد منه أن هناك كارثة حقيقة وأننا ننجرف بقوة هائلة نحو مصير هو الأكثر قسوة في لحظة فقدت الروح الإنسانية قدرتها على التمييز وهو يجعل إحساسنا بتلك الأهوال مجرد تخمينات.

These examples may suffice to illustrate the content, choice of code and literariness of the Egyptian poet and blogger Ashraf al-Anany. Contrary to his fellow blogger, Ahmed Shokeir, this blogger is not into a carnivalesque mode of representation. His texts are saturated with poetic features such as symbolism and metaphor, all of which complicates the translation (indeed, the interpretation) of some of his posts. The movement of “life” is metaphorically described as “a stone rolling down into the depths from the top of the mountain” and global society with its big-city lifestyle and commercialism makes life “grow old”, as if losing “its virginity”. The female pop icon of Madonna seems to symbolize decadence and distortions of modernity and its expressions of culture. To sum up, Ashraf al-Anany’s aim to educate, the somber content of his blog and literary style suit his choice of code which emerges as MSA.

Nawara Negm in *Jabhat at-tahyīs ash-sha'bīyya* on tahyyes. blogspot.com

One of the most popular Egyptian bloggers during our time period is Nawara Negm, born in 1973. The name of her blog is *Jabhat at-tahyīs ash-sha'bīyya* (Popular front for raving).⁶⁸ This blogger is the daughter of the renowned Egyptian colloquial poet Ahmad Fu'ad Nigm/Negm (1929-) to whom we have made reference in connection with Wael Abbas' poem by Mayāda Midḥat introduced above.⁶⁹

Nawara Negm began her blog in 2006 as newly divorced and with a sense of responsibility to speak up on behalf of torture victims in her country, as explained in response to the question "When did you start your blog and why?" Her blog is saturated with criticism of the Mubarak regime and administration and of all kinds of ills that she sees in her society. Although she projects positive light on Islamic movements ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood to Palestinian Hamas and Lebanese Hezbollah, she does not refrain from criticizing such parties when she finds reason to do so. Special areas of interest include condemnation of Israel, the USA, the Mubarak regime and the Egyptian State Security apparatus, support for the Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah and liberation of political activists in Egypt and elsewhere. A central theme throughout this blog is that of Egyptian and Arab humiliation with respect to (1) Israel's upper hand in the region, (2) on the global arena in the face of US and European superiority and (3) individually for every Egyptian struggling to meet daily needs.

Nawara Negm underlines that her blog texts are delivered as closely as possible to ECA. She says that she uses her blog to express herself freely, and that she posts "maybe five or ten posts" daily. She explains: "I write exactly like I speak. As if I am sitting with my friends and I express myself and it's like the stream of consciousness..." Hence, Nawara Negm conscientiously makes a point of *not* writing in MSA although in her capacity as a columnist in the daily newspaper *al-Dustour*, she commands this variety.

⁶⁸ How to render a satisfactory translation of the Egyptian expression "tahyīs" remains to be solved. Interpretations range from "goofing" to "delirious talk" and "raving". Nawara has explained the meaning of this expression as follows: "Tahyīs is a very colloquial word. It's Egyptian, it means, you know, somebody who is raving or maybe didn't get some enough sleeping..." (Interview, 28 March 2011, Cairo).

⁶⁹ Ahmad Fu'ad Negm's resistance poetry has resulted in his imprisonment on several occasions. In a special program on Al-Jazeera English (AJE), this poet was introduced as follows: "[T] he outspoken, irreverent and controversial Uncle Ahmed, as poet Ahmed Fouad Negm is known in Egypt, discovered poetry in prison in the 1950s and has been writing ever since. When the Egyptian revolution erupted in 2011, it was the words of Negm's famous poems, like *The Brave Man is Brave*, that were chanted in Tahrir Square." <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/poetsofprotest/2012/08/20128279254886950.html>. Last retrieved in September 2012.

She describes her blog as “political”, as “an outlet” and a way for her to “speak” her “mind” about “torture and laborers.” She points out that she does not wish to direct her readers but rather wants “brainstorming.” “I prefer to express my views and I accept it when they discuss it with me,” she explains. Her posts are rendered in a style which, as she herself acknowledges, resembles that which with literary terminology would be referred to as stream-of-consciousness. The reader of Nawara Negm’s posts is given the impression that her thoughts are presented as an uninterrupted flow as they pass through her mind. However, we are also aware that the she is not only intent on precisely duplicating the mass of thoughts which pass through her mind at the moment of blogging. Rather, she has political aims with her blog and she has consciously selected a specific linguistic mode with a chatty style of expression in order to guide her readers and make them feel comfortable.

In order to grasp the content of many of the posts of this blogger, the reader needs to be part of a specific narrative which has been operating over time. Often her group of followers may post 50 comments or more on one single post. This leads to convoluted discussions on details which in turn may be treated in ensuing posts by the blogger. Moreover, her technique of stream-of-consciousness coupled with her use of ECA adds to the difficulties for newcomers to her blog.

The first post in our selection from Nawara Negm is from April 13th 2009 and begins with a video from YouTube which no longer is available, sent to her by one of her followers, “Tafātīfū” (a nickname for Mustafā).⁷⁰

Gaw says that Sāmī was injured in his back in the war... No! Come on!
May they get a replacement from our Lord for their man. For a long time he
has asked of our Lord that he should die, or at least he admitted that he was
the one who burned Rome and that Nero is innocent. No no no no no.
Nobody should tell me that he isn't used to Israeli torture.
Noooooooooooooonsenssse.

جو بيقول ان سامي مصاب في ضهره في الحرب... لا خلاص بقى
يستعوضوا ربنا في الرجال بتاعهم، زمانه بيدعى ربنا انه يموت،
او غالبا اعترف انه هو اللي حرق روما وان نيرون بريء...
لالالالالا ماحدش يقول لي ما هو متعدد على التعذيب الاسرائيلي

⁷⁰ "This video is no longer available because the YouTube account associated with this video has been terminated due to multiple third-party notifications of copyright infringement from claimants, including Master Piece Group", as expressed 9 May, 2012 on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imhQ3bnIxTw&feature=player_embedded

This post, illuminating the style of the blogger, continues for another 18 lines and has 49 comments. In addition, there are three updates on this same date with 32, 16 and 48 comments respectively. The question of the identity of “Gaw” mentioned in the post has not been solved here and is also raised by one of the commentators of this post: muslimHuman.⁷¹ As for the question of the identity of “Sāmī”, this may be a reference to Lebanese *mujāhid* Muḥammad Yūsuf Maṇṣūr, known under his *nom de guerre* Sami Shehab (Sāmī Shihāb) the leader of a 49-member Hizbollah cell in Egypt who escaped from Egyptian prison in the beginning of February 2011, during the uprising in Egypt.⁷²

On April 13th 2009, Nawara Negm posts a derogatory commentary on the Egyptian government because of its inability to solve the rocketing population growth.⁷³ Although being severely critical her tone also carries a tone of carnivalesque sarcasm and irony:

Is there anyone in the world who is impressed by a campaign carried out by the Egyptian government? Every time they have a campaign for contraceptives the ladies give birth to nine from one single stomach.

هو فيه حد في الدنيا [الدنيا] بيتأثر بحملة بيعملها النظام المصري؟ دول كل ما يعلموا حملة لتحديد النسل الستات تخلف تسعة في بطن واحدة.

A central concern of this blogger is that of the lack of high moral standards, the humiliating state of Egyptian society when it comes to living standards and the sense of Egypt as being inferior to the Western nations on the global arena. Consider the following lines from a lengthy post from July 21st 2009:

⁷¹ This blogger, “muslimHuman” informs the reader that he has been a blogger since December 2006. <http://www.blogger.com/profile/18375345252910381880> Last retrieved in May 2012. In his comment, 13 April 2009, “muslimHuman” writes: “Who’s that Gaw!!!!!!! Maybe it’s short for somebody named Gawhar???” <http://www.blogger.com/comment.g?blogID=2720530513312889612&postID=2349306180621439073>. Last retrieved in January 2013.

⁷² Shihab was sentenced to 15 years prison in April 2010, and Hizbollah leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah has confirmed Shihab’s membership in a Hizbollah cell that was engaged in smuggling weapons through Egypt to the Gaza Strip. Shihab was the leader of the 49-member cell that was charged with plotting attacks against Egyptian tourist sites in 2009. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2010/04/201042913447654134.html>. Last retrieved in May 2012.

⁷³ This problem has been treated by Egyptian authors and literary critics alike since the 1940s. One of the central problems looming over Egyptian society and treated by the late Egyptian author Yūsuf as-Sibā’ī in his novel *Ard an-Nifāq— Land of Hypocrisy* (1949), three years prior to the Free Officers’ revolution of 1952, is the population growth of the country. Sabry Hafez makes note of this same problem with respect to literary texts from the 1990s. He explains that the writers, during their “formative years”, had witnessed a “constant increase in Egypt’s population – between 1980 and 2000 the population increased by 23 million – without an equivalent increase in state investment in education or housing (Hafez 2011: 112).”

Any country in the world, the economy of which depends on *baqsheesh* (gratuities and tips, the present author's comment) and middlemen (*samasra*) won't have any people left with morals because neither begging nor trickery produce respectable people... We were covered in the seventies because some Egyptians were able to travel to the Gulf and pump money into the country... And from where will the country get bread now? From people coming from abroad spending their money here and we'll stretch out our hand and take tips... That's not work, that's depravity, degeneration and bad manners and everything depends on *baqsheesh* and middlemen... Go ahead and pray and grow your beard and fast on Tuesdays and Thursdays and go on the pilgrimage for money you have begged every year. Whatever you do, you're not living a respectable life and you won't be respectable.

اي بلد في الدنيا اقتصادها معتمد على البقشيش والسمسرة مش ح يبقى فيها ناس عندهم اخلاق، عشان لا الشحاته ولا الحنجلة بتنتاج بنى ادمين محترمين...احنا اتسترنا في السبعينات عشان كان فيه فرصة ان بعض المصريين يسافروا الخليج ويضخوا فلوس للبلد... ودلوقت البلد بتتكل عيشها منين؟ من ناس تيجي من برة تصرف فلوسها علينا، يا نمد ايدنا ونأخذ تبيس... دي مش شغلانات، دي سفاله، وانحطاط، وقلة ادب، وكل حاجة بقت معتمدة على البقشيش والسمسرة، حتى الطب... صلى بقى وربى دنقلا وصوم اتنين وخميس، وحج بالفلوس اللي انت شاحتها كل سنة، مهما تعمل، انت عايش عيشة مش محترمة ومش ح تبقى محترم.

On June 3rd 2010, she writes about the upcoming visit of President Barack Obama to Egypt and his speech to be given at Cairo University on 4 June. The question posed in this post is why those invited attend this event, and she ironically asks if they intend to protest against the visit during the ceremony.

The essential question is, those who're going to attend, why are they going to attend? I mean, to speak to the Islamic world from Egypt while she is in this state – may our Lord heal her and make her well – is the greatest support for the present regime, to which those invited will say they are opposed – right? OK. The one who attends, does he attend in order to say, for example, raise his hand and ask Obama, Sir: Why did you come here and support this brutal regime?

...السؤال الجوهرى اللي ح يحضر ح يحضر ليه؟ اقصد يعني مخاطبة العالم الاسلامي من مصر وهي في الحالة دي، ربنا يشفىها ويعافيها، اكبر دعم للنظام القائم اللي المدعويين بيقولوا انهم معارضين له، صح؟ طيب اللي ح

يحضر، ح يحضر مثلا عشان يرفع ايده ويسأله اوباما: يا سيد انت جاي تدعم
نظام استبدادي ليه؟

All of the above examples from Nawara Negm's post confirm that (1) She endeavors to communicate in ECA; (2) her chatty style resembles the modernist literary style of stream-of-consciousness; and (3) her content is critical, presented with carnivalesque irony and sarcasm. A number of sentences from the excerpts above highlight these observations.

Post April 13th 2009

Gaw says that Sami was injured in his back in the war...

جو بيقول ان سامي مصاب في ضهره في الحرب...

Gaw biyūl in(ni) Sāmī musāb fī duhruh fī l-harb...

No no no no no no. Nobody should tell me that he isn't used to Israeli torture.

للالالالا ماحدش يقول لي ما هو متعدد على التعذيب الاسرائيلي
Lā lā lā lā lā mā hadsh yi'ul-li mā huwwa mit'awwid 'alā t-ta 'zib il-'isrā'il.

Nooooooooooooonsenssse.

Fashshshshshshshshshshshshshshsharrrr.

Is there anyone in the world who is impressed by a campaign carried out by the Egyptian government?

هو فيه حد في الدنيا [الدنيا] بيتأثر بحملة بيعملها النظام المصري؟

*Huwwa fīh hadd fī d-dīnā (sic) [d-dunyā, present author's correction]
biyit 'assar bi-ḥamla biyi 'mil-hā n-niẓām il-maṣrī?*

Post June 3rd 2010

...those who're going to attend, why are they going to attend?

اللي ح يحضر ح يحضر ليه؟

illī ha yihdar ha yihdar lēh?

Post July 21st 2009

Any country in the world, the economy of which depends on *baqsheesh* and middlemen (*samasra*) won't have any people left with morals because neither begging nor trickery produce respectable people...

اي بلد في الدنيا اقتصادها معتمد على البقشيش والسمسرة مش ح يبقى فيها
ناس عندهم اخلاق، عشان لا الشحاته ولا الحنجلة بتنتاج بني ادمين
محترمين...

Ayyi balad fi-d-dinyā iqtiṣād-hā mi ‘tamid ‘alā l-baqshīsh wa-s-samasra mush
ḥa yib’ā fī-hā nās ‘andu-hum akhlā’, ‘ashān lā sh-shahāta wa-la-l-ḥangala
bitintig banī adamīn miḥtaramīn...

All of Nawara Negm's posts give the reader a sense of informal "kitchen-table talk" whether it is the question of criticism of Israel, the Egyptian government, the USA or the blogger's fellow citizens' lack of self-respect and dignity. Her tone is personal and the content is seemingly unstructured as if letting the keyboard keep abreast with the flow of thoughts going through her mind. All taken together, the pressing topics making up the content of her posts combined with the familiarizing choice of code (ECA) disarms the reader and creates an atmosphere of urgency and intimacy. This strategy combined with a profound antiestablishment attitude and mocking of self-righteous individuals and government cronies calls to mind the ironic and sarcastic expression of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque. Moreover, it appeals to a large number of readers who readily participate in the communication by commenting on her posts. The above lines and, in fact, all of Nawara Negm's posts, confirm her own claim to make a point of writing in ECA, to let her text flow between her own ideas, comments on her reader's observations and convoluted threads that delve ever deeper into the minute details of a specific question of interest.

Ahmed Shokeir in *Hakāwī ākhar al-layl – Late Night Stories* on shokeir. blogspot.com

Ahmed Shokeir (*Aḥmad Shuqayr*) is the first of our top-five Arabic language Egyptian bloggers who abandoned blogging in his blog *Late Night Stories – Hakāwī ākhar al-layl* for micro-blogging on Twitter.⁷⁴

Residing in Saudi Arabia throughout the time of blogging in *Late Night Stories* (five years in June 2011) Ahmed Shokeir has chosen to blog in Arabic,

⁷⁴ In a special issue on the 25 January 2011 Revolution (*Thawrat 25 yanāyir*) in Egypt issued by Al-Ahram ICT Magazine and titled *Loghat Al Asr* this blogger is mentioned as one of the group of ten micro-bloggers producing the highest number of tweets per day January 10th –February 10th 2011. This group, constituting both individuals and news sites, delivered between 100-200 micro-posts per day on Twitter. One of them is Ahmed Shokeir (in the aforementioned survey called Muhammad Shuqayr) about whom the report states: "The citizen 'Muhammad Shuqayr' was in the vanguard of the Twitter stars, individuals who were active on behalf of the Revolution inasmuch as that he alone dispatched 187 messages to his followers whose number was 3,111 individuals, i.e. 6 messages a day on average... (*Loghat Al Asr* 124, April 2011: 21)." Another of these social media activists mentioned in this report is Mina Zekri, to whom has been referred above.

more particularly in a relaxed MSA, because he is addressing his message of social reform to Egyptians inside and outside of Egypt as well as Arabs generally. The most practical way to succeed with this aim, he concluded, was to blog in a mixture of “classical” Arabic (MSA) and ECA, as explained in our interview. He takes great care when choosing lexical items and phrases and believes that this may be one of the secrets behind the fact that so many readers are attracted to his blog.

Taking into account this blogger’s vast online communications as a blogger and a twitterian (extensive Twitter user) he may well be considered an online activist. In comparison with Wael Abbas and Nawara Negm, whose online activities go hand in hand with offline activism and mainstream-media interventions, Ahmed Shokeir resides in Saudi Arabia and criticizes ills of his (Egyptian) society in an entertaining, didactic fashion. His blog is also a window to the international arena, something which is emphasized by his popular slide show of the past year in pictures (2006-2011). This slide show, appearing at the beginning of the year, reviews globally renowned events of the past year ranging from the demise of Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz in 2006 to the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007, the demise of recording artist Michael Jackson in 2009 and Yemenite journalist Tawakkol Karman receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. We therefore, propose to categorize him as an entertainer with a didactic aim. This corresponds well with his self-image as a story-teller. Elaborating on the content of his blog in the subheading, he explains that “[D]uring the day stories are born, at the beginning of the night we tell them and by the end of the night we listen to the sweetest stories,”⁷⁵ from which we may deduce that he wishes to attract his readers with entertaining as well as educational accounts.

Ahmed Shokeir’s code is MSA “in a simple way”, as he explains and clarifies further; “and maybe this is one of the secrets that people somehow like my writings.” Another key to his popularity, he proposes, may be that he occasionally inserts ECA with the express view to draw readers to his blog. This strategy, he maintains, encourages people to visit and read his blog. Ahmed Shokeir also carefully considers the mode in which his content is presented. He is satisfied that he is able to express what he has on his mind by rendering his message with diplomacy, avoiding insults and severe criticism that may cause irritation. In this way, he explains, “We are breaking taboos and criticizing

⁷⁵ في النهار تولد الحكايات.... وفي أول الليل نحكيها... وفي آخر الليل أسمع أحلى الحكايات <http://shokeir.blogspot.se/> Last retrieved in December 2012.

Mubarak and everything... If you write with respect, you will usually get back in good language.”

The first post in our selection from Ahmed Shokeir’s blog is from May 19th 2009. The title is *Hafīd ar-ra’īs*, “The president’s grandson” and it is about the funeral of former president Mubarak’s grandson, Muḥammad Mubarak, son of Mubarak’s eldest son ‘Alā’. The opening phrases are worded as follows:

Reactions to the death of the president’s grandson made me recall a post which I have written previously with the title “When the president dies”. I closed by saying that we are an emotional people.

ردود الأفعال على وفاة حفيد الرئيس جعلتني أستحضر تدوينة كتبتها سابقاً
بعنوان عندما يموت الرئيس أنهيتها بأننا شعب عاطفي.

The gist of this post is that the arrangements for this funeral are not in proportion with the standing of the grandson of the president. The blogger explains

We share the president’s sorrow, [it is] a duty. But for the central state media apparatus to stand still for three days of mourning, this is not normal.

نشاط الرئيس أحزنه واجب لكن أن يتغطى الجهاز الإعلامي الرئيسي للدولة
حداداً ثلاثة أيام هذا ليس عادي.

Here, we note that Ahmed Shokeir is true to his statement that he mostly writes in MSA (“in a simple way”) and that his style seems to come closely to a mixed variety of MSA with insertions from ECA.⁷⁶ This is exemplified in the wording of the initial portion of the phrase in which it is proposed that “We share the president’s sorrow, a duty...”, where “a duty” expressed with the single item *wājib* (*wāgib* in ECA), an ellipsis of *dā wāgib* which is typical for ECA. In MSA this would be expressed as *hādhā wājib* or with stronger emphasis in a higher style *inna-hu wājib* meaning “this is a duty”. That it is “basically” MSA, becomes clear in the last part of the section: “this is not normal” – *hādhā laysa ‘ādīt*, which in MSA would be rendered *hādhā laysa ‘ādiyan* with the accusative case marker visible in writing, an error that easily may be referred to as a typo.

Moreover, this post is illustrated with a picture depicting the funeral procession. The child’s father, Mubarak’s eldest son, ‘Alā’, is at the vanguard carrying the casket on the right hand side. While the text constitutes a critique of

⁷⁶ Cf. Bassiouney 2009: 168-170 esp. 163-164.

the official arrangements surrounding the deceased grandchild, the footage serves to enhance this critique, some of which is expressed as follows:

Why have a military funeral procession with the body of the deceased wrapped in the Egyptian flag? The official TV-channels as well as some private channels announce three days of mourning for the death of the president's grandchild... This is too much. We aren't living in a monarchy and the president's grandson was an ordinary person, like any other citizen of this country.

جنازة عسكرية ويلف الجثمان بعلم مصر لماذا؟ تعلن القنوات الرسمية وبعض القنوات الخاصة الحداد على وفاة حفيد الرئيس لمدة ثلاثة أيام ... هذا كثير، نحن لسنا في دولة ملوكية وحفيض الرئيس هو شخص عادي مثله مثل أي مواطن في هذا البلد.

One June 20th 2009, Ahmed Shokeir posts a text under the title “Porno elections and masturbation”. This post constitutes a vitriolic criticism of the procedures surrounding parliamentary elections in Egypt. While people in other Arab countries like Lebanon and Morocco are able to vote properly, the blogger explains, “We follow elections and watch them like young men who are unable to get married watch porn movies”. Even in Iran the situation is better, the reader learns:

In every other country in the world, people are invited to participate in the elections while our people are climbing up wooden staircases to reach the first floor at a height of several meters, so they may throw themselves through a small window, in order to cast their vote.

في كل بلاد العالم يدعون الناس للمشاركة الانتخابية وعندنا الشعب يتسلق السالم الخشبية ليصل للدور الأول على ارتفاع عدة أمتار ليقذف بجسمه من شباك صغير ليدللي بصوته

In Egypt, though, the reader learns, voting procedures are thwarted by hooligans, by purchasing votes with twenty-pound notes cut in half and bribing the election committee with a bag of rice or a can of juice. Voting in Egypt also takes place in the names of individuals who have stood up from their graves to cast their vote and thereafter return to their shrouds in such a democratic fashion that even “the most powerful of democracies are unable to equal”. This ironic and sarcastic tone is kept intact to the end of this post. Evidence is legion as to the fraud and

cheating in Egyptian elections, the blogger informs. Nevertheless, the blogger complains, nobody has made a move to get out in a joint protest:

It is enough to read the blogs which have followed the elections and established fraud with material evidence in photos and videos and yet, all this has not made anyone move so that we go down and protest together. Why?

يُكفي فقط أن تقرأ التدوينات التي تابعت الانتخابات وأثبتت التزوير بالأدلة المادية بالصور والفيديوهات ولم يحرك كل هذا ساكناً اننزل ونعرض جماعة، لماذا...

The reason for this we learn is that, “Because we still content ourselves with masturbation as a habit we always approve of practicing in secret.” The core of the problem is that people want democracy but when the elections come they play along with the system. “May God preserve us and our Egypt from every naughty act. We just want to get married,” the blogger concludes. The excerpt reads as follows in the post:

لأننا مازلنا نكتفي بالإستمناء كعادة نحبذها سرية دائمًا... حفظنا الله وحفظ مصرنا من كل عمل داعر ... بس عايزيين نتجوز بأه.

Similarly to other excerpts from this blog which we have discussed here, this post illustrates the relaxed MSA with insertions of ECA with which this blogger has chosen to express himself in his blog. As was the case in the post from May 19th 2009 which included the ECA item of “wāhib”, this post includes the ECA particle “ba’ah” while the lion’s share is in MSA.

By contrast with Wael Abbas, Ahmed Shokeir is careful not to use swear words and does not intend to be offensive. But this does not prevent him from employing a carnivalesque mode of representation and of challenging norms and boundaries, a point in case being the post from June 2009 discussed above. In this post his style resembles that of the Lebanese blogger, Hummus Nation. While Hummus Nation’s likening politics with “eating shit” certainly may be referred to the catalogue of indecent expressions in any Arab society, Ahmed Shokeir’s ratings about the Egyptian election procedures and voting system as “porno elections and masturbation” may probably best be referred to the catalogue of indecorousness and socially offensive.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Cf. Thompson 2009: 223-231. An example of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque along these lines is given in an

Concluding discussions and questions

All of the bloggers discussed in this article command MSA, yet their blogs present a variety of codes ranging from ECA throughout the narrative to a literary and lexically conservative MSA with commentators responding to posts with verses from the Quran. These bloggers confirm the findings of Bassiouney, in as much as that in their capacity as authors they select their code of representation and adjust it to the aim of the blog and the desired audience. It also confirms Mej dell's observation that a variety of languages and codes may be employed in CMC among which are blogs.

Androutsopoulos' suggestion that CS functions as a contextualization cue to frame interpretations in CMC has found lesser support in this study. Two instances of CS were found: (1) ECA and/or a mixed variety for familiarization in personal profiles and introductory phrases and (2) MSA and/or a mixed variety for officialdom including reports, and print-press items. In this sense, CS was used by Wael Abbas to frame the narrative and impress the reader with specific sentiments such as familiarity or indignation. We also suggest that Abdel Moneim Mahmoud switched from MSA to a mixed variety in his personal profile for the same reason as Wael Abbas, to familiarize the reader with the blogger. His posts, consisting of reports which correspond to print-press articles, were in MSA.

Three bloggers, Wael Abbas, Ahmed Shokeir and Nawara Negm called to mind a Bakhtinian carnivalesque style of representation. While Wael Abbas refers to State Security as "bastards", Ahmed Shokeir accuses his fellow Egyptians of satisfying themselves with "masturbation" while criticizing them for not taking action against election fraud. Also, Nawara Negm illustrated her resistance towards the regime and the prevalent corruption with a carnivalesque form of social and cultural critique with ironic and sarcastic commentary on religious hypocrisy and the incapacity of the government.

Themes affiliated with Ashraf al-Anany's pronounced aim to make the circumstances of the Bedouin of Sinai known to his readers were not salient in the selection of posts discussed in this article. Nevertheless, his role as an educator emerged as he gave reports on hazards which may befall the inattentive internet user, some of the ills of globalization with its big-city lifestyle and negative aspects of modernity including what he names the "dictatorship of the majority." Besides shouldering the role of an educator, this blogger foremost perceives himself as a poet (remember his subtitle *The poet Ashraf al-'Anānī's blog*). In his

analysis of the South Park episode "Giant Douche and Turd Sandwich" in which one of the series' characters elects a turd sandwich for a new South Park Elementary School mascot, a week before the 2004 presidential election in the USA.

capacity as a Bedouin and poet, with the immense historical and cultural implications vested in such a heritage and combined with his view to educate and inform, this blogger's choice of code, MSA, comes as no surprise. Ashraf al-Anany does not employ a carnivalesque mode of representation.

To sum up we suggest the following presentation of the bloggers, their frames (design), choice of code and mode of representation.

| Blogger | Blog | Frame | Code/s | Narrative mode | CS |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Wael Abbas | <i>al-Wa'y al-Miṣrī</i> | Activist | ECA and mixed variety | Carnivalesque | CS for familiarizing and officialdom |
| Abdel Moneim Mahmoud | <i>Anā Ikhwān</i> | Educator | MSA and mixed variety | News media reporting | CS for familiarizing and news media |
| Ashraf al-Anany | <i>Sīnā' haythu Anā</i> | Educator | MSA | Literary, poetic | |
| Nawara Negm | <i>Jabhat at-tahyīs ash-sha'bīyya</i> | Activist | ECA | Stream-of-consciousness, carnivalesque | |
| Ahmed Shokeir | <i>Late Night Stories</i> <i>Hakāwī</i> <i>ākhar al-layl</i> | Educator/ Entertainer | MSA/ mixed variety | Literary, "story-telling", carnivalesque | |

From this chart it becomes clear that activist bloggers (online as well as offline) tend towards ECA and the carnivalesque while CS has been spotted with one activist and one educational blogger. Educational bloggers tend towards MSA and may also employ a carnivalesque mode of representation. Both activist and educational blogs use a mixed variety. It seems that the higher the literary aspiration of the blogger, especially in combination with a view to educate, the higher the probability of MSA as the preferred code.

In conclusion, choice of language variety and linguistic styles in blogs, electronic communication and throughout cyberspace remains a vast and independent field in Arabic studies which has yet to be explored. Theories need to be further developed, instruments of classification and methods for analysis are preliminary, and refinement and adjustment are called for in studies to come. Numerous questions arise in the wake of this initial endeavor, such as whether the individual and personal freedom of choice regarding code may spill over into other genres, online as well as offline, such as traditional news readings, official reports, political statements and religious rulings. With an ever increasing electronic communication over internet, social media platforms and cell- and

smartphones, questions which require further examination may be uttered as follows: What may a situation like this imply for the future of MSA? Where will it remain intact? Who will use this variety and for which purposes? Will MSA evolve large scale while adjusting itself to the demands of the ever increasing numbers of internet users who may or may not enjoy the education required to express themselves in fully-fledged MSA? These are questions which have not been addressed in this article and therefore remain to be explored.

Appendix

Egyptian Arabic Language bloggers, title of blog, web-site, number of in-linking domains and date of interview

- (1) Wael Abbas (Wā'il 'Abbas), *al-Wa'y al-Mis'rī*, misrdigital.blogspirit.com, (648 links). Interviewed in Cairo, Carlton Hotel, March 27th 2011.
- (2) Abdel Moneim Mahmoud ('Abd al-Mun'im Maḥmūd), *Anā Ikhwān*, ana-ikhwan.blogspot.com, (272 links). Interviewed in Cairo, Cilantro, March 27th 2011.
- (3) Ashraf al-Anany (Ashraf al-'Anānī), *Sīnā' haythu Anā*, alanany.wordpress.com, (248 links). Interviewed in Cairo, Estoril, Talaat Harb, March 28th 2011.
- (4) Nawara Negm (Nawwāra Najm), *Jabhat at-tahyīs ash-sha'bīyya*, tahyees.blogspot.com, (165 links). Interviewed in Cairo, Carlton Hotel, March 28th 2011.
- (5) Ahmed Shokeir (Ahmad Shuqayr), *Late Night Stories Ḥakāwī ākhar al-layl*, shokeir.blogspot.com, (133 links). Interviewed over Skype in Stockholm, Department of Media Studies, Stockholm University, June 6th 2011.

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E-learning and the dilemma of learner autonomy: A case study of first year university students of Arabic

Helle Lykke Nielsen¹
University of Southern Denmark

Abstract

The article reports on a study where e-learning tools in the form of online tests, individual learning plans and portfolios were included into the teaching of Arabic as a second language at university level with the aim of promoting learner autonomy. The results indicate (i) that compulsory use of the e-learning tools might be necessary if all students are to participate; (ii) that gender and ethnic background seem to play a role in the use of the e-learning tools; and (iii) that the students who might benefit most from using e-learning tools to promote learner autonomy, are the ones who use them the least.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, e-learning, online test, self-assessment, portfolio, individual learning plans.

Background and teaching goals

One of the core principles of the BA-programmes in Arabic at the University of Southern Denmark is that knowledge and skills taught throughout the programmes should apply to practical life within a professional context. In order to ensure this link between foreign language studies and a professional career, students can study Arabic only if they combine their language study with another subject, at present either business economics, communication studies or cross cultural pedagogics. The subjects, which the students study simultaneously, are distributed equally, so that about half the time is spent on language acquisition in Arabic, and half on the other subject.

For the language part of the study programme, which is my concern here, this core principle implies that the focus of the language training is unambiguously communicative. The students train listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in Arabic to be able to apply those skills in practice in a professional or social context. The students are not expected to have any previous knowledge of Arabic when they start their studies. After two years of basic

¹ E-mail: hln@sdu.dk

language training they spend their third year of studies in the Arab world where they take classes in language, culture and society, and work for approximately a month as trainees. The goal at the bachelor's degree level is that the students can manage different communicative tasks related to the field of either business economics, communication or cross cultural pedagogics in Arabic. In other words, the language is considered a tool, whereas business economics, communication studies and cross cultural pedagogics are considered the area in which the students get their scholarly education.

This communicative approach is a clear break away from the traditional philological tradition, which has dominated university studies of Arabic in Europe for so long. The programmes have come about due to a wish for labour market relevance: Only a few Danish and international companies and institutions have the means to employ young people who are competent in Arabic only, even though globalisation as well as immigration have made Arabic the largest immigrant language in Europe along with Turkish. The labour market for university graduates in Arabic is further characterized by the lack of well-defined employment opportunities and a structural vulnerability resulting from the political and financial changes generally attached to immigrant languages in European societies.

The fact that language training in Arabic explicitly aims at fulfilling concrete needs in a labour market under constant change, places special demands on the skills to be taught. In addition to this, two trends have influenced our BA-programmes in Arabic since the late 1990s: The study programmes which were originally intended as an option for Danish secondary school graduates, are now primarily attended by young people of Arab or Middle Eastern descent, and simultaneously, the average high-school grade obtained by the students starting the study programmes of Arabic, has dropped significantly, so that today we have one of the lowest averages of entrance grades at the university. This trend can, at least partly, be explained by the ever increasing number of students allowed into Danish universities since the late 1990s. The low entrance level has led to a significant rise in student drop-outs, especially during the first year of studies, as well as a tendency for students to be what teachers perceive as passive, over-dependent on teaching and reluctant to challenge teacher authority with a critical mind. In other words, there is a tendency among students to see themselves more like "knowledge receivers" than students taking responsibility for their own learning, a skill so fundamental in university education.

In order to develop the students' academic skills and bring down the drop-out rate, we decided to focus on how to facilitate the students' transition from

secondary school to university, the aim being that the students would gradually learn how to take responsibility for their own learning and acquire the knowledge, independence, and analytical skills that characterize an academic education. It was assumed that these skills would not only help students make the difficult transition from secondary school to university, but would also prepare them for a labour market that calls for flexibility and adaptability to ever changing tasks. Moreover, it was assumed that teachers and students would have a shared interest in developing the students' self-directedness and independent learning, since it would supposedly help them to achieve better results during their university studies.

In the present article, I shall outline the pedagogical intervention we made in a group of first-year students of Arabic in order to develop learner autonomy by means of e-learning tools. I shall first define what is meant here by learner autonomy, a term much debated in recent years. Secondly, I shall describe the group of students who took part in the study, and the range of e-learning tools which were used in class to promote learner autonomy. Thirdly, I shall report on the results based on teacher and student feedback as well as tracking tools available in Blackboard, the content management system used in our university which provides the frame for our e-learning tools. And finally follow the conclusions and their implications which have set the direction for further pedagogical development of our BA-programs.

Learner autonomy: a complex term

In the early research on learner autonomy in language learning, there seems to be a widespread consensus on Holec's definition of the term as being "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" which includes "the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" and involves the skills of "reflection and analysis that enable us to plan, monitor and evaluate our learning."² Subsequent research, however, has revealed an ever increasing level of complexity of the term. How, for example, should we delimit learner autonomy: Is it context free or context dependent – that is, to what extent, if at all, is learner autonomy in a formal educational setting related to the concept of personal autonomy, as it applies to other domains of daily life, through which it might influence the individual learner's options and choices in an educational context? According to Dickinson, there is no inherent relationship between autonomy in learning situations and personal autonomy,³ whereas Benson and others see

² Holec, 1981: 3.

³ Dickenson, 1977: 18.

learner autonomy in a formal educational setting as profoundly related to personal autonomy in general terms.⁴

Another important question concerns the content of the term: Is learner autonomy process or content-driven or both, and if so, how do these two components interact? Is it possible to identify different kinds or sub-categories of learner autonomy, and if so, what components are most suitable for a given purpose? Benson suggests three different versions of learner autonomy – technical, political and psychological – which are related to three different levels of control over learning,⁵ whereas Littlewood suggests a distinction between two levels of self-regulation: *Proactive autonomy*, which is basically identical to Holec's definition, but takes a more elaborate and detailed form; and *reactive autonomy*, which “does not create its own direction but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goals.” In this sense, reactive autonomy can be either a preliminary step to proactive autonomy or a goal in its own right.⁶ Smith suggests a distinction between *weak* and *strong* versions of pedagogy for learner autonomy: The weak version should prepare students to become more self-directed learners through awareness raising activities and practice of good learning strategies, based on learning arrangements determined by the teacher, whereas the *strong* version focus on learners who are already (partially) autonomous and therefore in a better position to initiate learner-driven initiatives.⁷

A more recent thread in the research literature deals with the perspective from which researchers look upon learner autonomy: According to Benson, Lamb and others, research on learner autonomy is increasingly informed by the perspective of the teacher and takes its point of departure in educational and situational settings – a trend which might be seen as “an expression of a growing personal uncertainty [i.e. among teachers] and a feeling of powerlessness in many modern educational settings.”⁸ This perspective on learner autonomy differs substantially from that of the learner, according to Benson, since learners' perspectives are always contextualized within particular experiences of learning and life. This leads to a biased approach to learner autonomy, which might well influence the degree to which learners can benefit from it.⁹

Given the fact that our pedagogical intervention aimed at developing learner autonomy among first year students of Arabic who tend to be over-dependent on

⁴ Benson 2008: 25, 29.

⁵ Benson 2001, 2008: 23.

⁶ Littlewood, 1999: 75-76.

⁷ Smith, 2003: 130-132.

⁸ Breen and Mann, 1997, cit. in. Benson, 2008: 30.

⁹ Benson, 2008: 25-30.

teaching and often perceive themselves as “knowledge receivers” more than independent learners, we opted for a definition of learner autonomy which takes its points of departure in a formal educational setting and looks at it from a teacher’s perspective. This is not to say that the importance of a possible – or even plausible – relationship to autonomy as a general life competence should be disregarded, or that we fail to see the importance of the learners’ perspective on autonomy. The chosen perspective is entirely a matter of making the definition of learner autonomy operational and consistent with our actual pedagogical reality.

As for the content of learner autonomy, we used Littlewoods distinction between proactive and reactive autonomy and focused on the latter as a step towards the former. This choice had implications for the way we perceive the question of process and content of learner autonomy: Based on Littlewoods distinction and consistent with Benson’s use of the term, we define proactive autonomy as covering control over content of learning as well as over methods, whereas reactive autonomy involves only control over methods.¹⁰ In other words, by choosing to work within the framework of reactive autonomy, it is the teacher who decides what is to be learned (content), and the learner who works on how to learn it (methods) through a range of scaffolding activities organized by the teacher and/or researcher. The purpose of these scaffolding activities is to draw learners’ attention to different ways of becoming more self-directed and autonomous in the fields of planning, monitoring and evaluating their working methods, as defined by Holec and widely accepted in the research literature as core skills in learner autonomy.

Learner characteristics and choice of e-learning tools

24 students participated in the pedagogical intervention on learner autonomy. The group had a gender distribution of six boys and 18 girls, and an ethnic/ national distribution of four Danes, one Norwegian, two Somalis, while the rest were of Middle Eastern descent, i.e. they were either born in Denmark by parents with Middle Eastern backgrounds (Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, Afghani), or had come to Denmark as children or at a relatively young age. Only one person came to Denmark as an adult refugee. The students were between 18 and 31 years of age, the average being 23 years. They participated in a two semester course of Arabic language proficiency for beginners, with a teaching load of seven weekly hours. 14 of them had some prior knowledge of Arabic, mainly in speaking and listening, whereas their skills in reading and writing were below the threshold of what would be required for a first year exam. The pedagogical intervention took place

¹⁰ Benson 2001: 99, 2008: 24.

from the second month of the first semester to the end of the second semester, corresponding to eight months, allowing the students one month to get acquainted with each other as a group and to familiarize with the university setting – activities which more often than not require much attention and mental energy from first year students.

If learners are to become more self-directed and autonomous in planning, monitoring and evaluating their working methods for the acquisition of Arabic, these skills must be translated into scaffolding activities which learners can work on and benefit from, so as to eventually reach the desired goals. As a first step, it was decided to opt for e-learning tools as the pedagogical framework for the scaffolding activities, and for several reasons: First, e-learning makes it possible to work on learner autonomy outside the classroom, thus avoiding further time pressure on classroom teaching. Secondly, e-learning often has an added value in comparison with doing the same activities in a traditional “paper-based” way (access to digital resources, easy access to cooperative learning tools in authentic settings, etc.). And thirdly, e-learning simulates much better than traditional classroom activities the actual working conditions that students will meet, once they enter the labour market. By using e-learning tools as an integrated part of a university course in Arabic proficiency, but with the deliberate intention to develop reactive learner autonomy through activities outside the classroom, we situated our intervention in the area commonly labelled “blended learning.”

The next step was to pinpoint domains in the course of Arabic language proficiency which would be suitable for intervention. The following four domains were chosen:

- (1) Computer skills in Arabic, enabling learners to work with e-learning tools and train Arabic language skills at the same time. It was assumed that learners would easily transfer their computer skills from Danish into Arabic, and that consequently, it would not be necessary to use much time and effort to train these skills.
- (2) Study skills which draw learners’ attention to the efforts necessary to meet university requirements in studying Arabic, and consequently make them aware of how to deal adequately with planning, monitoring and assessing these efforts.
- (3) Learning responsibility, that is to make learners aware of how to set up personal learning goals independently and working to achieve them; again, this implies an effort on the part of the learners to plan, monitor and assess their efforts.

- (4) Evaluation in the forms of teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-assessment, that is to foster the learners' ability to assess realistically their results in Arabic language proficiency.

Particularly three areas within our existing Arabic study programmes seemed relevant regarding the change to e-learning and thus serving as platforms for scaffolding activities to promote the above mentioned domains in learner autonomy. In the following, I shall explain briefly the background for and the implementation of e-learning in these three areas, and subsequently, conclude on the actual achievements.

Computer skills: From tests to online-tests

Language proficiency tests have been a compulsory component of our curriculum since 1992, when our first Arabic programme was established. By integrating four compulsory tests per year, which the students must pass to be allowed to sit for the final exam, we push them to work continuously on their language acquisition, so as to prevent them from postponing their efforts until some weeks before the final exams. Also, the testing provides feedback on their levels and efforts to the students, in order for them to assess their progression, which is often a motivating factor.

The e-learning platform of our university, Blackboard, offers components to facilitate written as well as oral communication. By transferring our proficiency tests to online tests in Blackboard, we could train students in writing Arabic on the computer as well as integrating Arabic resources from the Internet in the tests, thereby training information retrieval in Arabic, and thus set tasks which resemble the demands found today in many relevant job functions. To the reader who is not familiar with the use of Arabic on computers, such demands might seem quite obvious, but it is only within the last ten years or so that Arabic word processing has become standard software on the PC and web pages in Arabic script have become legible for ordinary PC users. Despite the technological development it is not uncommon for students to refer to technical problems with their Arabic computer programmes or printers as reasons for handing in handwritten instead of typed papers, or ask for an extended deadline. Arabic software and web-based resources still do not function as seamlessly on computers as the Latin script.

Study skills: Drawing up individualized learning plans

Apart from exams, the evaluation of students' language skills normally takes place when the teacher corrects and comments on oral and written exercises, to

which students can, but do not have to, relate. Based on this feedback, the teacher would expect students to work on their own with the areas necessary in order to obtain better language skills. Normally, there are no procedures to ensure that students work on their results systematically and coherently, or that the test results are combined with a coherent learning programme; what students do with their results, and how it influences their own assessment of language skills, is considered a personal issue.

The need for self-assessment of language skills has become particularly clear in a context which might be of relevance to many university programmes of Arabic and other immigrant languages. Because we now have an increasing number of students with Arab background and with various degrees of language skills in Arabic, we have come to realize that some of these students have a tendency to either over- or underestimate their skills in Arabic significantly. When new students state that they possess language skills in Arabic, they are tested before the classes start, so that they may be exempted from parts of the classes and thus invest more time and energy on other parts of the study programme. Many of the students of Arab descent believe that they can easily pass the tests, but quite a few of them are in for a surprise. As a rule of thumb, half of the students tested – i.e. the ones who think that they know enough Arabic to pass the exam which Danish students with no prior Arabic qualifications are to pass after the first year – pass the first year test, and again, half of those pass the second year test. In other words, half of the students of Arab descent who believe, when they enter our programme, that they master Arabic to some degree, do not have sufficient skills to pass the first year exam. Such an error of judgement is not without consequences—neither in education, where such results make these students feel that their identity is questioned,¹¹ nor in a potential work situation, where possible employers will feel deceived, if students cannot live up to the expectations they themselves have created.

In order to provide scaffolding activities which would allow students to plan, monitor and assess their efforts and language level results, and thus foster increased learner autonomy, new procedures for online tests were introduced. When online tests were marked, the students would receive an electronic copy of the paper and were asked to fill in an electronic questionnaire in which they had to evaluate their results, pinpoint possible problems and compare the results with their previous performance. They were also asked to indicate how they considered improving their results in future tests, and it was only when this questionnaire was filled in that the test was credited officially. On the basis of test results and the

¹¹ Nielsen, 2006.

student's questionnaire, the teacher proposed an individual learning plan which was placed in the student's portfolio (see below), to which only the teacher and the student had access. The student had then to approve or comment on the learning plan, which subsequently formed the basis for the student's independent work towards the next test.

By drawing up an individualized learning plan based on these procedures, the teacher sets the objectives and the learning content according to appropriate university standards. The learners assess their test results and suggest a plan covering approximately four to six weeks before the next test, in which they make it transparent to themselves as well as to the teacher how they should cover relevant material. In this way students practice how to plan, monitor and assess their own performance and have access to teacher support when necessary.

Personal learning objectives: From tasks to products to portfolios

Most foreign language writing takes place as an interaction between the teacher and the individual student. At the elementary level, the writing tasks often focus on specific linguistic phenomena in isolated sentences which make content less important than form. Such tasks support the narrow teacher-student interaction, since fellow students would simply not benefit much from reading standardized sentences and short paragraphs written by their peers. If, on the other hand, writing tasks are to be defined in terms of "products", that is texts which can be of interest to fellow students or other readers, such as short advertisement slogans, postcards, introduction of family members, web pages, etc., a new pedagogical dimension opens up: The reader becomes important, the content begins to play a crucial role, and the message will be of interest for others to read, comment on, and discuss. By creating a common learning space, which not only involves fellow students, but potentially also all sorts of other recipients outside the class, students normally become more motivated to engage in writing, because they can see a purpose which exceeds the traditional writing-for-the-teacher approach.

Most e-learning platforms are very suitable frames for creating a learning space to be used for "product oriented" writing tasks. The communication facilities in Blackboard allow the student to communicate with teachers and fellow students easily, exchange documents, include materials from the internet, and present products using mail functions, group folders with limited user access, notice boards, etc. Such facilities are not exclusive to expensive course management systems like Blackboard, but can be found for free in Google, Moodle and other freeware and open source software. Working within this kind of learning space does not only promote the students' motivation and reading skills,

because they can read other students' texts; it also provides a useful tool for pushing the learners to reflect on their progress and learning style. One way to favour this reflection is to establish work and presentation portfolios, which basically consist of two electronic folders in which the learners put their writing tasks: The work portfolio includes a number of products and tasks, perhaps in more than one version, which illustrate the learner's writing process over time, and thus offer the possibility to reflect over the progress made, linguistic challenges, recurring spelling mistakes, etc. The presentation portfolio, on the other hand, is a show case for products which the learner chooses among those of the work portfolio; it is open to other readers, such as fellow students, teachers, friends, etc. and thus offers an opportunity to get feedback from peers, to feed discussions, etc.

By combining products and portfolios, the teacher lays the groundwork for scaffolding activities which aim to foster more autonomous learner behavior: Again, it is the teacher who sets the objectives and the learning content and supports the learner throughout the production process, if needed. The learners work with the products on their own, setting their personal objectives and defining time and efforts to be invested. At the end of the pedagogical intervention, the learners must present an oral or written evaluation of the progress made in Arabic language proficiency based on their reflections on the content of their portfolios, the aim being to foster, improve and/or refine their skills in self-assessment. Also, the learner gets additional feedback from teachers and peers and can compare these with their own learning objectives. In other words, it is in the junction between self-assessment and the feedback from peers and teachers that learners will get a realistic perception of their actual performance and the efforts needed to improve their language skills.

Successes and barriers for learner autonomy

After having worked with online tests, portfolios, self-assessment and individual learning plans for eight months (October to May with a semester break in January), we evaluated our success in fostering learner autonomy through the use of the chosen e-learning tools. The results reported below are based on teacher and learner feedback in the form of teacher's log, Blackboard's tracking system, students' self-assessment questionnaires and reports on portfolios as well as class room discussions between teacher and students.

Computer skills and online tests

The use of e-learning technology and the setup of the students' own computers with Arabic script took up much time and attention. Minor problems, like remembering the passwords the students received from the university administration, logging in correctly to the university's computers, and choosing the correct paths of links to specific materials, made it clear at a very early stage that we had to produce clear-cut written instructions on how to use the technology, and also give the students a clearly defined area of responsibility for the set procedures, so that time was not wasted during teaching hours.

It was interesting to notice how the students coped with the demand for writing Arabic on the computer. Today it is possible to write Arabic in *Word*, if the operating system has been installed with the correct language properties – all you need to do is to change the language on a small language icon at the bottom bar and alter the writing direction of the operating system by clicking on an icon in the top menu. The students were introduced to these procedures using the university computers, and at the same time they were given instructions on how to install Arabic fonts on their own computers. Then, over a period of three weeks, they were asked to hand in short Arabic texts in a *Word* format – all of which was preparation for their first online test. Only a few of the students, however, complied with the request. Our assumption that the students would easily transfer their computer skills into something as fundamental as the use of an Arabic word processor, did not turn out to be true. It was only after the first online test where almost one third of the students failed, mainly because of time pressure combined with lack of typing skills in Arabic, that computer literacy in Arabic was taken seriously by all students.

Simple technology, clear and detailed instructions, and arguments clarifying the need for computer skills in Arabic, were necessary for making the transition of our proficiency tests to Blackboard work. Still, many students did not like it and they argued for a postponement of online tests at every given opportunity. But ultimately, the result was positive: 20 out of 24 students indicated in their evaluations at the end of the pedagogical intervention that they were rather positive concerning the online tests after the first year of studying; they found the listening and reading tests easy to manage on the computer; they felt that they had become much better at writing Arabic on the computer and accepted the argument that computer skills are necessary in order to prepare for the job market.

Study skills and individual learning plans

As explained above, the tests were to be followed up by a self-evaluation form which was to be filled in before the test could be credited. The test results and the self-evaluation which included the students' suggestions for points to be covered before the next test, formed the background for the individual learning plan that the teacher would suggest, and which could then either be accepted or discussed and revised in collaboration with the student. The goal was to make a learning plan for the student which would link the individual test results into a continuous learning plan, and thus, if the students worked accordingly, would not only help them in their language acquisition, but also train their study skills and make them take responsibility for their own learning.

The results of the self-evaluation procedures and the individual learning plans were mixed. As the students became better at self-evaluations, the gap between the test results and the self-assessment decreased, the students became more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and accordingly, their self-assessment became more realistic. But at the same time, the students' work with the individual learning plans was less successful: Of the 24 learning plans, eight students read and confirmed their learning plans on a regular level, eight students read – or at least opened – their learning plans in Blackboard, but neither confirmed nor wished to discuss them with the teacher, while the last eight students did not open them at all and consequently did not know what they contained.

The distribution had a gender related aspect: The group, which consisted of 24 students, had a gender distribution of six male and 18 female students. The eight students who responded to the learning plan, were all female students, while five out of the eight students who had not opened the plans, were male students. In other words: Only one of six male students in the class opened his learning plan, but did not respond. If we take a look at the ethnic/ national distribution, we find that all the four Danish and the Norwegian students in the group confirmed the learning plans. It is equally interesting that six out of the eight students who chose to confirm the learning plans, were active and capable students, who dealt very well with other aspects of their learning process, while among the students who did not even open the learning plans, were the students who failed both the first and the second test.

Portfolios

The result of the work with portfolios was successful eventually, both concerning the students' motivation for working with product oriented writing exercises and

writing texts for their fellow students to read. Again, however, there were problems before we reached that result. At first, it was optional for the students whether or not they wanted to put their papers into their portfolios, but as only a few handed in assignments written on the computer, we soon realized that working with portfolio had to be compulsory to have any effect. As that sort of requirements cannot be made solely by the teacher in the Danish university system, but has to be announced in the curriculum, which is a legal document stating rules and regulations, the only possible way was to make portfolio work as part of the tests which were already stated as compulsory in the curriculum. Accordingly, the tests in writing skills were created as product oriented tasks: The students were told that the tests in written proficiency, when corrected and marked, were to be placed in the shared portfolio, to which all students had access. Once the product was there, the test would be credited. When it became a compulsory task, and the students knew that their fellow students had access to their texts, some began competing with each other in writing good assignments.

In the last writing task of the year, students were asked to create a brochure about themselves which were to be enclosed with a fictitious enquiry to an Arab company concerning a possible trainee period, and this turned out to be very popular with the students. An example of such a brochure can be seen in fig. 1. To make sure that the students actually read and learnt from each other's products, we created a test in reading proficiency with the aim of finding the best brochure of the year. Each student was to choose the three best brochures and give arguments for their choice. Pedagogically, the main issue in this approach was not the choosing of a winner, but to train the students' reading skills.



Fig 1 A student brochure

The students' evaluations indicate clearly that the portfolio idea of writing product oriented papers which were to be read by everybody, made many of the students more interested in writing. A number of students also became more interested in reading. This can be seen from Blackboard's statistical function which traces each student's activities on the e-learning platform. On average, the normal reading frequency of the portfolio tasks rose by almost 50% compared to the frequency for other reading tasks.

Conclusions and implications

Did e-learning based on online tests, portfolio, self-assessment and individual learning plans promote learner autonomy? In our context, it certainly did in a number of cases: Students obtained better computer skills in Arabic which was a prerequisite for working with e-learning tools, and most students developed a realistic assessment of their proficiency in Arabic and a raised awareness of their strong and weak points in the language acquisition process. The e-learning tools also improved the students' learning skills: By using the portfolio for product-oriented writing tasks and giving them the opportunity to read texts written by their peers, students came to work more independently outside the classroom, thereby improving their writing and reading skills.

However, when it came to taking responsibility for their study skills, exemplified by the students' use of individual learning plans, an interesting and somehow worrying pattern emerged. In our group, there was a distinct difference between the way male and female students behaved, in the sense that the female students were clearly more active in using their learning plans than the male students. This did not come as a surprise, as it is well documented in the research literature that male and female students' learning styles differ. Also, the students of Middle Eastern descent used the tool much less than the Danish/ Scandinavian group of students. This finding might well be random, given the low number of 24 students who participated in the study. If, however, we take the findings at face value, one explanation to the ethnic/ national divide might be that the results are a consequence of the gender distribution in the class, the Danish/ Scandinavian students being all female. An alternative, and very tentative, explanation to the ethnic/national divide would be that students who are socialized into sociocultural patterns which favour more hierarchical family structures and teacher focused learning processes – a tendency still prevailing in some Middle Eastern families, even though geographically they live outside the Middle East – might find it either irrelevant or more difficult to operate in a less hierarchical and more flexible learning environment which postulates the relevance of taking

responsibility for one's own learning.¹² However, further research into key concepts such as motivation, context and learning strategies across cultures is needed, if such findings are to be dealt with properly.

Equally worrying was the fact that the learning plans seemed to be beneficial mainly for the students who were already doing well in their studies, while the weaker students, who might have benefited from it, did not even use the tool. Thus the use of individual learning plans seems to have widened the gap between strong and weak students. This conclusion is supported by other results¹³ and makes one reflect on how, in the future, we will be able to better help those students who really need to improve their study skills and take more responsibility for their learning.

A final and equally interesting conclusion was that in order to encourage students' autonomous learning, we had to make the use of e-learning tools compulsory, otherwise most students would not have gone ahead with it. This is somehow contradictory in the sense that an increase in autonomous learner behaviour is not expected to be achieved by using compulsory means. A reason which might partly explain this dilemma is that we are dealing with a language written in a non-Latin script which makes it more difficult and time-consuming for learners to work with e-learning tools, at least initially. The need to make e-learning tools compulsory challenged two of our initial assumptions: First, against our expectations, learners did not easily transfer their computer skills from Danish into Arabic, and consequently, we had to use much more time and efforts to train these skills than expected. And second, not all learners shared the assumed interest in developing learner autonomy and obviously did not perceive its relevance to improving their academic performance. We do not know, at present, the reasons behind their lack of interest – maybe they lacked the necessary motivation or maybe it lead to an increased workload which they were not prepared to cope with. Whatever the reasons the learner reactions were a reminder that motivation is a core factor if an increased degree of learner autonomy is to be achieved.

These conclusions have a number of implications for the future of our BA programs. First, in order to minimize the barriers of the Arabic script when working with e-learning tools, it will be beneficial to introduce students to the Arabic keyboard by using an Arabic typing tutor, thus training the students in typing with their 10 fingers. And only when they have achieved a certain confidence and speed in writing Arabic on the computer, will they be introduced

¹² Barakat, 1991, Benson, Chik and Lim, 2003, Palfreyman, 2003, Sanprasert 2010.

¹³ Nielsen et al., 2005.

to the other e-learning tools. Secondly, we are to make the reasons for increased learner autonomy more transparent to our learners, so as to make sure that they understand the necessity of learner autonomy in an academic setting. And thirdly, though we certainly prefer our students to work on increased learner autonomy voluntarily, never-the-less we have decided to state the requirements for online tests and portfolios in our curriculum, thus making it a compulsory prerequisite for the final exam. The individualized learning plans were not successful with learners and therefore, we will have to find other tools to encourage study skills. It may well be that making online tests and portfolios compulsory is only needed as a temporary step towards achieving reactive autonomy, and that the need will disappear once students reach a level of active autonomy, but at least it provides teachers with useful pedagogical tools to foster increased autonomy along the way.

There are still a number of unresolved issues in the aftermath of our pedagogical intervention. We cannot yet say anything about the implications for the drop-out rate, and we are still left with the challenges of how to deal with a widening gap between strong and weak learners. But it seems that, given the positive results of online tests and portfolios, we have managed to identify a number of barriers for developing reactive learner autonomy and thus paved the way for fostering more active autonomy. As it is, we have taken a small step towards pushing at least some of our students from being “knowledge receivers” to becoming more autonomous language learners who know how to take responsibility for their own learning, a skill so fundamental in university education.

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Johannes Pedersens ophold i Cairo 1920-1921

Jørgen Bæk Simonsen¹
Københavns Universitet

Abstract

Modtageren af dette Festschrift var som professor i semitisk filologi automatisk *efor* for det legat, der bærer Johannes Pedersens navn. Jeg ved, at Eksell som mange andre nærer stor respekt for sin forgænger i embedet, og jeg har derfor benyttet lejligheden til at genlæse en række breve, Pedersen skrev til kolleger i Danmark, medens han var på studieophold i Cairo i 1920-21. Jeg har også genlæst hans ansøgninger til Carlsbergfondet og set nærmere på de hensigter, han i ansøgningerne gav for sin studierejse. Jeg har valgt i mit bidrag at gøre udstrakt brug af citater fra ansøgningerne og brevene for at lade Pedersens egne ord komme til live i Festskriftet til en af hans efterfølgere i embedet.

Keywords: dansk orientalistik, Johannes Pedersen, H.O. Lange, Frants Buhl, Carlsbergfondet, al-Azhar.

Da den store danske orientalist Johannes Pedersen (1883-1977) i 1908 afsluttede sine teologiske studier ved Københavns Universitet var målrettede studier for hans vedkommende ikke slut. Hans interesse for orientalske studier var fortsat stor, og han satte sig derfor som mål at gennemføre videre studier hos en række af Europas førende orientalister. I årene mellem 1909 og 1912 gennemførte han derfor en omfattende studierejse, der førte ham til studier hos islamforskeren Christian Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) i Leiden, hos den arabiske filolog August Fischer (1865-1949) i Leipzig og hos islamforskeren Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) i Budapest. Med Goldziher og Snouck Hurgronje sluttede han personlige venskaber, og derfor ligger adskillige breve fra disse til Pedersen i hans efterladte papirer i Håndskriftsamlingen på Det Kongelige Bibliotek i København.² Undervejs gennem Europa fik han også mulighed for at studere en række orientalske manuskripter, der kom til at sætte sig spor i hans videre virke som forsker. På sin studierejse var han tillige travlt beskæftiget med at færdiggøre den afhandling om *Den semitiske ed*, der i 1912 gav ham den filosofiske doktorgrad, og som i 1914 kom i en revideret og udvidet tysk oversættelse, der

¹ E-mail address: jbs@hum.ku.dk

² Pedersens omfattende papirer er omhyggeligt og systematisk ordnet af religionshistoriker mag.art. Bo Alkjær og registreret i samlingen under signaturen ACC 1974/97 i 93 kasser. Jeg refererer til den kasse, hvor benyttede breve eller andre citerede arkivalier er opbevaret.

blev tilegnet hans mangeårige lærer professor Buhl.³ De kommende år arbejdede han på første del af sit videnskabelige hovedværk om det gamle Israel, der blev udgivet i to bind i 1920 *Israel, I-II: Sjæleliv og Samfundspriv*. Anden del af hans hovedværk *Israel III-IV, Hellighed og Guddommelighed* udkom i 1934, og værket er som helhed blevet oversat til både engelsk og tysk.

Men Pedersen var imidlertid fortsat nysgerrig, og af den grund ansøgte han i 1914 Carlsbergfondet om

Understøttelse paa 5000 Kr. til en Studierejse i Orienten. Mit Formaal med en saadan Rejse er at skaffe mig selvstændigt Kendskab, saavel sprogligt som kulturelt, til den nulevende arabisktalende Orient, idet jeg venter, at et saadant Kendskab vil være af stor Betydning for mine Studier og vejlede mig til en mere indtrængende Forstaaelse af den fortidige Orient, som jeg hidtil har beskæftiget mig med i mit videnskabelige Arbejde.⁴

Det er med andre ord den samtidige arabiske verden, der er mål for studierejsen, og sigtet er dobbelt: der er dels tale om at sikre sig en større indsigt i og viden om det talte arabiske sprog⁵ og om den kultur, der præger den moderne arabiske verden. Pedersens ansøgning var vedlagt en varm anbefaling fra professor Frants Buhl, der var overbevist om, at ansøgningens intentioner ville blive indfriet, dersom ansøgningen blev imødekommet. På et møde den 24. maj 1914 blev ansøgningen behandlet, og den ansøgte tillægsbevilling blev bevilget.

De oprindelige planer måtte imidlertid ændres. Udbruddet af Første Verdenskrig gjorde det umuligt at gennemføre den planlagte studierejse, og den 4. maj 1920 henvender Pedersen sig igen til Carlsbergfondet:

Undertegnede tillader sig herved at ansøge den højtarede Direktion for Carlsbergfondet om at der maa blive tilstaaet mig en Bevilling af Fondets Midler til Forhøjelse af den Sum paa 5.000 Kr. som Carlsbergfondet viste mig den Velvilje at bevilge mig i 1914 til en Studierejse i Orienten. Den Sum som dengang bevilgedes mig, maatte efter Datidens Pengeforhold anses for at være tilstrækkelig til et Aars ophold i Orienten [...]. Det er af mig af flere Grunde magtpaalliggende at kunne

³ Pedersen anmodede i et brev til Buhl i begyndelsen af 1920 om tilladelse til at dedikere ham den reviderede tyske udgave.

⁴ Ansøgningen dateret 14. november 1913 findes i Carlsbergfondets arkiv. Jeg vil gerne takke forskningskonsulent, cand.mag. Esther Jarlov for at have fundet denne og andre henvendelser til fondet fra Pedersen frem til mig til brug for denne artikel.

⁵ Der var blevet undervist i arabisk talesprog på Københavns Universitet fra 1813 ved Jens Lassen Rasmussen (1785-1826) jf. Løkkegaard 1992: 496. Han fremhæver også, at en række danske orientalister gennem 1800-tallet havde længere studieophold rundt om i Europa. På det punkt var Pedersens studierejser 1909-1912 eller for den sags skyld hans ophold i Egypten 1920-21 som behandles i det følgende heller ikke udtryk for noget afgørende nyt, sml. Skovgaard-Petersen 2007: 8. Han var heller ikke den første danske orientalist, der op holdt sig længere tid i Orienten: A.F. van Mehren (1822-1907) havde således op holdt sig i Egypten i 1867-68, Buhl var på en studierejse til Egypten, Palæstina og Syrien i 1889 (Pedersen 1934: 1f), og Johannes Østrup op holdt sig i Cairo og i Damaskus i 1891-93 (Østrup 1937: 14).

foretage Rejsen nu, og det er mit Haab at den vil kunne tiltrædes i Løbet af Sommeren. Da jeg ikke mener at kunde faa tilstrækkeligt Udbytte af en for mine Studier saa vigtig Rejse som denne, med mindre jeg kan lade den strække sig over et helt Aar, skal jeg tillade mig at ansøge den højtærede Direktion om en Bevilling paa 5000 Kr. ud over den allerede tilstaaede Sum.⁶

Sagsbehandlingen blev denne gang noget kortere. Det fremgår af en påtegning, at Pedersens ansøgning blev fremsendt ”til hvert Medlem med Anbefaling,” og den ansøgte sum blev bevilget allerede den 7. maj. Dermed var alle studierejsers første forudsætning faldet på plads, og Pedersen kunne nu anmode Universitet om orlov uden løn for en periode af et år.⁷ Den ansøgning faldt også på plads, orloven blev bevilget og rektor udarbejde en forseglet skrivelse på engelsk og fransk, som Pedersen kunne medtage på sin rejse og forevise, hvis han fik behov for hjælp.⁸ Skrivelsen forklarede, at Pedersen var en af landets og universitetets førende forskere på sit felt, hvorfor Rektor og Københavns Universitet havde tillid til, at han ville få hjælp hvis det var nødvendigt. Studierejsen blev påbegyndt den 13. august 1920 og den 12. august 1921 var han tilbage igen i København.

Efter hjemkomsten afrapporterede Pedersen til Carlsbergfondet, der desværre ikke har den i sit arkiv, men i Pedersens efterladte papirer findes en udateret kladde.⁹ I sin afrapportering fokuserer han særligt på sine sproglige studier og skriver desangående:

Min første Opgave var her at finde en duelig Lærer med hvem jeg kunde udøve det Ægyptisk-Arabiske Talesprog. Det lykkedes mig først efter 14 dages Forløb at finde en Mand, der kunde læse og tale med mig en Time dagligt [...]. Hovedvanskeligheden ved et Sprogstudium i Nutidens arabisktalende Orient er den store Forskel mellem Skrift- og Talesprog. Som Skriftsprog anerkendes stadig kun det klassiske Arabisk; ud af dette har nu - under Paavirkning af forskellige Forhold – udviklet sig moderne Dialekter, som baade i Lexicon og Grammatik er langt simplere end det uendeligt omfangsrige klassiske Sprog, men hvis Tilegnelse vanskeliggøres en Del ved at man ikke kan understøtte den med Litteraturlæsning. De dannede Klasser tilstræber i deres Tale en vis Tilnærmelse til det klassiske, navnlig i Ordvalg og i Avissproget har man en Type, der kan betegnes som klassisk Arabisk i Tilnærmelse til Dagligsproget. Skønt jeg søgte saa meget som muligt at komme i Tale med arabisktalende Ægyptere, blev det mig dog klart at jeg ikke kunde gøre virkelige Fremskridt uden at leve i et helt orientalsk Milieu. For at opnaa dette tog jeg til Fayyum hvor jeg tilbragte tre Uger af December Maaned. Det lykkedes mig i den Tid at faa et Indblik i det orientalske Liv som det leves i en lille By. Jeg var Gæst i alle Byens Skoler hvor jeg hørte paa Undervisningen og

⁶ Ansøgningen findes i fondets arkiv som ansøgning/henvendelse no. 319 for året 1919-1920.

⁷ Der er flere udkast til den nødvendige orlovsansøgning i Pedersens efterladte papirer ACC 1974/97 kasse 24.

⁸ Findes i samme kasse.

⁹ ACC1974/97 kasse 25.

havde Lejlighed til at studere den ejendommelige Blanding af europæisk og orientalsk Væsen som er karakteristisk for det moderne Ægypten.

I en række breve skrevet af Pedersen til kolleger i København kommenterer han i flere tilfælde de vanskeligheder han stødte på i forbindelse med sine forsøg på at tilegne sig den talte dialekt i Cairo. Han skriver i et brev til H.O. Lange (1863-1943) kort efter sin ankomst til Cairo, at han straks var gået i gang med at kontakte en række antikvitetshandlere for at forhøre sig om mulighederne for at gøre køb af papyri fra det gamle Egypten. Lange, der på det tidspunkt var overbibliotekar ved Det Kongelige Bibliotek, havde bedt Pedersen om under sit ophold i Egypten også at se sig om efter dels papyri til indkøb til Det Kongelige Biblioteks allerede etablerede samling og desuden indkøbe værker til biblioteks orientalske samling. Det kan af de breve Pedersen sendte til Lange ses, at han indfriede sine løfter med den omhu og omhyggelighed, der kendetegner hele hans professionelle virke, både som forsker, som mangeårig formand for Carlsbergfondet og som præsident for Videnskabernes Selskab. Han fik da også under sit ophold købt både papyri og trykte værker i Cairo. Han skriver i et brev til Lange dateret 17. februar 1921:

Foreløbig har jeg anskaffet en meget god Samling af den klassiske Traditions- og Koranfortolknings Hovedværker. Mit væsentligste Formaal med dette Brev er at bede Dem forespørge Ø.K. om de vil Tage Bogkasserne gratis hjem med et Skib engang i Forsommeren ved gunstig Lejlighed. Ikke alene vil jeg derved faa flere Penge at købe for, men den Forsendelsesmaade er sikkert også den Paalideligste... For mit eget Vedkommende køber jeg også en Del Bøger hernede og havde tænkt at henvende mig til Ø.K. om at faa dem gratis med hjem sammen med Bibliotekets.¹⁰

De papyri, Pedersen med venlig hjælp og assistance fra kontakter Lange havde på Det Egyptiske Museum, sørgede han for blev sendt gennem den danske diplomatiske repræsentation i Cairo i særlige dertil indkøbte kasser.¹¹

Pedersen var også blevet bedt om at afsøge markedet for arabiske manuskripter, og dette får Lange venligt og diskret mindet ham om i brevet dateret den 17. februar 1921. I et brev af 28. marts 1921 meddeler Pedersen, at han ikke er faldet over nogle interessante manuskripter, men han vil søge videre, når han når frem til Damaskus og minder i den forbindelse Lange om, at de er noget dyrere at indkøbe end trykte bøger.¹²

¹⁰ Brevene fra Pedersen til Lange er katalogiseret i Håndskriftsamlingen som NKS 3736, kvart.

¹¹ Brev fra Pedersen til Lange dateret 17. februar 1921. Det er Lange, der i et brev til Pedersen dateret 21. december 1920 anfører, at de indkøbte papyri bør sendes i blikkasser.

¹² Anf. brev.

I den allerede omtalte afrapportering til Carlsbergfondet forklarer Pedersen fondets direktion om forholdet mellem det talte folkesprog i Cairo på den ene side og det mere klassiske sprog, der blev benyttet i de trykte aviser og sprog i de trykte aviser og magasiner. Dette forhold omtaler han også i et brev til professor Buhl dateret 2. november 1920:

Det lykkedes mig først derefter at faa en Sproglærer; det var Capt. Davidsen som skaffede mig ham.¹³ Han er Kopter og har i mange Aar været Lærer ved en Undervisningsanstalt for Englændere og Amerikanere, som Gardener, den engelske Præst, leder. Vi bruger en vejledning, Gardner har skrevet,¹⁴ den er meget praktisk anlagt og gaar ud paa at vi indøver de gængse Vendinger. Det er ikke saa let at vende sig til den, men jeg mærker da nogen Fremgang og forstaar nu i hvert Fald nogenlunde naar der tales direkte til mig. Vi læser en Time hver Dag og en stor del af Dagens øvrige Timer gaar med at terpe de Fraser og Fortællinger som jeg gerne skal have paa rede Haand til Timen. Det er jo en anden Maade at lære Arabisk paa end den jeg er vant til. En Vanskelighed ved Cairo-Dialekten er at qāf [afnørt på arabisk] er blevet til hamza [ligeledes afnørt på arabisk], hvorved Ordene i den hurtige Tale ofte bliver helt uigennemskuelige. Ganske vist kan man godt selv udtale qaf, men man maa nødvendigvis lære at kende Ordene i den anden Form. En anden vanskelighed er den stærke Sammentrækning af Ordene i den flydende Tale, og den skiftende Accent.¹⁵

Der er sikkert mange kolleger, der har haft samme oplevelse rundt om i den arabiske verden, og endnu i januar 1921 synes Pedersen ikke at være helt tilfreds med sin beherskelse af Cairo-dialekten. Han skriver nemlig i et andet brev til Buhl dateret den 25. januar 1921:

Desværre kan jeg ikke rose mig af at være stiv i Talen, men jeg forstaar efterhaanden ganske Godt hvad der bliver sagt.

Men der var heldigvis grupper med hvem han kunne føre samtaler på klassisk arabisk eller måske rettere på det, der i dag betegnes som *moderne standardarabisk*. Pedersen bosatte sig ved sin ankomst i Ismailiya-kvarteret, altså i den moderne del af det Cairo, der gennem anden del af det 19. århundrede oplevede en voldsom vækst og en rumlig transformation i kraft af de mange anlægsprojekter, khediverne satte i gang. I et brev til Buhl dateret den 2. november 1920 skriver han:

¹³ Om Kaptajn Magnus Julius Henry Davidsen se Winther 2006: 4-9.

¹⁴ Det er ikke lykkedes mig at spore Gardeners lærebog i Cairo-dialekt.

¹⁵ Brevene fra Pedersen til Buhl er katalogiseret som NKS 4962, Kvart. Min kollega professor Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen har også benyttet et par af brevene til sin artikel fra 2007 om ”Shaykherne og kokkepigen. Johannes Pedersen i Cairo, 1920-21.” Vi har i flere tilfælde hæftet os ved de samme iagttagelser.

Jeg har en halv times Gang til Azhar. Saa ofte jeg kan, gaar [jeg] derud og faar en Passiar med en af Boghandlerne. Det morer mig at sidde i deres Boder og tale med dem om Bøgerne og se paa deres Lager. Det er naturligvis mest de theologiske Materier som danner Samtalens Emne. Jeg fik sidste Søndag en lang Fremstilling af Islams Fortrin frem for alle andre Religioner: naturligvis bestod de mest i at Profeternes Segl havde bragt en shari‘a [anført på arabisk] der var bedre end alle andre. Som Eksempel nævntes Skilsmisse, og vedkommendes Respekt for mit Land forhøjedes betydeligt da jeg Fortalte ham, at vi ogsaa havde en saadan Institution hos os, om end i andre Former. For resten ved de efterhaanden meget god Besked med den europæiske Verden og alt hvad der foregaar. Jeg har kun truffet faa som ikke vidste hvor Danmark laa. I Paris traf jeg faa som vidste det i sin Tid.¹⁶

I ansøgningen til Carlsbergfondet om økonomisk støtte til studierejsen anførte Pedersen to grunde til projektet. På den ene side ønsket om at studere det moderne talesprog i Cairo og på den anden side at udbygge sit kendskab til den moderne orient. I sin senere afrapportering redegør han omhyggeligt for sine bestræbelser på at tilegne sig det moderne talesprog, og om sit andet mål skriver han som følger:

Ved Juletid tog jeg tilbage til Cairo [fra et ophold i Fayyum]. Jeg mente nu at være kommet saa vidt at jeg kunde begynde Virkeliggørelsen af min egentlige Plan, nemlig at træde i Forbindelse med de muslimske Lærde. Jeg flyttede fra mit europæiske Pensionat ud i de Indfødtes Kvarter, og efter nogen Søgen lykkedes det mig at faa en Shejch, som var Lærer ved Azhar-moskeen, til at læse med mig [et Par Timer dagligt – streget over i kladden]. Hos [oveskrevet Med] ham havde jeg et Par Timer daglig Undervisning og samtale ang muhammedanske Discipliner, især Metafysik, Logik og Pligtlære. Han førte mig snart til en Mængde andre Shejcher og han indførte mig i Azharmoskeen. Jeg tilbragte nu tre Maaneder, Januar-Marts, med Læsning med denne Shejch i Azharmoskeen og Studier, hvor jeg navnlig interesserede mig for Manuskripter fra den ældste Sufisme. Endvidere fortsatte jeg mit daglige Studium af de arabiske Aviser og søgte gennem Studium af tidlige Aargange paa Bibliotheket at faa et Indtryk af de senere Aars bevægede politiske Udvikling der har ført til Krav om mere Uafhængighed.

I det allerede omtalte brev fra Pedersen til Buhl af 25. januar 1921 fortæller han sin gamle lærer en smule mere om indholdet af disse studier:

Jeg er nu kommen mere i Forbindelse med de Lærde. Hver Eftermiddag kommer en Shejch med hvem jeg diskuterer Metafysikkens Problemer. Torsdag og Fredag læser vi to gange, om Formiddagen ‘ilm al-mantiq [skrevet på arabisk]. Jeg har

¹⁶ Pedersen havde under sin studietur 1909-1912 et ophold i Paris. Pedersen fik sin studenteksamen fra Sorø Akademi i 1902 og Akademiet har på www.soranerarkivet.dk et par interview med Pedersen optaget i 1965, hvor han giver en levende skildring af sine studier hos førende orientalistiske forskere i Europa.

besøgt Azhar sammen med ham og aflagt Besøg hos forskellige af de højlærde, de forlanger af mig at jeg skal gøre Rede for hvad Meningen er med Treenigheden, og de udtaler deres store Forbavelse over at Europa, der paa mange Omraader har gjort saa store Fremskridt, staar saa langt tilbage i ‘ilm al-Kalām [skrevet på arabisk]. Men for øvrigt er de gerne imponerede over at der er Folk i Europa som studerer Islam og udtaler deres Glæde over at jeg er kommet til Videnskabernes Centrum i Stedet for at øse af urene Kilder. Min Shejch fremstiller Religionens Sandheder i deres finere Begrænsning og taler om Vantroen som om han havde med en troende at gøre. Skønt jeg intet har foregjlet ham, antager han mig vistnok for en Slags hemmelig Muslim.

Det fremgår tydeligt, at Pedersen har følt sig som en fisk i vandet sammen med de lærde ved al-Azhar, og han har målrettet søgt så meget indsigt i det gamle universitet og dets institutionelle organisation, at han efter sin hjemkomst kunne udgive en mindre afhandling om et af den muslimske verdens førende universiteter. I 1922 udgav han *Al-Azhar – Et muhammedansk Universitet*,¹⁷ der grundigt redegør for universitets historie siden grundlæggelsen efter fatimidernes erobring af Cairo i 967, og som også forklarer om de reformer, der gennem de foregående årtier var blevet gennemført. Afhandlingen er fortsat den dag i dag en lille klassiker!

Pedersen brugte også en del tid på bibliotekerne i Cairo, dels på al-Azhars bibliotek men også på Sultan-biblioteket, hvor han bl.a. kopiere mindre afhandlinger af al-Ghazali, som han skriver i et af sine breve til Buhl. I afrapporteringen til Carlsbergfondet anfører han tillige, at han brugte en del tid på at studere manuskripter om den ældste sufisme, et område, der havde hans interesse gennem hele livet. Først efter at han i efteråret 1950 var gået af som professor, gjorde han en tekst af al-Sulamī (død 1021) med titlen *Kitāb tabaqāt al-sūfiya* endelig færdig og fik den udgivet i 1960.

Hvorledes sufismen blev praktiseret i Cairo i begyndelsen af det 20. århundrede, fik Pedersen oplevet ved selvsyn en aften i januar 1921. Han skriver herom til Buhl i sit brev af 25. januar 1921:

En mærkelig Oplevelse havde jeg forleden aften. Det var Abu ’Ilas Mulid og i den anledning Tog jeg ud til Bulaq, hvor hans Moske er. Der var fyldt af Mennesker paa Gaderne, og alt forløb som¹⁸ ved andre Mulider, Folk var i Grupper og drak Kaffe mens de hørte på Recitationer, Gaderne var illumineret og fra Boder Solgtes Sukkervarer. Men det interessante var Dervisherne, som jeg her saa for første Gang

¹⁷ Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning Nr. 124, V. Pios Boghandel-Poul Branner, København 1922. Bogen blev i 2007 genudgivet i et samlebind af Vandkunstens Forlag i København bestående af Pedersens lille afhandling suppleret med et bidrag af Mogens Munk Hansen om *Al-Azhar – Moskeens historiske bygningsanlæg* og et bidrag af Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen *Al-Azhar 1922-2006*.

¹⁸ Der er i brevet et ulæseligt ord efter ”som,” men meningen er klar nok.

rigtigt. De stod i Telte og foretog rytmiske Bevægelser med Overkroppen, snart langsomt, snart voldsomt, til de tumlede om med begejstrede Blikke eller stirrende som berusede. I Teltene var der Bænke, hvor Folk sad og drak Kaffe og lod sig opbygge af Synet. Jeg var klædt i Tarbush, saa jeg blev taget for Efendi; en ung Mand kom ud af et af Teltene og førte mig ind, og jeg saa paa Skuespillet en Tid, men gik saa min Vej, at det ikke skulde gaa mig som Saul. Jeg var også inde i Moskeen og saa til min Forbavelse at ogsaa den var fuld af Dervisher.

Pedersen var tydeligvis også interesseret i at få indsigt i så meget om det moderne Egypten, som det nu var muligt under sit ophold i landet og i Cairo. Under et besøg over flere uger i Fayyum omkring juletid 1920 besøgte han også landsbyerne i den frugtbare oase, og fik på den måde indsigt i, hvorledes livet blev levet i mere landlige omgivelser. Men han var mest i Cairo og oplevede den egyptiske metropol over vinteren 1920-21, hvor den politiske situation var ganske anspændt. Egyptiske nationalister havde krævet tilladelse til at repræsentere landet i forbindelse med fredsforhandlinger i Versailles i 1919, men det krav var blevet afvist af englænderne.¹⁹ Det gav anledning til voldsomme demonstrationer, og de spændinger var endnu til stede, da Pedersen ankom til byen. I et brev til H.O. Lange af 17. februar 1921 skriver han:

Ægypten er for Tiden en mærkelig Blanding med alle Nuancer fra den ægte Middelalder til den mest moderne Nutid. Hvis landet virkelig faar Uafhængighed vil disse Modsætninger sikkert træde stærkt frem og frembringe stærke Gnidninger. Men et interessant Land er det – alt for meget for et halvt Aars Tid.

De aktuelle forhold bliver også omtalt i brevet til Buhl af 25. januar 1921, hvor det igen er spændingen mellem velkendte traditioner på den ene side og de samtidige udfordringer fra en verden i dramatisk udvikling på den anden, der får Pedersen til at skrive som følger:

Cairo er en mærkelig Verden. Hele Azharkredsen lever fuldkommen i Middelalderen, og andre Kredse repræsenterer de mest hypermoderne Ideer. Forleden dag mødte jeg en Mand, der har været Azhari og er ansat i Waqf-Ministeriet; han gaar klædt i Kaftan og 'Imama, men indvendig har han forladt det hele, et Resultat af et Ophold i Frankrig. Og dog kan man ved at tale med en tilsyneladende fuldkommen Efendi pludselig opdage at han i Bund og Grund er Orientaler.

Cairo var og blev en metropol, og derfor er tendenser fra andre dele af verden også levende til stede i Egypten i 1920-21. Pedersen fortsætter brevet som følger:

¹⁹ Eugene Rogan 2009: 191ff.

En aften var jeg i Selskab med en Læge, en Dommer og en Bibliotekar somaabnbarede mig at de var Bahaister, men hemmeligt for at undslippe Fanatismen. De mente at der var ca. 300 af deres Sekt hernede, og udtalte Haab om at jeg vilde føre den sande Religion til Danmark.

Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) har som bekendt fået status som en af den arabisk-muslimske verdens centrale reformatorer. Det syn på hans virke deles ikke helt af Pedersen. I brevet dateret den 7. februar 1921 til Buhl skriver han om den Azhar-lærde, han blev undervist af:

Han lever fuldstændigt inden for Skolastikernes Horisont, og det er overordentligt interessant at høre hans Domme over Livets Foretelser. Han er discipel af Muhammad 'Abduh og jeg ser igennem ham, hvor urigtigt det vilde være at bedømme denne Retning som Liberalisme. I Praxis er der ganske vist en vis Liberalitet hernede for Tiden, og det hænger sammen med at den nye Nationalbevægelse har samlet alle, ikke mod Europæerne men mod Englænderne.

I afrapporteringen til Carlsbergfondet er Pedersen om muligt endnu mere forbeholden i sin vurdering af udviklingen i Egypten og den reformbevægelse 'Abduh havde sat i gang. Han skriver her om det Cairo, han levede i fra oktober 1920 til april 1921, på baggrund af studier af førende Cairo-aviser fra de foregående år og de tilbagevendende politiske krav om fuld uafhængighed, der blev formuleret af dele af den egyptiske elite:

Alle Ægyptere er stærkt optagede af Bevægelsen [den nationale bevægelse] og jeg var Bestandig Vidne til Demonstrationer paa Gaderne. Der er ingen Tvivl om at Bevægelsen er af stor Betydning, ogsaa fra et alment kulturhistorisk Synspunkt, paa Overfladen er den rent national, uden hensyn til Religionsforskelle; men i Virkeligheden ligger Modsatningen mellem den muh. Orient og Europa bagved, og Bevægelsens videre Forløb vil sikkert faa Indflydelse paa Islams Udvikling. Den Krise som er Opstaaet inden for Islam ved Mødet med den europæiske Kultur har afført visse Reformbestræbelser. Disse har hidtil væsentlig kun antaget fast Form i en enkelt Bevægelse, der indledtes for en Menneskealder siden af Ægyptens Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh. Det har interesseret mig at studere denne Bevægelse nøjere i de Spor den har afsat i Litteraturen, i Lovene og de almindelige Anskuelser som drøftes Mand og Mand imellem. Som maskeret "Returning"²⁰ er den ved at ebbe ud, men de Problemer den søger at løse trænger sig stadig paa og vil sikkert frembringe nye Reformretninger. En Grundtanke ved alle hidtidige Bevægelser af den Art er imidlertid at de er Compromisforsøg; en indefra kommende Reformatorisk Aand kan [må læses har] Islam ikke.

²⁰ Et meget sjældent eksempel på brug af engelsk i Pedersens breve, her brugt med henvisning til reformbevægelsens ønske om at vende tilbage til den islamiske traditions kilder for at genskabe islams oprindelige dynamik.

Pedersen kommenterer på den egyptiske debat i flere forskellige sammenhænge og enkelte steder i brevene fra Cairo slår hans humor stærkt igennem. Omkring juletid 1920 flyttede Pedersen som allerede nævnt fra den nyere moderne del af Cairo til et mere folkeligt kvarter. Han skriver herom til Buhl i et brev dateret den 25. januar 1921:

Siden Julen har jeg igen været i Cairo, og har foretaget en Forandring i min Levemaade, idet jeg har faaet et Værelse i ”le quartier des indigènes”, i Darb al-Munajjama [skrevet på arabisk], en af de smaa Sidegader til Muhammad Ali Gaden. Lejligheden tilhører en dansk Haandværker som har en tydsk Kone; i øvrigt bebos Huset mest af Grækere. Foruden Værelset har jeg et Køkken, og en arabisk Kokkepige sørger for den daglige Ernæring. Hun bærer Navnet Mufida, er Mulat, skilt fra to Mænd og 19 Aar gammel. Hun er fyldt med Ægyptens Overtro og fortæller mig en mængde Ting, når hun ikke er Fornærmet, hvilket i øvrigt hyppigt hænder.

I en anden sammenhæng er det dog tydeligt, at Pedersen har betydelig sympati for den unge pige og hendes forsøg på at skærme den danske orientalist mod al for stor påvirkning fra de traditionelle lærde på al-Azhar. Pedersen anfører i et andet brev, at hans Azhar-lærer har advaret ham kraftigt imod ”*at omgaas for meget med simple Folk, der ikke ”taler Arabisk,*” som han skriver i et brev til Buhl af 7. februar 1921. I samme brev skriver han:

Min Shejchs Lærdom suppleres fortræffeligt af min Kokkepige, som ikke er fri for at være noget mistænksom mod ham. Hun siger disse Shejcher beder for meget, og så ligger al-balāwī [skrevet på arabisk] under deres Bedetæpper. Jeg maa tilstaa at hun er morsommere end han.

Men det var ikke bare i Egypten, at en ny Orient var ved at tage form. Det samme gjorde sig gældende i de arabiske provinser, der indtil Osmannerrigets sammenbrud i 1918 havde været en del af historiens sidste muslimske dynastiske imperium. Pedersen rejste den 28. april 1921 fra Cairo med toget med kurs mod Jerusalem. Her besøgte han historiske mindesmærker, foretog rejser rundt i Palæstina på hesteryg og noterer i et brev til Buhl dateret den 22. juni 1921, at europæiske orientalister igen er ved at indfinde sig i den gamle hovedstad – som Buhl i øvrigt selv besøgte i 1889. Ligesom tilfældet var med Pedersen, var det en bevilling fra Carlsbergfondet, der gjorde det besøg muligt.²¹ Pedersen skriver:

²¹ Se *Carlsbergfondets Understøttelser 1876-1926*: 71 og Pedersens nekrolog over Buhl i Pedersen 1934: 1f. I Buhs efterladte papirer i Håndskriftsamlingen på Det Kongelige Bibliotek findes et par dagbøger fra Buhs rejse i Palæstina med beskrivelser af bl.a. Klippemoskeen og al-Aqsa-moskeen.

I Jerusalem er der efterhaanden kommet adskillige Kredse af europæiske Videnskabsmænd, der nu har dannet et fælles Selskab (med Møder og Tidsskrift). Midtpunktet dannes vel nok af de franske Dominikanere; tillige er der et engelsk og et amerikansk Institut.

Pedersen havde i et brev fra Cairo til H.O. Lange nævnt, at han måske i Damaskus ville være i stand til at lokalisere interessante manuskripter til Det Kongelige Bibliotek. Det skulle vise sig ikke at være tilfældet, men i brevet til Buhl gør Pedersen sig nogle overvejelser over forskellen mellem metropolen Cairo og Damaskus, som han opholdt sig i en lille måneds tid, før han igen rejste mod Jerusalem via Beirut og siden Cairo for at vende tilbage til Danmark:

Her har jeg faaet en meget hjertelig Modtagelse, og er fra første Dag kommen i nær Berøring med Folk. Venligheden er så [ulæseligt] at jeg vanskeligt kan sidde i Ro paa Biblioteket og se i et Ms uden at en kommer for at vise mig noget endnu interessertere. Damaskus er langt mere uberørt af europæisk Indflydelse end Cairo; her er ikke saa megen muhammedansk Lærdom som der, men jeg har Indtryk af at man arbejder mere uhindret af Skolastikken. Man har oprettet Jam'īya 'Ilmīya [skrevet på arabisk] som udgiver et Tidsskrift og søger Forbindelse med Europa. Politisk er Stemningen her langt roligere end i Ægypten; General Gouraud fik en Modtagelse her i gaar som ingen Englænder vilde faa i nogen ægyptisk By. I øvrigt havde de sidste Uroligheder i Alexandria vistnok været Englænderne meget kærkomne, da de vil benytte dem som Paaskud til at undlade at opfylde Løfter som de har været saa letsindige at give Ægypterne. Jeg bliver her endnu nogle Dage, tager saa over Ba'albek til Beirut og videre til Jerusalem. Ved Midten af juli Maaned haaber jeg at kunde begynde Hjemrejsen fra Alexandria.

Den plan skulle vise sig at holde, og Pedersen kunne i august måned 1921 næsten på årsdagen for sin afrejse igen sætte sine ben i København. Han var dermed klar til igen at optage sit virke på Københavns Universitet som forsker, der allerede med udgivelsen af *Israel I-II* forud for sin afrejse til Orienten havde indskrevet sig som en af den europæiske orientalistiks førende forskere. Han blev i 1922 udnævnt som Buhls efterfølger som professor i semitisk filologi ved Københavns Universitet.²² Og med de værker om den arabiske muslimske tradition, han siden forfattede, er der ingen tvivl om, at alle personlige intentioner med studierejsen blev indfriet. Europæisk orientalistik fik en række vægtige værker og hans eget personlige udbytte var også stort. Pedersen afslutter sin afrapportering til Carlsbergfondet med disse ord:

²² I et brev fra Pedersen til Buhl dateret 7. februar 1921 skrev han: *Mine Interesser er jo knyttede til der Fag som hører under det semitiske Professorat, og intet ville være mig kærere end om jeg maatte blive udset til at være den som skulde afløse Dem naar De engang forlader Deres Stilling.*

Udbryttet af min Rejse har været dels et personligt Kendskab til orientalsk Liv og specielt til Islam som det leves i vore Dage, dels et stærkt Indtryk af Oldtiden saaledes som det faas ved Synet af de endnu eksisterende Mindesmærker og Skuepladsen for den gamle Historie. Jeg slutter min Beretning med en Tak til Direktionen for Carlsberfondet fordi den med sin Bevilling har sat mig i Stand til at faa denne og for mine Studier betydningsfulde store Oplevelse.

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Abstract

The recipient of this Festschrift was in her capacity as the Professor of Semitic Philology also the Warden of "Johannes Pedersen Grant." I know that Kerstin Eksell respects her predecessor and therefore I have used the opportunity to re-read a number of letters which Johannes Pedersen wrote to his colleagues in Denmark when he was studying in Cairo 1920-21. I have also re-read his applications to Carlsberg Foundation and looked into the goals that he intended to reach during his stay in Cairo. I have chosen to give extensive quotations from his applications and letters in order to let Johannes Pedersen himself speak in the Festschrift addressed to one of his successors.

Key-words: Danish oriental studies, Johannes Pedersen, H.O.Lange, Frants Buhl, The Carlsberg Foundation, al-Azhar.

Moderne arabisk prosa – en oversikt

Stephan Guth¹
Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

Artikkelen er en kortfattet gjennomgang gjennom historien til skjønnlitterær arabisk prosa i perioden fra 1800-tallet inntil i dag med fokus på utviklingene i Egypt og Levanten. Historien er delt i sju perioder. Et siste kapittel tar foran seg den islamske religionens plass blant emnene, moderne arabiske prosalitteratur er mest opptatt av.²

Keywords: Moderne arabisk litteratur, roman, novelle, litteraturhistorie, nasjonallitteratur, realisme, Ny sensibilitet / al-Ḥassāsiyya al-jadīda, postmoderne, Ny humanisme.

Framveksten av moderne arabisk prosa under nahḍa-tiden (andre halvparten av 1800-tallet)

Sammen med teater/drama vokste moderne arabisk prosalitteratur fram fra midten av 1800-tallet. Framveksten skjedde parallelt med, og som en integrert bestanddel av, kraftige forandringer på det økonomiske, det politiske, det sosiale og det kulturelle feltet. For å komme seg bort fra det som ofte opplevdes som ”forfall/nedgang” (*inhiṭāt*), for å møte utfordringene (og takle de territorielle tapene) som nasjonale uavhengighetsbevegelser førstesaket i en rekke provinser under Det osmanske rike, og for å innhente det kraftige og stadig mer innflytelsesrike Vesten, som den arabiske verden (og Midtøsten generelt) følte seg forsinkel og mindreverdig overfor, særlig med hensyn til militær og teknologisk utvikling, hadde regionen en periode med omfattende og dyptgående reformer. Disse ble igangsatt i første halvdelen av århundret av den osmanske sultan (*tanzīmāt* = ”korrekturen, rettelser, reformer”) og i Egypt av sultanens ”visekonge”, Muhammad ‘Alī (r. 1805–48). Reformene omfattet alle viktige statlige sektorer og siktet mot å erstatte utdaterte militære, juridiske, administrative og pedagogiske institusjoner med ”moderne”, oppdaterte. For å samle og implementere de nødvendige kunnskapene sendte man grupper av studenter til Europa og inviterte europeiske rådgivere til landet, man laget arabiske oversettelser av (for det meste vitenskapelige) publikasjoner og

¹ E-mail address: stephan.guth@ikos.uio.no

² Tusen takk til min kollega Gunvor Mejell for tålmodig hjelp med å «språkvaske» denne artikkelen. En kortfattet engelsk versjon av den er planlagt publisert i *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd edition.

lærebøker, man opprettet nye skoler og høyskoler med moderne pensum (f.eks. undervisning i *al-‘ulūm al-hadītha*, ”de moderne vitenskapene” og fremmedspråk i stedet for den tradisjonelle islamske kunnskapskanon), og man utvidet raskt trykkerivesenet. To av de prosessene som ble satt i gang av reformbevegelsen, ble avgjørende for historien til det moderne Midtøsten og dens litteratur. For det første vokste det fram en ny sosial gruppe, eller klasse: *efendiyya*, dvs. en utdannet elite som hadde studert i Europa og gått på vestlige misjonærskoler som allerede fantes i regionen, eller på skolene til det nye, i høy grad sekulariserte systemet, og som jobbet i moderne, for det meste statlige institusjoner (skoler, domstoler, det offentlige, osv.), senere også i privat sektor (spesielt pressen). I motsetning til den tradisjonelle, hovedsakelig religiøse eliten (*‘ulamā’*) syntes *efendī*-ene (hvis typiske antrekk besto av en kombinasjon av europeisk *redingote* og tyrkisk *fess/tarbūsh*) at de selv var ”sosialingeniører” i et samfunn som etter deres oppfatning var et ”maskineri”, et mekanisk system (*al-hay’ a al-ijtimā’ iyya*) som trengte å bli ”reparert” av dem, av de ”opplyste” fakkelbærerne for vitenskaps- og rasjonalitetsbasert ”framskritt” (*taraqqī, taqaddum*). Ofte anså de seg selv også som ”lege” for ”syke pasienter”. De fleste forfatterne av moderne arabisk prosa tilhørte denne klassen av ”intellektuelle” (*muthaqqaṭūn*). For det andre var de nye institusjonene i de fleste tilfeller implementert *parallelt* med sine gamle motparter (koranskoler, *madāris*, *shari‘a*-domstoler osv.), noe som skapte en situasjon med stadig konkurranse og motstand, om ikke åpen rivalisering, bland representantene for de to gruppene, der alle prøvde å erobre og/eller forsøre sin plass i samfunnet. Dermed ble litteratur/*adab* et felt der den gamle og ny eliten konkurrerte.

De virkemidlene den nye eliten benyttet seg av for å fremme sine ideer, å angripe tradisjonalistene og derved å forhandle sin plass i et samfunn som holdt på med å forandre seg, var hovedsakelig teatret (siden sent i 1850-årene, først i Libanon) og den private presse (fra 1860-/70-årene og utover), og det var mens kampene mellom de gamle, etablerte sjangrene og de nye ”antisjangrene” pågikk, at det gamle begrepet *adab* begynte å få sin moderne betydning som ”litteratur” (mens prosa og drama i sin tur til en viss grad, og inntil ca. annen verdenskrig, ofte ble tillagt egenskaper som klassisk *adab* inntil da hadde hatt, slik som å være språklig tiltrekksende og på samme tid nyttig underholdning – med andre ord det gamle Horatsiske idealet om *prodesse et delectare* – men også god moral og kultur generelt).³ Både den modernistiske og den konservative leiren stolte på at det ville utvikle seg en ny offentlig sfære i den forestilte ”nasjonen” – ”folket” – som de skulle få støtte fra og rette budskapene sine til (i motsetning til den

³ jf. Guth 2010b og 2011a.

herskende eliten, som hadde vært adressaten til formoderne raffinert ”høy” kultur), og søkte derfor å popularisere kunnskap og å spre ”moderne, opplyste” ideer. I aviser og tidsskrifter var satire (bitende latterliggjøring av tradisjonalisme, formalisme, ”bakstreverskhet”) og fortellende prosa de mest populære sjangrene ved siden av artikler (*maqāla*) og brev/avhandlinger (*risāla*) som diskuterte aktuelle hendelser og forsøkte å gjøre leserne kjent med alle typer nyttig moderne kunnskap. Alle tekster fra denne perioden er preget av en sterk tilstedsvarsel av en paternalistisk forfatter-forteller som leserens lærer og veileder. Siden man forventet av litteraturen at den ville opplyse og reformere samfunnet og bidra til å bygge en moderne ”nasjon” (begrepene *waṭaniyya* og *qawmiyya* var på alles lepper på denne tiden), var det helt avgjørende med referensialitet, dvs. at litteratur måtte referere til verden utenfor seg selv (i motsetning til selvrefleksiviteten som i høy grad preget det retoriserte litterære språket i tradisjonell estetikk). Fram til tidlig i det 20. århundret antok en gruppe intellektuelle at det absolutt var mulig å bruke ”innfødte” sjangere til moderne formål, om de bare ble reformert og tilpasset dagens behov. I deres øyne kunne *nahda*-prosjektet, den mye etterlengtede ”oppvåkningen” og ”gjenfødselen” eller ”renessansen”, vel oppnås ved hjelp av en ”revitalisering” eller ”gjenopplivning” (*iḥyā*) av tradisjonen og ved at man utnyttet den litterære arvens rikdommer.⁴ I de fleste tilfellene var imidlertid arven som disse ”neo-klassisistene” gjenoppdaget, ikke den samme som den kanonen som ble promotert av de mer konservative tradisjonalistene. De konsentrerte seg derfor ikke bare om å redigere og publisere (med håp om å popularisere) store klassiske *adab*-verk (jf. f.eks. M. 'Abduhs redigering av al-Hamadhānīs *maqāmāt*) så vel som klassiske ordbøker og leksika, men også om å løfte ”folklig” litteratur (inntil da nesten utelukkende tradert muntlig og betraktet som en del av ”lav”-kulturen, ikke verdig den utdannede elitens oppmerksomhet) opp, slik at den ble ”ærverdig” skriftlig/trykt litteratur (for dette formålet måtte populære romanser og eposer ofte bli ”oversatt” fra talespråket til litterær *fuṣḥā*). Denne typen litteratur virket mer livlig, mindre kunstig for dem enn den tradisjonelle estetikkens ”døde” selvrefleksivitet, som virket som om den ikke hadde mye med virkeligheten å gjøre, med sine utslitte bilder og sin hengivenhet til ”vakre” betydninger og lyder. Selv om neoklassisistene likevel opprettet holdt en ofte krevende stil i sine egne skrifter⁵ og på denne måten angrep tradisjonalismen ”by using the legitimating principles of the traditionalists to subvert it”,⁶ så betydde, eller innebar, skjønnlitteraturens

⁴ Hallaq/Toelle 2007.

⁵ Se f.eks. A. F. al-Shidyāq (1804–87), Nāṣīf og Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī (hhv. 1800–71 og 1847–1906) og Muḥ. al-Muwaylihī (1858–1930).

⁶ Hamarneh 1998: 231b.

instrumentalisering som virkemiddel for opplysning og reform svært ofte en bevisst ofring av klassiske estetiske idealer, elitære som de var, til fordel for mindre forskjønnede, mer underholdende fortellinger.

Ved å gjøre det nærmest de seg den andre trenden, som etter hvert tok over fra de neoklassisistiske tendensene og ble dominerende rundt år 1900, etter at den allerede hadde begynt å gjøre seg gjeldende mye tidligere i mange oversettelser og bearbeidelser/ ”indigenizations”,⁷ hovedsakelig fra fransk og engelsk, så vel som i ”sosialromansene” skrevet (siden 1870) av Salīm al -Bustānī (1846–84), Nu‘mān ‘Abduh al -Qasātilī (1854–1920) og andre.⁸ I motsetning til tradisjonalistene og neoklassisistene søkte denne gruppen (ofte kristne) forfattere inspirasjon verken hos den klassiske arven eller den ovenfor nevnte ”lave” folkelige tradisjonen, men hovedsakelig hos vestlige modeller. De viet mye av sin energi og aktivitet til oversettelse og adaptering, men om ikke så lenge kom de ut med egne verk også (den første fortellingen av ”vestlig” type er, etter alt å dømme, Khalīl al-Khūrīs (1836–1907) *Way, idhan lastu bi-ifranjī!* (Åh, kjære, så jeg er ikke europeer, da!), 1859/60). Disse fant en bredere leserkrets fra 1890-tallet og utover, takket være Jurjī Zaydāns (1861–1914) historiske romaner.⁹ Forfatterne i denne gruppen verken hevdet eller ønsket lenger å produsere ”god” eller ”vakker”, dvs., språklig krevende, kunstnerisk retorisert prosa i tråd med klassiske normer. For dem, som for deres nye og voksende sekulariserte ”borgerlige” lesepúblikum, var praktisk nytteverdi, jordnærhet og vitalitet, diskusjon om og fremming av moderne politiske og sosiale ideer det som var viktigst, og som ble regnet som progressivt. I prosatekstene ble det derfor ofte innbygd lange passasjer som skulle formidle all slags kunnskap (fra historie til teknologiske prestasjoner, fra geografi og etnografi til religiøse og filosofiske ideer); presentasjon av politiske utopier (antidespotisme, konstitusjonalisme); diskusjon av idealer som *liberté, égalité, fraternité* eller utdanning av kvinner; iscenesettelse av tilsvarende sosiale og moralske konflikter (tradisjonell vs. ny elite, gamle vs. nye verdier); understrekning av prosaens henvisning til, og relevans for, det som skjer her og nå, dens ”realisme”; lovprising av *resonnement* (‘aql) over blind tradisjon (*naql*) eller tankeløs imitasjon av vestlig livsstil (*tafarnuj*); og hylling av menneskets levende og følende hjerte vs. formalistisk klamring til normene som man hadde arvet fra ”forfallsepoken”, og som ble ansett som fiendtlig innstilt til livet.

Emosjonalitet og ”nasjonallitteratur” (tidlig 1900-tall)

Den emosjonalistiske trenden var sterkest rundt første verdenskrig, spesielt med

⁷ Peled 1979, Bardenstein 2005.

⁸ Badr 1983, Dolinina 1973, Guth 1999, Hafez 1993, Moosa 1983.

⁹ Kračkovskij 1930, Pérès 1957.

forfattere som Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī (1876–1924) og Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (også Kahlil Gibran, 1883–1931). Deres for det meste kontemplative fortellere reflekterer forfattere som hevder å ha overlegen, ”filosofisk” kunnskap om verden – Jubrān sammenlignet seg til og med med en profet (*Profeten*, 1923). Deres radikalt idealistiske ”svart-hvitt”-moralisme, kombinert med en tåredryppende sentimentalitet, kan leses som uttrykk for et ønske om å markere seg selv (og det nylig framvoksende borgerskapet) som en viktig sosial aktør (noe som antydet, om ennå ikke åpent, at de burde gis politisk makt også). På den ene side kan det at denne gruppens rettferdige, ærlige, uskyldige helter taper kampen mot representanter for den herskende elite – et tap som blir tegnet med stor ”tragikk” – tolkes som uttrykk for forfatternes følelse av total maktesløshet overfor den utholdende gamle orden, det være seg sultanens ”despotisme” eller en økt utenlandsk dominans/kolonialisme. På den annen side er det et opprørsk ramaskrik og en kritikk av den eksisterende orden som noe urettferdig og illegitimt¹⁰ og dermed klart en form for hard sosial og politisk kritikk. Den store popularitet denne skrivemåten nøt på sin tid, skyldtes også et foredlet språk som lyktes i å bruke elementer fra ”høye” registre i klassisk arabisk til spiritualisering og emosjonalisering.

De maktesløse ”filosof-profetenes” jamrende klager ble imidlertid gradvis erstattet av en mer dynamisk trend, da nasjonalismen ble hoveddrivkraften for de utdannede elitene og forfatterne utviklet ideer om en ”nasjonal(-)litteratur” (*adab qawmī*). Tendensen begynte å gjøre seg bemerket fra ca. 1910 – Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykals (1888–1956) *Zaynab* (1913) blir ofte betraktet som den første ”ekte egyptiske” romanen. Nasjonallitteraturbevegelsen forkastet den tidligere tradisjonalismen og neoklassismen som foreldet og elitistisk og vraket ”manfalūṭisk romantisme” som altfor idealistisk og ”passiv”; i stedet fremmet bevegelsens tilhengere ”realisme” som sitt program (i forordet til novellesamlingen *Ihsān Hānim*, publisert i 1921, gjengir Īsā ‘Ubayd begrepet som *madhhab al-ḥaqā’iq*, ”de sanne faktas metode”). En ”moderne” litteratur burde være ”basert på observasjon (*mulāḥaza*) og psykologisk analyse for å portrettere livet som det er, uten overdrivelse eller beskjæring” (ibid.). I motsetning til oversatt skjønnlitteratur, som oversvømte markedet, men hadde sin bakgrunn i ikke-arabiske miljøer, skulle nasjonallitteraturen handle om lokale forhold, portrettere ”typiske” karakterer og den ”nasjonale personlighet” og ta opp presserende problemer i det moderne samfunnet, alt dette i en ikke-elitistisk, funksjonell stil som ikke burde avstå fra å nevne dårlige forhold og gjerne også bruke ”stygge” ord der de passet. Innholdets ekthet, kombinert med en moderne,

¹⁰ Najīb 1983, Guth 1997.

om nødvendig komplisert, fortellerteknikk ville, ble det antatt, til slutt sikre global anerkjennelse, om ikke aksept, i kretsen av verdens mest kultiverte land. Det var hovedsakelig i novellesjangeren at forfattere fra ”Den moderne skole” (*al-Madrasa al-Hadītha*), som brødrene Taymūr (Muhammad, 1891/2–1921; Maḥmūd, 1894–1973), Maḥmūd Tāhir Lāshīn (1894–1954) eller Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī (1905–92) prøvde å oversette sitt program til konkrete stykker av litteratur. Ifølge Hafez var det Lāshīn som brakte den nye fortellende diskursen til en tilstand av ”modning”.¹¹

Senere ”nasjonallitteratur” (mellomkrigstid)

Da romanen fulgte, var *adab qawmī*-pionerenes første entusiastiske optimisme imidlertid allerede blitt ganske sjeldent – den fortsatt selvsikre, skjønt nokterne tro som Tāhā Husayn (1889–1973) hadde på at landet hans tilhørte en middelhavssivilisasjon i stedet for den arabisk-islamske verden, og, i romanselvbiografien *al-Ayyām* (i: 1929; ii: 1939; iii: 1973), at framskritt faktisk var mulig, står nesten som et unntak på den tiden. I de fleste andre tilfeller, som Ibrāhīm ‘Abdalqādir al-Māzinī (1889–1949), ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād (1889–1964) eller Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1987), er det tydelig fra deres triste kapitulasjon overfor fakta, fra det forbitrede uttrykket i deres ideologier eller den anstrengte insisteringen på at det å ha glede av lidelse faktisk er en nasjonal egenskap (al-Ḥakīm, i *‘Awdat al-rūh*, 1934), at den nye, sekulært utdannede, urbane middelklassens noble, men altfor urealistiske idealisme har gått gjennom en periode med bitter skuffelse: gapet mellom dem og ”nasjonen/folket” var blitt åpenbart og virket nå uovervinnelig. Alt håp om at massene, spesielt de på den underutviklede landsbygden, lett ville akseptere de urbane *effendi*-enes veiledning og takket være selve veiledningen snart ville utvikle seg til et moderne ”progressivt” samfunn, hadde vist seg å være forgjeves. Konsekvensen var at en rekke forfattere ga opp å skrive eller trakk seg inn i sine ”elfenbenstårn” (jf. tittelen på P. Starkeys studie om al-Ḥakīm). Gapet hadde oppstått i arabiske samfunn under *nahḍa*-tiden da ”tradisjon vs. modernitet”-skillet ble skapt, og har fortsatt å prege, og ofte forfölge, moderne arabisk prosa (jf. Selim 2004). Konflikten ble enda skarpere i mellomkrigstiden og under annen verdenskrig på grunn av økt industrialisering og en massiv tilstrømning av arbeidsmigranter fra landsbyene til storbyene. I romanene tok den ofte form av et sammenstøt mellom (framskrittsorientert og opplyst) individ og (tilbakestående, uvitende) samfunn eller ”by mot bygd”. I en periode preget av ideologisk radikalisering da også kommunisme, sosialisme, fascism og det muslimske brorskapet ble dannet,

¹¹ Hafez 1993: 215 ff.

tenderte prosaforfattere til å forklare verden og vanskelighetene moderniseringsprosjektet medførte, samt sine egne roller i samfunnet, i form av ideologisk dualisme som f.eks. ”Vestens materialisme vs. Østens spiritualisme”. Disse ble også brukt som forklaring på meget personlige feil, f.eks. en arabisk manns mislykkede forsøk på å ha et forhold til en vestlig kvinne: Konfliktene ble ofte både kulturalisert og kjønnet.

Sosial(istisk) realisme og ”nyromantikken”

Der skuffelsen ikke ble omgjort til ideologi, fostret den i forfatterne en gjenoppdagelse av kjernekonseptet til det som ”nasjonallitteraturens” forfektere hadde oppfordret til: realisme. Den nye realistiske trenden dominerte scenen inntil sekstiårene og kom i høy grad til å bli identifisert med de tidlige verkene til en av dens store talsmenn: Najīb Mahfūz (også Naguib Mahfouz, 1911–2006). Som den forrige generasjonen trodde også de nye realistene at litteraturen burde gjenspeile virkeligheten som det var, usminket, for å komme videre med framskrittsprosjektet. Imidlertid var ”virkeligheten” for dem ikke bare en nasjonal, men først og fremst en sosial sak. ”Nasjonen”, dvs. fellesskapet som *adab qawmī*-gruppen ville bidra til å skape ved å representere og utmale det i litteraturen, var nå på plass. Men det var fortsatt langt fra det man hadde håpet på. Etter at usannsynlig idealistiske og søkte forestillinger hadde vist seg å være like unyttige som fortvilet passivitet, var det blitt forfatternes plikt å holde speilet opp foran selve nasjonen og å utøve samfunnskritikk. (Legg merke til at ”realisme” nå oftest ble gjengitt som *wāqi‘iyā*, ikke lenger som *madhhāb al-ḥaqā‘iq*, dvs. at de nye realistene erstattet den sublime idealismen som tross alt lå i *adab qawmī*-pionerenes søk etter ”sannheten”, med en orientering mot *al-wāqi‘*, dvs. mot det som faktisk var ”tilfellet” – jf. etymologi: *wāqi‘* < √*wq* ”å falle; å skje” og norsk *tilfelle* = låneoversettelse av eng. *case* < lat. *cadere* ”å falle; å skje”.) Mange forfattere var påvirket av den tanke, som var fremmet av franske eksistensialister, spesielt Sartre, at litteraturen burde ta ansvar for samfunnet, og at engasjement var en moralsk plikt (fransk *littérature engagée* ble gjengitt som *adab multazim* i arabisk).¹² Sammenlignet med *adab qawmī*s eksperimentelle miniatyrbilder utvidet blikket seg nå og kom til å dekke mer komplekse panoramaer, f.eks. ”livsverdenen” til et urbant nabolag i sin helhet eller et landsbysamfunn. Dette medførte at lengre sjangere (særlig romaner) ble favorisert (ved siden av de fortsatt populære novellene). I romanene var søkerlyset ikke lenger så mye på forfatter-fortellerens egne problemer (noe som var tilfellet hos pionerene), men på ondene samfunnet som helhet led av, f.eks. føydalsystemet, fortsatt utenlandsk

¹² Klemm 1998.

dominans, utbredt korruption og sosial ulikhet, kvinnenes situasjon, ungdommens ideologiske forvirring, første verdenskrig og dens etterspill osv. Førstepersonfortellinger ble sjeldnere, og i stedet kom tredjepersonsfortellinger der leseren riktignok fortsatt følte at forfatteren var til stede, men der denne hadde trukket seg tilbake og nøyde seg med sporadiske kommentarer, ellers var han en stille, ”objektiv” observatør som lot figurene sine tale selv (dialoger, fri indirekte tale) mens han selv forble utenfor hendelsene. I noen tilfeller (f.eks. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sharqāwī, 1920–87) inngikk realismen en forbindelse med ideologi, noe som dannet en ”sosialistisk realisme”. Den var mindre tilbakeholdende, når det gjaldt direkte å foreslå løsninger på problemene i etterkrigstiden og den tidlige Nasser-perioden, enn en Maḥfūz, Yūsuf Idrīs (1927–91), Yūsuf al-Shārūnī (1924–), Fathī Ghānim (1924–99) eller Ghassān Kanafānī (1936–72). Samtidig hevet mange kvinnelige forfattere sin røst mot den patriarkalske sosiale orden (Laylā Ba‘albakkī, 1934–; Laṭīfa al-Zayyāt, 1923–96)¹³. Siden litteraturkritikk fra Nasser-tiden av var anpasset regimet, ble ikke-”progressive” tendenser som den såkalte nyromantikken – forfattere som Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ‘Abdallāh (1913–70),¹⁴ Yūsuf al-Sibā‘ī (1917–78)¹⁵ eller Ihsān ‘Abd al-Quddūs (1919–90) – ignorert som ”eskapister” til tross for at de nøt stor popularitet og (ved siden av at de unektelig hadde sentimentale trekk) pleide å følge en realistisk agenda. For det meste tok de jo opp emner fra den tabutunge triaden sex, religion og politikk¹⁶ på en dristig måte som noen ganger også skapte skandaler.

Mellom realisme og postrealisme

I løpet av de første årene av sin regjeringsperiode var Nasser i stand til å gi den arabiske verden tilbake mye av håpet den hadde mistet i mellomkrigstiden og i perioden umiddelbart etter annen verdenskrig. I 1948 hadde Israel påført de arabiske armeene et stort nederlag og opprettet en egen stat. ”*Il-Rayyis*” kunne feire en taktisk seier i Suez-krisen og klarte å nasjonalisere Suezkanalen. For første gang etter mange tiår av nærmest koloniale forhold ble det oppnådd ekte suverenitet etter utvisning av utlendingene og de siste britiske troppene. Kongen ble sendt i eksil, det gamle foydalsystemet ble avskaffet, jorden fordelt på nytt, tapt stolthet gjenvunnet ved at man påtok seg en ledende rolle i Tredje verden-bevegelsen, og arabisk nasjonalisme opplevde en glansperiode. Gigantiske offentlige boligprosjekter ble igangsatt, utdanning gitt gratis til alle, mat og bøker solgt rimelig til massene, jobber garantert og industrialiseringen raskt utviklet. Det

¹³ Hafez 1995, Zeidan 1995.

¹⁴ Om ham, jf. Guth 1987.

¹⁵ Om ham, jf. Ramsay 1996.

¹⁶ Stagh 1993.

tok imidlertid ikke lang tid før regimet møtte kritikk. I hovedsak kom den fra religiøse grupper på grunn av regimets sekularisme, men også fra en idealistisk venstreorientert fløy (som ganske mange forfattere tilhørte). Tvil begynte å krype inn og spredde seg. Moderniseringsprosjektet var det allerede blitt sådd tvil om av Mahfūz i romanen *Awlād ḥāritnā* ("Barna i bakgata våre", 1959): Ville ikke det ønskede vitenskapsbaserte framskrittet føre til Guds død? Al-Tayyib Ṣāliḥ (1929–2009) *Mawsim al-hijra ilā 'l-shamāl* ("Trekket mot nord", først publisert i 1966) kom som en kraftig, påfallende klarsynt demper på optimismen som hersket like etter uavhengigheten, på den naive troen på at det skulle være mulig å kaste et i høy grad tilbakestående samfunn inn i moderniteten, og for raskt å kunne helbrede sårene kolonialismen hadde påført arabiske samfunn. Andre romaner, f.eks. 'Abd al-Ḥakīm Qāsims (1934–90) *Ayyām al-insān al-sab'a* ("Menneskets syv dager", 1969) iscenesatte frigjøring fra dominerende patriarkalske figurer – et viktig tema spesielt etter det arabiske nederlaget i junikrigen 1967.¹⁷ Mens åpen kritikk under Nassers levetid snart ble undertrykt ved at kritikerne ble fengslet, kom det i årene etter Nasser romaner som Gamāl al-Ghītānīs (1945-) *Al-Zaynī Barakāt* (1974), med en kompromissløst detaljert analyse av regimets despoti og en repressiv overvåningsstats redsler.

Den postmoderne vendingen

Med nederlaget i 1967 sprakk den store boblen av Nassers propagandaretorikk med et smell. Mahfūz' fortelling *Taht al-miṣalla* (Under busskuret), skrevet like etter nederlaget, er et urovekkende vitnesbyrd om den lammende effekten *naksa-en* (tilbakeslaget) hadde på arabiske forfattere: Verden var ikke lenger forståelig, men behersket av kaos og absurditet, det fantes ingen og ingenting man kunne ha tillit til, til og med "virkeligheten" man observerte med egne øyne, kunne vise seg å være fiksjon, en løgn. Enda et nytt sjokk kom bare noen få år etter naksa-en, da borgerkrigen brøt ut i Libanon. Særlig den israelske invasjonen i landet gjorde at folk mistet alt håp de fortsatt måtte ha. I litteraturen førte disse erfaringene til det som etterpå ble referert til som en "ny følsomhet",¹⁸ og som i sin essens kan anses som en parallelutvikling til den globale vendingen til postmodernismen,¹⁹ selv om de litterære virkemidlene som ble brukt i arabisk prosa, ofte minner om eksperimentelle "modernistiske" teknikker i vestlig litteratur.²⁰ Den troen på virkelighetens gjenkjennelighet ("knowability") og framstillbarhet

¹⁷ jf. Naguib 1989.

¹⁸ Kharrāṭ 1993.

¹⁹ Neuwirth/Pflitsch/Winckler eds. 2010.

²⁰ Ballas 1978, Meyer 2001.

(”representability”),²¹ tross alt var forblitt intakt (eller, som hos Mahfūz, hadde begynt å komme tilbake etter det første sjokket), beskrev og analyserte subtrenden al-Kharrāt kalte ”ny realisme”, gjenstandene for sin observasjon med et enda mer kompromissløst granskende blikk og med skarpere øye for små detaljer enn tidligere realisme hadde gjort. For mange trakk imidlertid ”nakṣa”en og den libanesiske borgerkrigen til og med den mimetiske realismens fundament i tvil, fordi den var bygd på de samme forutsetninger som moderniseringsprosjektet, med sin patriarkalske og egentlig autoritære subjekt-objekt-diskurs, som anså mennesket i stand til å (re-)forme(re), (gjen-)skape, (re-) presentere ”virkeligheten” – en antagelse begge hendelsene hadde vist var dødelig feilaktig. Det var altså nødvendig å gjenoppbygge litteraturen på et nytt fundament. Den litterære avantgarden, ofte også kalt ”sekstittallsgenerasjonen”, som samlet seg rundt magasiner som *Gālīrī* 68 (Galleri 68),²² og som fulgte tett de antipatriarkalske studentopprørene i Vesten, begynte å lete etter nye begynnelser og andre, hittil forsømte, dimensjoner av virkeligheten og å utforske et antall alternative tilnærmingar. Noen, f.eks. al-Għiṭānī eller Imīl (Emile) Ḥabībī (1922–96), gjenoppdaget den førmoderne (dvs. før 1800-tallet) arabiske litterære arven som et forråd, som hadde bevart ”autentiske” skrivemåter og som kunne bidra til å møte modernitetens ødeleggende virkninger: ikke bare arven etter Nasser-epoken, inkludert absurditeten i palestinernes liv etter 1967 eller borgerkrigens grusomheter, men også – og særlig – følgene av den økonomiske liberaliseringen (*al-infītāḥ al-iqtīṣādī*) som Nassers etterfølger, Anwar al-Sādāt (president fra 1970 til han ble drept i 1981), hadde satt i gang, og som besto av en åpning mot Vesten, mot globale markeder og for utenlandske investorer, noe som snart medførte en radikal omvelting også i samfunnets struktur (jf. ”brødopptøyene”, januar 1977). Det at man holdt fortiden nærværende som en kontrast her, var med på å stoppe (tekstuelt) allestedsnærværende forfall og tap av identitet ved å bevare og gjenopplive tradisjonen. Arven ble da samtidig prinsipielt *bekreftet* og *tilpasset* nye realiteter, og kontrasten og spenningen mellom gamle former og moderne innhold stimulerte leseren.²³ Kontrast (*mufāraqa*) som et middel for å få leserne til å stille kritiske spørsmål om virkeligheten i fiksjonen og på denne måten overføre tolkningsautoriteten, eller -suvereniteten, fra forfatteren til leseren (og dermed, forhåpentlig, gjøre litteraturen i seg selv mindre ”autoritær” og mer ”demokratisk”) var også det viktigste strukturelle virkemidlet til en annen understrømning til Den nye sensibiliteten: al-Kharrāts ”external-oriented, things-in-themselves mode of writing”. Verden her hadde (tilsynelatende) ingen

²¹ Hamarneh 1998.

²² Kendall 2006, Stehli-Werbeck 2011.

²³ Guth 2010a.

innvirkning på fortelleren, ble oppfattet av ham/henne som noe fremmed, en verden der menneskelig handling ble bestemt av de fysiske omgivelsene (jf. fransk *nouveau roman* og dens tema *chosification* ”objektivisering”). Målet med denne kontrastive teknikken var å skape en fremmedgjøringseffekt som ville ”avsløre alle virkelighetens bedøvende aspekter og angi kilden til aversjon og frustrasjon”, ”impotens og fremmedhetsfølelse”²⁴ og på denne måten indirekte peke på en ”lidenskapelig, helt undertrykt kjærlighet til livet”,²⁵ som i denne understrømningen var skjult bak en markert nonchalant og tilsynelatende uengasjert skrivemåte. Derimot ble samme kjærligheten til livet uttrykt i ”indre visjons”-trenden ved hjelp av en beskrivelse, igjen i en overveldende bredde, av skadene den absurde, uutholdelige verden hadde påført subjektets *indre*. Individet ble her ansett som ”an ever-moving mass of sensations and notions”,²⁶ og dets minste følelser ble sporet. Derfor ble virkelighetsframstillingen nå interpolert med drømmer, mareritt og fantasier og forsterket med ”surrealistiske” bilder (jf. også hyppig bruk av indre monolog). Søkelyset på individets *indre* virkeligheter medførte også et brudd med den tradisjonelle tids- og romoppfatningen: Kronologisk og topografisk fragmentering ble nå ofte brukt til å uttrykke skillet mellom subjekt og objektiv virkelighet. Som i den eksternt orienterte trenden forble forfatterne nesten usynlige her også, de avstod fra å kommentere de indre realitetene de presenterte, og overlot det til leseren å trekke egne konklusjoner og tolke ”materialet” – krisen til en ”alienated self caught in the labyrinth of his own hallucinations and delusions”²⁷ – som en gjenspeiling av sosiale eller politiske realiteter utenfor.²⁸ Det er ganske påfallende at de fleste protagonistene på den tiden var passive antihelter, at seksuell impotens var et hyppig motiv, og at de mange fengselsfortellinger som fantes, også hadde en metaforisk, eksistensiell dimensjon.

Det militære nederlaget i 1967, den libanesiske borgerkrigen, sammenbruddet i det gamle samfunnssystemet, til ideologier og tilsvarende håp, tapet av kulturell identitet på grunn av økende vestliggjøring og globalisering, det faktum at korrupte og undertrykkende oligarkiske regimer stadig varte ved – disse og mange andre faktorer dannet bakgrunnen for lignelser om eksistensiell fremmedhetsfølelse,²⁹ ensomhet og håpløshet i moderne samfunn, fortellinger om ”ødelagte hjem”, fratatt sammenheng og ontologisk forvirring, som var karakteristiske for 1970- og 1980-tallets litteraturproduksjon.

²⁴ Abul-Enein 1984: 373–4.

²⁵ Kharrat 1991: 190.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kassem/Hashem eds. 1985: 11.

²⁸ Guth 2011b: 97–8.

²⁹ King 1978.

Allikevel produserte sjokket og forandringene i virkeligheten ikke bare bilder av katastrofe, ødeleggelse, fragmentering, oppløsning ... og åpne spørsmål. Da forfatterne fikk et lite pusterom, slik at de fikk revurdert tilstanden, og da også en yngre generasjon vokste fram, mistet den deprimerende virkeligheten riktignok ikke sine vesentlige, dvs. traumatiske særtrekk, men disse ble ofte også omgjort til et mer dynamisk potensial. Fragmentering og eksistensiell usikkerhet forble dermed viktige emner³⁰, men samtidig ble det også oppdaget noen ”skatter” blant ”ruinene”.³¹ Ideologienes sammenbrudd åpnet veien både for kritisk dekonstruksjon og for forsiktige forsøk på rekonstruksjon. Revisjonen av språket, for eksempel – som hittil hadde vært et svært ideologiladet problem som hadde spilt en nøkkelrolle i fabrikasjonen av regimets løgner – gjorde at man oppdaget mange hittil glemte idiomer (dialekter, hverdagsspråk, sosiolekter, klassisk arabisk) som kunne og burde få lov til å utgjøre en del av nye litterære diskurser. Forvirringen om forholdet mellom virkelighet og fiksjon var ikke nødvendigvis et onde, men kunne også bli gjort om til både opplysende og underholdende metalitterære leker, som loddet den kreative skaperens makt eller sonderte konsekvensene av en herskers kontroll over mediene. Et selv som hadde vist seg å være fragmentert eller ”forfalsket”, var ikke nødvendigvis en kilde til fremmedhetsfølelse, frykt eller panikk, men kunne i stedet bli opplevd som enda mer autentisk, ”sannere” og mye rikere enn en ideologisk preget, uniform identitet. Sammenbruddet i tradisjonell kronologi og topologi ville ikke automatisk ødelegge en fortelling, det kunne også frigjøre den og gi rom for en tids- og steds-”polygami”.³² Det kunne bli realisert ikke bare strukturelt, men også innholdsmessig: Det var mulig samtidig å være ”hjemme” flere steder (livet i eksil og/eller diaspora utenfor den arabiske verden fostret denne egenskapen) og i flere tider (erindret historie og kulturarven utgjorde jo en del av ens identitet). Vanlige temaer og etablerte sjangere i litteraturen ble dekonstruert og identifisert som del av hegemoniske diskurser, noe som åpnet veien for hittil marginaliserte grupper og ga dem en plass i litteraturen, for andre regioner enn det tidligere dominerende Egypt og Levanten til å frigjøre seg og få en viss posisjon i markedet og for ”transgressions” i sjanger og kjønn.³³ Innholdsmessig brakte den postmoderne vendingen et stort antall hittil ukjente temaer tatt fra fortiden og/eller historien, fra islamsk mystikk, fra det gåtefulle og eksotiske, men også fra hverdagen og subkulturene, fra det folkelige til bikulturalisme, fra golfstatene og den libyske ørkenen til Paris, London eller Buenos Aires. Når det gjelder former og

³⁰ Hāfiż 2001 og Hafez 2010.

³¹ Guth 2007.

³² Neuwirth/Pflitsch/Winckler eds. 2010: 233 ff.

³³ Ibid.: 361 ff.

skrivemåter, ble prosaen beriket av elementer fra historiske romaner, memoarer, krim, pornografiske og andre ”lette”, underholdende sjangere, samt tradisjonell arabisk fortellerkunst, men også fra lyrikk³⁴ og eksperimentelle former.³⁵ Overtredelser i sjanger gikk ofte parallelt med å leke med etablerte normative kjønnsroller.

Mot nye horisonter

Skiftet fra en depressiv, fortvilet stemning til mer positive ”budskap” ble tydelig spesielt i løpet av 1990-tallet og tidlig 2000-tall, og det er bemerkelsesverdig at det ofte kom fra den europeiske diasporaen, dvs. utenfra den arabiske verden.³⁶ Til tross for (eller på grunn av) helt motsatte forhold hjemme, og samtidig som de bevisst ignorerte de mange tabuene og farene, insisterte disse forfatterne på enhver arabers rett til å få hans/hennes ”andel i liv og lykke”. Mot all slags politisk undertrykkelse og kvelende sosiale eller kulturelle normer ga de kraftig uttrykk for lengsel etter frihet, og demonstrerte muligheten til, og nødvendigheten av, å bekrefte seg selv som menneske ved å snakke ut, uttrykke begjær og leve ut glede. Denne trenden ble videreført etter årtusenskiftet og nøt da i stadig større grad godt av de nye frihetene som moderne informasjons- og kommunikasjonsteknologi og regimenes manglende mulighet til å kontrollere motstand og å drive sensur, ga dem. En ny ”aggregattilstand” ble nådd da tekster som ‘Alā’ al-Aswānīs *‘Imārat Ya ‘qūbiyān* (Yacoubian-bygningen, 2002) og Rajā’ ‘Abdallāh al-Ṣāni’s *Banāt al-Riyād* (Jentene fra Riyadh, 2005) ga blaffen i tabuer og forventninger i en sofistikert litterær stil, ble bestselgere³⁷ og på denne måten bidro til å spre nye holdninger og verdier. *The International Prize for Arabic Fiction* (IPAF) i 2007 ble lansert ”with an intention to address the limited international availability of high quality Arab fiction”,³⁸ noe som gjorde det mulig å omgå restriksjonene litteraturen i enkelte arabiske land fortsatt var utsatt for.

To år etter ”den arabiske våren” er det kanskje for tidlig (januar 2013) å prøve å si noe generelt om hvordan de politiske og sosiale endringene opprørene satte i gang, vil gjenspeiles i moderne arabisk litteratur. Hvordan det enn måtte være, viste i hvert fall perioden umiddelbart før hendelsene tydelig at kravet på en andel i liv og lykke fra nå av, og én gang for alle, ble ansett for å være en generell menneskerett – i en rekke tekster ble det til og med realisert som et naturlig behov, noe som naturen selv krever.³⁹ Inntil da hadde individene blitt nektet denne

³⁴ Behzadi 1996.

³⁵ Taha 2000.

³⁶ Guth et al. eds. 2008.

³⁷ Rooke 2010.

³⁸ Fra prisens nettside, www.arabicfiction.org (sist hentet februar 2013).

³⁹ Guth 2009.

legitime andelen gjennom det som ble framstilt som et komplett system (av tradisjonelle patriarkalske normer, kjønnsdiskriminering, statlig kontroll og undertrykkelse osv.), og gjennom tabuene systemet opprettet mot brudd på sine normer. I de fleste tekster resulterte sammenstøtet mellom individ og system i et høyt antall ofre. Men det ble også demonstrert at individuell lykke og en slags ”ny menneskelighet” faktisk var oppnåelig hvis, og bare hvis, individet klarte å fullføre et modig brudd med systemet (det forteller ganske mye at mange hovedpersoner var ”dropouts” som hadde lagt det tradisjonelle samfunnet bak seg). Tekstene endte nå med å forestille seg nye begynnelser i form av små ”celler av ren menneskelighet”, imidlertid uten eksplisitt å si noe særlig om hva ellers denne ”nye humanismen” innebar. Årene som kommer, vil sikkert gjøre dette klarere. Utviklingen kan bli inspirert og/eller framskyndet av det som for tiden foregår på Internett. Det er mulig at de så langt mest populære sjangrene – romanen og novellen – snart kommer til å bli supplert av nye som forfatterne i øyeblikket eksperimenterer med i de digitale mediene (blogger, fora osv.), sjanger som ofte også inkluderer lyd- og billedelementer. Mens en stor del av litteraturen som publiseres online, ikke avviker fundamentalt fra ”vanlig” (offline, trykt) litteratur, er mange tekster likevel såpass forskjellige at kritikere flest fortsatt er tilbakeholdende med å kalle disse for ”litteratur”. Tekstene det er snakk om, er preget av en enda mer dristig tilnærming til sosiale, politiske og religiøse tabuer – forfatterne nyter jo anonymitet – og deres bruk av arabisk folkemål når de skriver, vitner om at de er beredt til å bryte med de språklige og estetiske normene til et gammelt, ærverdig, ja til og med hellig språk. Det å snakke ut, en viss lekenhet, og en veksling mellom fakta og fiksjon er andre egenskaper som preger denne litteraturen ved siden av dens moralske og estetiske nonchalanse.

Moderne arabisk prosa og islam

På grunn av sine nære forbindelser med og sin vesentlige binding til moderniseringsprosjektet er moderne arabisk litteratur stort sett preget av en ”faintness of Islamic inspiration”.⁴⁰ Gruppen sekulære nasjonsbyggere, som de fleste forfatterne tilhørte, opplevde vanligvis den islamske religionen som en del av den store bunken gamle tradisjoner som burde reformeres; religionen ble snarere sett på som et problem enn som en inspirasjonskilde. Men siden religiøst pregede skikker og vaner alltid har preget hverdagen i den arabiske verden, og ettersom moderne arabiske forfattere alltid har følt seg både som ”writers and scribes”⁴¹ som hadde plikt til å registrere og arkivere ”virkeligheten”, har islamske

⁴⁰ Cachia 1990; kap. «In a glass darkly..»

⁴¹ Jacquemond 2003/2008, Guth et al. eds. 1999.

realiteter selvsagt alltid dukket opp også i litteraturen, det være seg som emner i seg selv (f.eks. religiøse lederes makt, problemene ved kjønnssegregasjon og generelt forholdet mellom kjønnene, islamistiske tendenser osv.) eller som en del av lokalkoloritten som forfekterne av en ”nasjonallitteratur” anså som en nødvendig ingrediens i den litteraturen de ønsket å skape. Dessuten dukket religionen ofte opp med sine filosofiske eller kulturelle/historiske aspekter eller som en naturlig del av en fortellingsbakgrunn.⁴² Det var imidlertid ikke før vendingen til postmodernisme at forfattere som al-Għiṭānī (se ovenfor) i sin jakt etter stilistisk autentisitet fant fram den klassiske arven, deriblant også islamske tekster, som en kilde til inspirasjon med hensyn også til litterære *former*, og at islamske bevegelser på den annen side oppdaget litteraturen som et nyttig redskap for oppbyggelse og formidling av religiøse budskap og derfor utviklet teorier om en spesielt islamsk litteratur (*adab Islāmī*).⁴³ Men bortsett fra alt dette har den moderne arabiske litteraturens store emner blitt identifisert⁴⁴ som: forholdet mellom øst og vest, deriblant kolonialisme og/eller kulturell dominans (som ramme for spørsmål om moralske verdier, autentisitet og kulturell identitet),⁴⁵ kvinnens rolle og status så vel som forholdet mellom menn og kvinner generelt (inkludert alt det som gjelder kjærlighet, seksualitet, kjønnssegregasjon, ekteskap osv.);⁴⁶ individ og/versus samfunn (herunder fremmedhetsfølelse, problemer med ”selvoppdagelse” og selvutfoldelse);⁴⁷ Palestina-spørsmålet, krig (Junikrigen 1967, Oktoberkrigen 1973, borgerkrig i Libanon);⁴⁸ dessuten ble dagens problemer i samfunnet ofte diskutert samtidig med tilsvarende politiske systemer (så langt sensuren tillot dette), noe som implisitt eller eksplisitt kommer fram også i et antall fortellinger fra/om fengselet. De ovennevnte emnene er selvsagt bare noen få akser moderne arabisk litteratur hittil har dreid seg rundt. Spekteret av emner som finnes, og av problemstillinger som ble og blir kommentert i fortellingens ”forkledning”, er selvfølgelig like rikt som livet i den moderne arabiske verden selv.

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⁴² al-Musawi 2009.

⁴³ Szyska 1996, Guth 2006.

⁴⁴ Stagħ 1996, Fähndrich 1999.

⁴⁵ Wieland 1980, El-Enany 2006, Hallaq et al. eds. 2006.

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Notabene

Denne oversikten retter søkelyset mot forholdene i Egypt og Levanten, siden disse landene har vært den moderne arabiske prosalitteraturens "vugge" og, inntil andre halvdelen av 1900-tallet er blitt ansett som denne litteraturens sentre. Måten litteraturen utviklet seg på i andre regioner i den arabiske verden, og tempoet dette skjedde i, kan avvike vesentlig fra det som er beskrevet nedenfor, selv om det egyptisk-levantinske eksemplet, *mutatis mutandis*, stort sett kan tjene som paradigme for andre regioner. I hvilken grad paradigmet gjelder, vil avhenge av i hvilken grad vedkommende land har gått gjennom en liknende modernisering, "vestliggjøring" eller "globalisering", og når dette skjedde. Som tommelfinger-regel kan man si at litteraturen i golfstatene inntil nylig var mindre berørt av "modernisering" langs de egyptisk-levantinske linjene, og at "tradisjonell" litteratur, spesielt også muntlige former, har bevart en sterkere posisjon der. Skjebnen til irakisk eller libysk prosa har derimot i høy grad vært bestemt av den langvarige undertrykkelsen av uttrykksfrihet under hhv. Ṣaddām Husayn og al-Qadhādīḥī. I maghreblastene fant "moderniseringen" innen prosa, før uavhengigheten, nesten utelukkende sted i franskspråklig litteratur, og siden har fransk litteratur vært en modell man har forholdt seg til, det være seg som noe å

referere til, noe å avvise og erstatte, noe å lære av, noe å samhandle med eller noe å prøve å ”beseire”. For historien til noen av disse nasjonale litteraturene, se blant annet

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Abstract

The article is a concise survey of modern Arabic prose from the middle of the 19th century AD until our days, with a focus on developments in Egypt and the Levant. The history of this literature is divided into seven major periods. An eighth section deals with the role Islamic religion has in novels and short stories among other prominent topics.

Keywords: Modern Arabic literature, novel, short story, literary history, national literature, realism, New Sensibility / al-Hassāsiyya al-jadīda, postmodernism, New Humanism.

Diglossia and the ideology of language. The use of the vernacular in a work by Youssef Fadel

Elisabeth Moestrup¹
University of Aarhus

Abstract

This paper looks at the use of the standard and the vernacular in the Moroccan novel *Qiṣṣat ḥadīqat al-hayawān* (*The Zoo Story*) by Youssef Fadel. It demonstrates that the writer uses the vernacular as an ideological stance, and to comment on political predicaments, domestic and global. I argue that the use of the two varieties are used along ideological lines, not as each other's opposite, but to put each other into relief, and that they are competing for hegemony rather than being in a static relationship.

Keywords: language as ideology, Arabic language, Moroccan Arabic, diglossia, Arabic literature

Introduction

In the present article, I intend to analyse a Moroccan work of fiction in which the vernacular Moroccan is used, if not on an equal footing with the standard written language, then extensively so. The analysis will be based on Bakhtin's theory of language as ideology: his sociological approach to language contends that language use is always ideological and that the Saussurean normative description of language fails to highlight the importance and the impact that the choice of variety has on meaning; the diglossic Arabic language offers more choices as to linguistic variety than most other languages and the choice is not a random one. With this statement as point of departure, I shall examine the text looking at the distribution of the standard/vernacular language as to *register* – who – and *repertoire* – what i.e. the issue – in order to demonstrate that the use of the vernacular where you would expect to find the MSA and vice versa is an ideological stance on the part of the writer, that language choice is used for commenting on political predicaments, domestic and global, concurring with or contradicting the theme of the work in question, and that examining these choices may disclose otherwise hidden meanings.

¹ E-mail address: em@teo.au.dk

Bakhtin's theory of ideology

Ideology according to Merriam-Webster and the Encyclopedia Britannica's definitions is "a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture" and "a system that aspires both to explain the world and to change it." Bakhtin (1895-1975) indeed tried to explain the world he lived in through his theories on literature and language; whether he tried to change it is less obvious. He might have done so in an indirect way by promoting oppositional writing. But he did see language and especially the language(s) in a novel, as a means of opposition to the dominant discourse of any given epoch.

Bakhtin's view on language stood in opposition to the prevalent view whose most important proponent was Saussure. Opposing Saussure who views language as a stable, monolithic system Bakhtin perceived it as a foremost social phenomenon. To Bakhtin a language involves centre and periphery: some language types are central and others are peripheral. Further, he distinguishes between two notions of discourse: *authoritative* and *internally persuasive*. Authoritative discourse – e.g. religious, political, or moral – is used by those holding positions of authority in the society, whereas internally persuasive discourse is used by those who are denied privileges. Their discourse is not backed up by any authority, and often it is not even acknowledged in the society (neither by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms), or in the legal code.² According to Bakhtin, the language described by Saussure equals the authoritative discourse. It is a language that imposes itself as a taboo and must not be taken in vain. To question the authoritative discourse is almost a treasonous act, a sign of rebellion.

Accordingly, there is an ongoing struggle over meaning that is played out between the centripetal and the centrifugal forces, between authoritative, fixed discourse and the more personal, informal and provisional discourse which contrary to authoritative discourse is open to outward influence. The purpose of the peripheral language types is to oppose the dominance of the central language. Thus language is always explicitly used with an ideological purpose in the struggle over meaning that takes place, not only in political writing but also in everyday conversations – and in literature.³

Bakhtin was not interested in or acquainted with Arabic and, therefore, has not contributed to the discussions on diglossia. It seems obvious, nonetheless, that one can apply his distinction between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse on Arabic and thus view MSA as an example of authoritative discourse

² Bakhtin 1990: 342.

³ Bakhtin 1990: 332.

that the centripetal forces are moving towards. As the authoritative discourse MSA is opposed by and struggling with the centrifugal forces, i.e. the vernacular(s) that represent internal persuasive discourse.

The Zoo Story

The text to be analysed here is a novel by Youssef Fadel entitled *Qissat hadīqat al-hayawān* (*The Zoo Story*).⁴ This novel as well as Fadel's seven other novels have remained untranslated; therefore all translations in the present paper are mine. The novel was published in 2008, exactly 50 years after Edward Albee's one act play *The Zoo Story*,⁵ of which the Arabic title is a direct translation. In Albee's *The Zoo Story*, two men meet in Central Park in NY and have a conversation: the older, more sedate middle class family man, Peter, is smoking his pipe and reading a newspaper, when Jerry, a younger bachelor type of man who has seen better days, comes by and wants to recount his visit to the Zoo. He never gets around to telling the story, however, because the conversation between the two men continues to turn from one thing to another. Jerry mentions his lonely room, the poor renters, his miserly landlady and her dog that is always lying in wait for him when he gets home, and he tells how he has tried to poison it. In contrast to this sad account, Peter lives a comfortable, albeit dull family life. Eventually, the conversation acquires a provocative and nagging tone and finally turns into an open conflict over the right to the bench; in the ensuing fight, Gerry comes to stab himself with a knife which he has handed over to Peter, and in dying insists that Peter must flee the park.

Albee is the American response to the French absurd theatre of the 1950s and 1960s with Ionesco and Becket as the best known exponents. He was the first absurd dramatist in the US and refers to himself as US's most European author. *The Zoo Story* is a social critique of the failure of the American dream, embodied in the complacent Peter; to make him wake up and realize the waste of the life he is leading, Jerry must sacrifice his life. In recent years, Albee has lived to see renewed popularity, as recent scholarly works have shown.⁶

Even in the Arab world, Albee seems to be popular, since, in 2008, Youssef Fadel takes Albee's one act play as his point of departure for a highly inter-textual 400 pages long novel, bearing the same title. Arab littérateurs and Arab dramatists in particular have always taken a great interest in the absurd theatre of Europe,

⁴ يوسف فاضل قصة حديقة الحيوان نشر الفنك 2008

⁵ Albee, Edward 1969 (orig. 1958). *The Zoo Story* is the first absurd one-act play in the USA, written by Edward Albee in 1958. Albee is better known, perhaps, for having written *Who's afraid of Virginia Wolff?*

⁶ On Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* see for instance: Zinman 2008; Bottoms 2005; Marinkovic-Penney 2004; Rutenberg 1969; and Debusscher 1967.

imitating it but also transforming it to fit local needs, the best example of this being the Egyptian playwright and author, Tawfiq al-Hakim.⁷ He and others wrote absurd drama and one-acts in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. But since its heyday, the Arabic absurd drama seems to have almost disappeared, and the novel has assumed the role as the preferred genre in Arabic fictional writing.

The Moroccan *Zoo Story*, then, picks up the threads of this neglected genre and turns it into a novel. It is too long and too rich a novel to be summarized here in full. I will restrict the summary to the parts seen as relevant to the present topic, the struggle between the centripetal and the centrifugal forces of language. On the surface, the novel is a narrative of Assimo and Rashid, two men in Morocco of the 1970s,⁸ who keep trying throughout the novel to reach the point where they can perform Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*. Their task is not an easy one; from the outset, seven pages are missing from the play, and in the course of some political upheaval more pages are lost. Furthermore, they keep getting deflected by various random events: Rashid is called on duty in a faraway village to be a school teacher, but reaches an agreement with the parents in the village that they will provide him with food if he does not insist on their children coming to school. This leaves Rashid alienated on the verge of mental collapse, and in a fit he burns the copy of the play. Later, by chance, Assimo finds himself with a large amount of money and goes off to Paris to study theatre. There he meets Augusto Boal, a Brazilian real life character and father of the *Theatre of the Suppressed*.⁹ In Paris, Assimo establishes a relationship with a French woman who has a dog that snarls at him until one day he decides to leave her flat and the dog subsequently disappears. In the end, nothing comes out of his stay in Paris, just as nothing came out of Rashid's stay in the village, and Assimo goes back to Morocco, meets with Rashid again, and once more, they try to form a theatre troupe and to perform *The Zoo Story*.

Early in the novel we are introduced to the third protagonist, Nura, a young single parent who works in a cinema and dreams of becoming an actress and leading a better life. She has a brief encounter first with Rashid, then with Assimo who fathers her second child and then leaves her, after which she decides to leave Morocco for Italy. In the end, she escapes with both children to Italy.

Unfortunately, the two protagonists fall out over Nura when Assimo marries her, and the theatre project comes to a temporary halt, only to be resumed, when

⁷ Se for instance Jayyusi 1996.

⁸ Also known as the "years of lead" (mainly the 1960s through the 1980s) due to the violent and heavy-handed responses from the state against dissidents and democracy activists under the rule of Hassan II.

⁹ A theatrical form first elaborated in the 1960s, initially in Brazil later in Europe. Boal's techniques use theatre as means of promoting social and political change.

he tires of her. The two friends keep rehearsing and even rewriting the play to make it more suitable to their personal needs: for instance, the two protagonists in the rewritten version bear the same names as the characters in the novel the book that Peter is reading in the park, is deemed improbable as, in Rashid's words, *nobody reads in Morocco*, and it would be taken as a sign to the secret service to carry a book. At some point they join a theatre camp together with Nura, but this time the organizers are such dilettantes that Assimo and Rashid give up the project again. Assimo now takes a meaningless job in Libya, but when he receives a letter from Rashid about *The Zoo Story*, he returns to Morocco. When in the end, they succeed in actually performing a play – not *The Zoo Story* but a different one about two actors of whom one accidentally kills the other on stage – Assimo accidentally kills Rashid when he fails to slacken the rope which Rashid uses for hanging himself. The closing scene of the novel has Assimo in his roof flat waiting for the police to pick him up.

A further important character in the novel is the mysterious *al-Ustadh* – a man from the *mukhabarat*, the intelligence service – who is supposedly an expert on theatre, but who uses his contacts with young actors and writers to keep track of the leftist youth. Rashid works for him at some point. The information of the main characters – perhaps the whole novel – stems from *al-Ustadh*, or so the narrator claims in the preface to the novel.

This short summary shows that what Youssef Fadel borrows from Albee's works is first and foremost the absurd. In the Theatre of the Absurd, traditional plot structure is rarely the important trait, rather a lack of a transparent plot is the rule, the story often consists of an absurd repetition of a cliché or a routine, and the mode of most absurdist plays is tragicomedy.¹⁰ The absurd in this case is that the two protagonists find themselves trapped in a story, in a metafictional conceit in which the outcome has already been decided upon. The absurdity of human endeavor is a central theme in this novel as well as in Youssef Fadel's other novels:¹¹ only rarely do we meet characters who set up a goal that they succeed in reaching. Quite the contrary, hopes and aspirations are nearly always thwarted in the harsh realities of Moroccan society. Nura with her successful escape to Europe in *The Zoo Story* is an exception.

There are more common features in the two works, but there are dissimilarities as well. In contrast to Albee's version, Fadel's *Zoo Story* has more characters and parallel courses of events: Nura's story, for instance, is an additional protagonist voice. But what truly sets Fadel apart from Albee is his

¹⁰ Esslin 2001.

¹¹ See the list of his works in the references below.

passionate concern with language, and more specifically with the state of diglossia in Arabic. Before he began writing novels, Fadel wrote several plays in the vernacular, but the novels which he wrote at the time, were in the standard language. In a collection of interviews conducted with cultural personalities of Morocco, Fadel expressed the view that writing in the vernacular was not an option. At the time, he was painstakingly sure that it was too early to introduce the use of the vernacular to people who were not yet sufficiently “mature.” In the theatre, Fadel says, the Moroccan vernacular is the only option. But in the novel it is too difficult, because there are no set rules for the orthography and people are not used to read it and will not buy a book written wholly in the vernacular.¹² The interview was conducted in 1997, just before he actually began experimenting with the use of the vernacular. In the novels *Haššās* from 2000, *Mītrū Muḥāl* from 2006 and in *The Zoo Story*, there are numerous passages in the vernacular. It seems that Youssef Fadel changed his opinion on how to deal with the vernacular/standard Arabic dilemma.

Ferguson and *Diglossia* 1959

Let us in passing briefly mention Ferguson’s seminal article from 1959 and his functional distribution of the two registers of language, H and L – in the case of Arabic the standard Arabic, MSA (H) and the vernaculars (L). Ferguson’s model has subsequently been modified,¹³ and with the social media gaining importance, language usage in the Arab world has been affected resulting, among other things, in an extensive use of the vernacular in writing. Here suffice it to mention that the language functions which Ferguson consigns to H, are now just as often done in L. One example is *letter writing*, which according to Ferguson is performed in H. This has never been exclusively the case, but less today than ever: in *Facebook*, e.g., entries and comments are more often than not written in the vernacular, and anyone writing a text message would always do it in the vernacular. Literature, also consigned to H according to Ferguson, has been affected as well; gone are the days when even the use of the vernacular in dialogues was frowned upon, and many works of fiction today are written entirely or mostly in the vernacular. This is not to say that the standard language has lost its prestige, but it points to the fact that the speed of everyday life and the sloppiness in writing that the social media and text messaging permit, have led people to abandon the habit of always writing in the standard language. Instead, they prefer to write exactly what comes to their

¹² Caubet 2004: 91-104. (A transcript of an interview).

¹³ For a thorough discussion on diglossia see Bassiouney 2009: especially 9-27.

minds without having to “translate” it into a stylistically more advanced form. Everyday considerations overshadow ideological pan-Arabic considerations.

Youssef Fadel seems to have adopted this usage. In two earlier novels, he makes increasingly use of the vernacular, but in *The Zoo Story* he goes as far as to write entire chapters in the vernacular, thus overstepping the common practice of keeping only the dialogue in the vernacular. Moreover, even though most of the text is written in the standard language, it is interspersed abundantly with vernacular exclamations, inner monologues and long dialogues. The standard language in the novel is stylistically elaborate and challenging, thus demanding that the reader has a good command of both MSA and the Moroccan. In short, the basic language is an MSA rich in vocabulary and grammatical structures, and the vernacular serves as marker or emphasis. The use of the vernacular in this case cannot, therefore, be viewed as a way to pander to or help the uneducated reader – an impression one sometimes gets when reading novels written in a very simple standard variety or predominantly in the vernacular.¹⁴

In the following, I shall analyze the use of the vernacular in cases where it is used in entire passages, from the perspective of register and repertoire. The aim is to assess whether there is a consistency in the usage of the vernacular which points the reader towards a meta-textual message connected with ideology.

Register and repertoire

Register refers to the “speaking” agent of a certain discourse. It can be direct speech as well as the narrative voice of a text. In Arabic fiction we may find that the speech of illiterates, women, children, and peasants is represented in the vernacular, thus giving the impression of a more modest social group or of people with little or no education. Educated people’s speech is represented in the standard language; a lawyer or a politician for instance speaks standard language or even male characters generally, as opposed to women who use the vernacular. In modern movies, native Arabs speak the vernacular while foreigners speak the standard language, to avoid affiliation with a specific geographic area. This distribution of language varieties has at times entailed a value judgment: the clever ones use the prestigious standard, the simpler use the vernacular.

Repertoire, on the other hand, refers to the issue or the topic of a discourse; here we get back to the Fergusonian functional distribution of H/L. According to

¹⁴ Khaled Khumayssi’s novel *Taxi* (2008; Egyptian orig. 2006), for instance, is written mainly in the Egyptian vernacular and when the standard language is used for introductory remarks, more as a kind of stage directions, it is in a simple unelaborate form. Another case is Ghada Abdel Aal’s novel *I Want to Get Married!: One Wannabe Bride’s Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not-Quite-Rights* (2010; Egyptian orig. 2008).

Ferguson, when discussing e.g. religion, the language will be the standard whereas discussions about for instance love or domestic work will be represented in the vernacular. Ferguson did not distinguish between register and repertoire; to him it was all about repertoire, leading to the conclusion that an illiterate or a woman could not discuss politics or religion. This seems to have been very much the opinion of many writers of Arabic fiction.

For the sake of brevity, the discussion will be limited to the chapters of the novel that are written mainly in the vernacular. Thus, I shall not include chapters with isolated incidents of vernacular in the form of exclamations, a single line, direct speech, or interchanges of speech, though this form constitutes a large part of the novel as well. The chapters to be examined are Part I, chapters 2 and 16; Part II, chapters 3, 5, and 10; Part III, chapters 7 and 13; Part IV, chapters 2 and 8 and 11; and Part V, chapters 5 and 9 – a total of 12 chapters out of 64. The use of the vernacular amounts to approximately 20-25% of the work.

Part I, chapter 2 is the first chapter written entirely in the vernacular, as Nura – a 20 year old mother – introduces herself to the reader by telling her (short) life story. She was married very young to a friend of her brother, but the groom left after a month, and now she lives with their child at her mother's place and dreams of a divorce so as to be able to plan on her own. She has, nevertheless, managed to find a job and keeps yearning to become an actress and escape poverty.

Very conspicuously, in the middle of a long story full of complaints, the discourse abruptly changes to the standard language when she says:

How does life look to me? What can I say? I do not expect a miracle and I am not a philosopher to sit and think about life. But in short, I can say that I have had no luck. Life hasn't given me anything. Three years ago I married, and this was the worst disaster that ever happened to me.

After this, she resumes the use of vernacular until the end of the chapter.

Part I, chapter 16: Rashid is in hospital and Nura comes to see him. He has tried to get closer to her after Assimo left for France, but in vain. To impress her, he makes up a story about his arrest and his treatment at the hands of the police. The harsh humiliating interrogation is vividly reported, and the account has the intended effect: Nura cries and Rashid thinks to himself that he, too, liked the story. *Al-Ustadh* comes to the hospital and engages Rashid in the intelligence service.

Part II, chapter 3: Nura tells of her great love for theatre, in which she has lost all interest after Assimo has abandoned her. She asks why men marry at all and provides the answer herself: men get married to have a prostitute for free instead of bothering to find a new one every time. She complains about the fact that men do not give birth.

Part II, chapter 5: Assimo has left for France. Rashid tries to follow but is not granted exit permit. He feels bitter because Assimo has left with his (Rashid's) money. *Al-Ustadh* contacts him again. Rashid searches for Nura with whom he is still infatuated, but she has lost faith in him after his abandonment of her, and does not keep their appointment.

Part II, chapter 10: Nura tells us about Nasima, a young actress with an elderly lover who has rented her a flat, where he drops by to see her three nights a week. The two women spend the other nights together and their friendship evolves into a sensual relationship.

Part III, chapter 7: This chapter is related by Assimo's father, *l-mekanisyan*, recently out of jail where he was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder 20 years ago. Until then he had been living a simple happy life with his wife and child, but one day he was approached by two young men who influenced him politically and indirectly caused the murder. His wife remarried during his sentence and *l-mekanisyan* thinks there is something suspicious about this. He has a plan for his life which he will later share with Assimo.¹⁵

Part III, chapter 13: Nura decides that she wants to get some of *this thing called life*.¹⁶ She is not sure what it is, but she is confident that something is in wait for her. Her brother, Mustafa, has married a former prostitute, but all they do is fight. She has received a letter from Nasima who has moved to the US after Assimo threatened her.

Part IV, chapter 2: This chapter is a letter from Rashid to Assimo. He lives with his sister and is bothered by mosquitoes. He explains how he has rewritten *The Zoo Story*: the character Peter is renamed Rashid and works for the intelligence service.

¹⁵ But he is run over by Rashid on orders of *l-Ustadh*.

¹⁶ قصة حديقة الحيوان p.271.

Part IV, chapter 8: This is another letter from Rashid to Assimo. Rashid explains how he has rewritten *The Zoo Story* and that he has been so preoccupied with it that he now feels like Peter and Gerry. He is waiting for Assimo to come home so that they can stage the play.

Part IV, chapter 11: Nura has arrived in Italy. She meant to go to Libya to Assimo, but her brother could only get her a ride to Italy, so this is where she is now. She has found a job in a kindergarten where she rehearses plays with the children. She had to leave her older child behind, but plans to bring her to Italy as well.

Part V, chapter 5: Rashid is pondering what it means to be an author and what the purpose of the theater is. He wonders why the most splendid ideas come to him when he is not writing, only to disappear as soon as he sits down to write. In this monologue the language shifts to the standard for almost an entire page when he is discussing his new play about an informer who decides to commit suicide. The text then returns to the vernacular, and Rashid recounts the evening when he and Assimo went out to stick posters for their show on the walls and were arrested. Assimo sings the whole night and when Rashid asks him if he is aware of where they are, he answers: “In the Zoo.”

Part V, chapter 9: Nura is back in Morocco to bring her child to Italy with the passport of the other child. She is careful not to meet anybody she knows in Morocco out of fear that Assimo will learn of her return and prevent her from leaving. In the end everything works out well.

Going through the chapters in the vernacular, we notice that the protagonists who use this variety for entire chapters are Nura, Rashid, and Assimo’s father, *l-mekanisyan*. Nura’s share is six chapters, Rashid’s five, and *l-mekanisyan*’s only one. Nura is the first and the last person to use the vernacular in the novel. She is the only one to act and think with some consistency and reason throughout the novel, thus adapting to the environment as best she can. She soon realizes, however, that she must go somewhere else if she wants a share in “this thing they call life.” The chapters told through her follow a logical line in her fight for improving conditions for herself and her children, and eventually she succeeds in rescuing them. She is the real heroine of the novel reacting to circumstances with some logic. The words in her first monologue in the standard language stand out,

and we cannot but attribute special importance and weight to them: they are her point of departure, the catalyst that makes her react.

In contrast to Nura, Rashid is part of the absurd where the plot seems to be of less importance. He is drifting in the wind like the pages of the play which they lose in the first chapter, and his endeavours come to nothing. The same applies to Assimo. But Assimo is not given a voice in the vernacular like Nura and Rashid. Though he has many lines throughout the novel, never is he given space to speak for more than a few lines at a time. This is a cause for wonder. One possible explanation could be that he is, really, only a duplicate of Rashid and as such is not seen as worthy of an independent voice.

Looking at the topics in the vernacular parts, we find that all topics are dealt with in the vernacular as they are dealt with in the standard. The vernacular parts of the novel form small islands in the standard texts and within these islands, the standard text again form even smaller islands. The two languages are competing for hegemony rather than being in a static relationship; sometimes the vernacular is opposing the standard, and sometimes the standard opposes the vernacular, sharpening the attention of the reader who is thrown back and forth between the two. At the same time they interact, giving each other contours by occurring side by side rather than in a hierarchy as in Ferguson's H/L distribution. Or in other words, the one enhances the effect of the other at the cost of itself.

Conclusion

Let me start by stating that Youssef Fadel masters *fushā* just wonderfully and is not using the Moroccan vernacular to make reading easy and attract the general public, as is sometimes the case in Egypt, with examples like Ghada Abdel Aal's *I want to get married* and Khaled Khumaysi's *Taxi*. To read Fadel's works the reader must master the Moroccan vernacular *and* the standard language at a very high level, for *The Zoo Story* makes difficult reading: the vocabulary is enormous and the complexity of the sentences is at a correspondingly advanced level.

Youssef Fadel is no proponent of Ferguson's functional distribution approach to diglossia. In *The Zoo Story* the standard and vernacular varieties appear side by side and, rather than being in opposition to each other, they are in opposition to the other vernaculars of the Arab world: those of the *mashriq* countries and notably that of the dominant Egypt. To further support this point, let me mention another work by Youssef Fadel, his novel *Hašīš* from 2000, in which he uses throughout the novel the letter *f* in its Maghreb form with a dot beneath the letter instead of above. This has no impact on the grammar or the vocabulary

of the text, but the mere look at a page of that novel reminds the reader that we are not just in the Arab world generally, but in the Maghreb specifically.

It seems to me that another of Youssef Fadel's objectives in using the Moroccan could be the wish to distance and liberate his discourse from being part of "the Arab world" of which it linguistically forms part, to be sure, but perhaps less so politically and even less culturally. The novel makes mention of North Africa, Europe and Latin America time and again, but Egypt or the Middle East is not mentioned once. Roger Allen has demonstrated how the literatures of the Arab world have moved in different directions, each developing its own *khuṣūṣiyāt*, special characteristics,¹⁷ and are no longer drawing on contemporary common experiences – although still sharing a common history. Fadel uses the Moroccan vernacular to oppose the dominant language varieties of the Arab world, like Egyptian and Levantine Arabic and, furthermore, to comment on the futility of human endeavour.

Another question which presents itself is the intertextual use of Albee's one act play. There is a contradiction in using an American play – America as the largest superpower of the world – as the basis of the novel and transforming this work into Moroccan, making it inaccessible to most of the world, save a small group of literate Moroccans. On the one hand, Fadel chooses to be part of the international and cosmopolitan borderless world; on the other hand, he closes in on himself when he chooses the smaller world, the particular. In my view, Fadel demonstrates the attempt of a writer to tear himself away from the Middle Eastern expectations and demands of loyalty to a common Arabic cause, and instead, insists on being a part of the truly global world, though still remain an individual.

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Adonis på svenska – en översättningskritik

Tetz Rooke¹
Göteborgs Universitet

Abstract

Denna artikel handlar om hur den arabiske poeten Adonis har översatts till svenska. Den teoretiska bakgrunden är den klassiska frågan om ”oöversättlighet”. Metoden är en jämförande närläsning av utvalda texter av Adonis och deras publicerade svenska översättningar. Vilka översättningsförluster har uppstått vid transpositionen av de komplexa originalen? Studien undersöker denna fråga genom fyra kritiska fokus: 1) grammatik och semantik, 2) intertextualitet och kultur, 3) poetisk form, samt 4) redigering och urval. Analysen visar att ”Adonis på svenska” är en ganska annorlunda poet än ”Adonis på arabiska” på grund av den kombinerade effekten av de manipulationer som skett på alla undersökta områden. Resultatet stöder påståendet att översättningen av arabisk litteratur i Norden fortfarande befinner sig på experimentstadiet.

Keywords: Översättning av arabisk poesi, poesiöversättning, Adonis i översättning, oöversättlighet, översättningsförluster

Inledning

Den syrisk-libanesisk-franske poeten Adonis har en stark ställning i Sverige, där han i den litterära offentligheten sedan länge framställs som den främste representanten för den moderna arabiska poesin. Han uppfattas ofta som en modernistisk ”guru” med stor karisma: ”Adonis visar vägen – för svensk poesi” lön exempelvis rubriken på en artikel i *Aftonbladet* häromåret, där den svenska poeten Magnus William-Olsson pekade ut den arabiska poetiska traditionen som en möjlig källa till förnyelse för den svenska poesin.² Utgångspunkten var en nyutgåva av Adonis parisföreläsningar från 1984, *En introduktion till arabisk poetik*, som ofta tjänat som grund för svensk förståelse av den arabiska diktraden utanför arabisternas krets.³

Att Adonis är förhållandevis flitigt översatt i Sverige, både lyrik och kritik, har flera orsaker. Bortsett från texternas egenvärde bottnar det positiva mottagandet i introduktörernas inflytande och flit. Översättaren och kulturjournalisten Sigrid Kahles långa fälttag för Adonis som kandidat till

¹ E-mail address: tetz.rooke@sprak.gu.se

² William-Olsson 2010.

³ Adonis: *En introduktion till arabisk poetik*, övers. Astrid Ericson Bahari och Hesham Bahari (Lund: Alhambra, 2010) [1991] Fransk titel: *Introduction à la poetique arabe* (Paris: Sindbad, 1985). Arabisk titel: *al-Shi'riyya al-'arabiyya*, 1985.

Nobelpriset i litteratur har spelat en stor roll. Från det att den första lansen drogs i akademiernas tidskrift *Artes* och fram till senare års protestinlägg i pressen över det ständiga förbigåendet av poeten, har Kahle kraftfullt propagerat för Adonis både i ord och i handling. Som dotter till en tidigare ledamot av Svenska akademien, orientalisten H. S. Nyberg, hustru till en tysk diplomat med långa stationeringar i arabvärlden, och som flyhänt kulturskribent med *Svenska Dagbladet* som plattform, har Kahle haft avgörande inflytande på bilden av Adonis i Sverige.⁴ En annan viktig person för introduktionen av Adonis har varit förläggaren och översättaren Hesham Bahari. Alla Adonis böcker på svenska utom en har publicerats på Alhambra, Baharis eget förlag.⁵ Under två decennier har Alhambra målmedvetet och ambitiöst satsat på poeten. Utgivningsprojektet har varit framgångsrikt i den mening att flera titlar nått förhållandevis stora upplagor, samtidigt som uppmärksamheten för böckerna i massmedia har ökat efterhand som Adonis kommit att bli ”namnet på allas läppar” inför Nobelprisvalet varje år.⁶ Recensionerna har dessutom överlag varit positiva. Negativa omdömen om ”Adonis på svenska” är sällsynta i media, om de existerar överhuvudtaget.

I de fall recensenterna ändå uttryckt tveksamheter eller garderat lovorden, har ambivalensen antingen tillskrivits diktarens förmodade höga svårighetsgrad eller troliga översättningsförluster. Men eftersom den svenska kritikerkåren i gemen inte behärskar arabiska, har man inte kunnat granska översättningarna mot originalen, något som annars är brukligt vid lyriköversättningar från främmande språk. Det har varit svårt för den enskilde kritikern att bedöma tolkningarnas kvalitet i ett jämförande perspektiv. Röntgenblicken har blockerats av arabiskans bly. Översättarna har därför hamnat, eller lämnats, i skymundan.

⁴ Kahle 1984. För en sammanställning av hennes artiklar fram till och med 1994, se skriftförteckningen Kahle 1994. En intäkt på Kahles inflytande på bilden av Adonis i Sverige är hennes bidrag till *Nationalencyklopedin* (NE), s. v. ”Adonis: Den störste arabiske poeten”.

⁵ Följande titlar av Adonis finns hittills utgivna på svenska: *Den förälskade stenens tid*, övers. Hesham Bahari (Lund: Bakhåll, 1987); *Sånger av Mihyar från Damaskus*, övers. Hesham Bahari, Ingemar & Mikaela Leckius (Lund: Alhambra, 1990); *En introduktion till arabisk poetik* övers. Astrid Ericson Bahari och Hesham Bahari (Lund: Alhambra, 1991); *Bönen och svärdet, essäer om arabisk kultur*, övers. Jan Stolpe (Lund: Alhambra, 1994); *En tid mellan askan och rosorna*, övers. Hesham Bahari, Sigrid Kahle, Ingemar Leckius, Mikaela Leckius och Ingvar Rydberg (Lund: Alhambra, 2001), i ny utökad och reviderad upplaga med titeln *Detta är mitt namn, en antologi* (Lund: Alhambra, 2006); *Utdrag ur Boken, platsens gårdag nu*, övers. Ingvar Rydberg (Lund: Alhambra, 2000); *Boken, platsens gårdag nu, del I*, övers. Hesham Bahari (Lund: Alhambra 2005). Den enda titel som inte är utgiven på Alhambra är poetens första, *Den förälskade stenens tid* (1987), men då fanns ännu inte förlaget, startat 1988, och Hesham Bahari står dessutom som översättare av premiärboken. Därutöver har poeten presenterats och översatts till svenska i litterära tidskrifter som *Lyrikvänner, 80-tal, Karavan* och *Alhambras litterära magasin*.

⁶ Formuleringen ”namnet på allas läppar” är hämtad från ingressen till Mustafa Cans artikel (Can 2003).

Denna artikel är ett försök att utreda frågan som ofta ställts i recensionerna av Adonis verk, explicit eller implicit, men som aldrig besvaras där: Hur skiljer sig den arabiske Adonis från Adonis på svenska? Hur har dikterna påverkats av översättningsprocessen? Vad är det som möjligtvis gått förlorat? Undersökningen ska ses i ljuset av ett gammalt språkfilosofiskt och kunskapsteoretiskt problem: Var går översättlighetens gränser? Finns det några gränser för översättligheten över huvud taget, eller går allt i litteraturens värld, även modern arabisk poesi, att översätta?

Oöversättlighet i teorin

Begreppen ”översättlighet” respektive ”oöversättlighet” (*translatability* – *untranslatability*) har teoretiseras av översättningsvetenskapen som akademisk disciplin sedan dess begynnelse. J. C. Catford, som initierade en lingvistisk teoribildning om översättning, delade upp fenomenet i två kategorier, ”lingvistisk oöversättlighet” och ”kulturell oöversättlighet”.⁷ I det första fallet definierade han oöversättligheten som en lexikalisk enhet eller syntaktisk struktur i källspråket utan motsvarighet i målspråket; utifrån denna definition vore den övervägande delen av en arabisk text vilken som helst förvisso oöversättlig på grund av språkens långa avstånd från varandra. Men som Susan Bassnett konstaterar i en replik till Catford i sitt kapitel om ”Untranslatability” i en tidig bok från 80-talet, så kan man alltid strukturera om den främmande syntaktiska källspråkskonstruktionen på något sätt och få fram en adekvat översättning trots allt.⁸ Bassnett ger inte heller mycket för Catfords andra kategori, ”kulturell oöversättlighet”, eftersom språket är en del av kulturen och denna därför alltid per definition är unik: ”In so far as language is the primary modelling system within a culture, cultural untranslatability must be de facto implied in any process of translation.”⁹ Umberto Eco sammanfattar ståndpunkten kärnfullt så här: ”Linguistic systems seem to be mutually incommensurable. Incommensurability, however, does not mean incomparability”.¹⁰

George Mounin är också inne på samma pragmatiska spår: i teorin är basenheterna (från fonem och uppåt) i varje språkpar inkommensurabla och asymmetriska, men kommunikation är dock alltid möjlig, när hänsyn tas till situationen och omständigheterna, mellan talare och lyssnare eller författare och översättare. Översättning är en dialektisk process som faktiskt kan lyckas

⁷ Catford 1965. Om Catfords roll som teoretisk skolbildare, se Ingo 1998: 41-42.

⁸ Bassnett-McGuire 1980: 32.

⁹ Ibid.: 34.

¹⁰ Eco 2001: 12.

bra – aldrig fullständigt, men tillräckligt bra för att den inte ska vara omöjlig: "Communication through translation can never be completely finished, which also demonstrates that it is never wholly impossible either."¹¹ För Mounin är kruxet varken lingvistiskt eller kulturellt, utan psykologiskt och individuellt: det är egentligen den personliga erfarenheten i all sin egenart och originalitet som är oöversättlig. Och författaren och kritikern Steve Sem-Sandberg har sagt något liknande om, hur det oöversättbara i litteraturen ser ut:

Med tiden har jag dock mer och mer kommit att tro att det utöver detta – historia och grammatik – finns något *eget*, något oöversättbart *språk-aktigt* som jag inte riktigt kommer åt att definiera men som alla genuina författare har i större eller mindre utsträckning. – En ton, en särskild kvalitet; ett slags oöversättbart *det*. – Det är just detta lilla *det* alla översättare kämpar med när de översätter en roman av en författare från ett annat språkområde och som de känner att de inte kommer åt, detta trots att de menar sig behärska allt – inte bara det språk författarens uttrycker sig på utan också hans kulturkrets, tradition, förebilder, valfrändskaper ...¹²

I en essä med titeln "Om möjligheten och omöjligheten att översätta" utredes översättaren och kritikern Erik Mesterton oöversättligheten ur många olika perspektiv, såväl språkteoretiska som litteraturhistoriska. Mesterton för fram samma åsikt som lingvisten Roman Jakobson, att all kognitiv erfarenhet, de mentala strukturerna, begreppen, alltid kan översättas. Den begreppsmässiga information som finns i en text, och som vi har kunskap om, den kan alltid överföras till vilket som helst existerande språk, med långa omskrivningar om inget annat fungerar. Problemet med poesin – och den poetiska prosan – är att den inte enbart har ett kognitivt innehåll. Poesin uttrycker även andra erfarenheter, estetiska upplevelser, som är knutna till den språkliga formen. I poesin blir de grammatiska kategorierna i sig betydelsebärande; språkets uttryckselement "semantiseras".

Resonemanget illustreras av språklekar och dubbletydigheter. När det tyska *scheinen* i en diktrad betyder både "synas" och "lysa", uppstår en valsituation: Vad skönt är [Was aber schön ist], "synes saligt" eller "lyser saligt"? Båda läsarterna existerar samtidigt genom dubbletydigheten i tyskans uttryck, men översättaren till svenska måste välja endera tolkningen. Varpå Mesterton ironiskt föreslår en lösning av knuten som går ut på att översätta

¹¹ Mounin 1963: 279. Efter citat i Bassnett-McGuire 1980: 36.

¹² Sem-Sandberg 2008: 238.

versen två gånger, en gång på varandra sättet, med ett ”alternativt” emellan. Då har all information ju kommit med ...¹³

Men är det då samma dikt? Vems röst ljuder högst, författarens eller översättarens? Mestertons poäng är att man bör skilja på översättbarhet och läsbarhet. Även det icke-översättliga kan översättas läsbart, det vill säga njutbart, genom en ”skapande transponering”. Att skapa en läsbar poetisk text lika ”överdeterminerad” eller mättad med betydelser som originalet kräver svåra kompromisser med semantiken, men också ett konstnärligt sinnelag hos översättaren, vars uppgift det är att skapa dikten på nytt. Detta är en gammal sanning: ”Inom lyrikens domäner kan översättaren inte längre nöja sig med att vara reproducerande; han blir med nödvändighet medskapande, parallellt diktande”, formulerar Per Erik Wahlund den i sina översättarmemoarer.¹⁴ Och Sem-Sandberg utvecklar det kreativa spåret ytterligare genom att också involvera läsaren som medskapare: Tilltron till texten, identifikationen och upplevelsen, uppstår vid läsakten, menar han. Meningen i texten är en slags kommunikativ kod. Denna kan definieras som en pakt mellan författaren och läsaren. Hur man översätter vad som i grund och botten är en oskriven överenskommelse blir då den svåra frågan.¹⁵

Jag har i mitt konkreta fall valt att undersöka fyra svårigheter hos Adonis som särskilt tycks hota översättligheten: 1) det arabiska språkets struktur 2) de intertextuella referenserna, 3) den bundna poetiska formen, och slutligen 4) behovet av urval och redigering, som gjort Adonis till en ganska annorlunda poet på svenska än på arabiska tycks det mig. Det finns naturligtvis många andra element möjliga att begrunda. Metaforerna bland annat, och tonen, eller ordlekarna. Hur översätter man exempelvis författarens lek med den vokallösa arabiska skriften, där *faraj* (befrielse) och *farj* (sköte) är homografer? ”Säg alltså till din kropp, i maskopi med hemligheterna, att upplysas vid *Bab al-faraj* // Det kvittar om *r*:et är vokaliserat eller har *sukūn* – du kommer ändå aldrig att kunna förvandla orden till ting” heter det i dikten ”I famnen på ett annat alfabet”.¹⁶ För det första syftar texten här på en plats (*Bab al-faraj*, en av Damaskus stadsportar), för det andra på detta egennamns bokstavliga betydelse (”Befrielsens port”), och för det tredje på möjligheten att skapa en helt annan betydelse (”kvinnosköte”) av bokstäverna *f-r-j*, om man låter bli att läsa in en kort *a*-vokal efter bokstaven *r*. Tre betydelser i en term med andra ord, och det

¹³ Mesterton 1998: 176-178.

¹⁴ Wahlund 1970: 58.

¹⁵ Sem-Sandberg 2008: 242

¹⁶ Adūnīs: ”Fī ḥuḍn abjadiyya thāniyya” ur samlingen *Abjadiyya thāniyya* (Casablanca: Dār Tūbqāl, 1994), 196. Egen översättning. Alla översättningar från arabiska i denna artikel är mina, om inget annat anges.

med en sexuell anspelning dessutom. Det är inte lätt att matcha i någon översättning.

Grammatikens stötesten

Går det att isolera vad som är svåröversatt hos Adonis som unik poetisk röst, från vad som är allmänt besvärligt att rendera på andra språk än arabiska på grund av detta språks särskilda egenskaper? Arabiskan har ju rykte om sig att vara särskilt svåröversatt. Oftast tänker man då på semantiken och ordrikedomen. Men morfologin och kongruensreglerna i arabiskan skiljer sig också från svenska på radikala sätt. I verböjningen är formerna för 2 m. s. och 3 f. s. exempelvis identiska i imperfektkonjugationen. Eftersom verbs subjekt markeras med ett bundet morfem istället för självständigt personligt pronom, kan en verbform som *taqūlu* (med verbet ”säga” som exempel) antingen betyda *du* (m) säger eller *hon* säger beroende på kontext; det går inte att göra skillnad grammatiskt.

I dikten ”Thamud” daterad 1976 finner vi just denna verbform.¹⁷ Trots att subjektets identitet inte är explicit i den arabiska versen måste en översättare till svenska på grund av vårt språks tvingande grammatik här välja väg: *du* eller *hon*? Valet komplickeras ytterligare av att inanimata nomen i plural syntaktiskt betraktas som feminin singular i arabiska och alltså också tar samma form. Det betyder i det aktuella fallet att även tolkningen *de* säger (inanimat korrelat) är möjlig. För att kunna översätta ordet *taqūlu* i dikten korrekt måste översättaren alltså veta vad böjningsformen syftar på: *du* (m) säger, *hon* säger eller *de* säger? På arabiska är alla tre varianterna möjliga läsarter.

Bara genom en tolkning av diktens djupstruktur kan valet fattas. För att kunna välja rätt subjekt till verbet måste översättaren göra en serie hypotetiska rekonstruktioner av den berättelse, som döljer sig bakom intrigen som textens ytstruktur representerar. Valet av pronomen beror på sammanhanget. Ingvar Rydberg och Hesham Bahari som tillsammans översatt denna dikt väljer ”Du sade”.¹⁸ Rätt eller fel? Det finns inget givet facit, men strofen där versen ingår och dikten som helhet pekar i en annan riktning som jag läser den. För mig är det mest sannolika att det underförstådda subjektet är de blad som nämns fyra rader upp. Det är *de* (bladen) som talar. Det *du* som framträder här och även apostroferas i den svenska versionen några rader tidigare, uppfattar jag som en sämre gissning av översättarna framkallad av arabiskans brist på explicitet.

¹⁷ Adūnīs: ”Thamūd” ur *al-Muṭābaqāt wa-l-awwā’ il* (Beirut: Dār al-ādāb, 1988) [1980], 10.

¹⁸ Adonis: *En tid mellan askan och rosorna* (Furulund: Alhambra, 2001), 130; *Detta är mitt namn* (Lund: Alhambra, 2006), 121.

Utan kontext är subjektet till *taqūlu* flertydigt. Det svenska pronomenet *du* är också vagt, fast på annat sätt: det saknar distinktion i genus. Frasen ”du sade” öppnar för en tolkning av referenten som feminin, vilket är en omöjlig läsning på arabiska som böjer imperfektverbet i andra person olika för maskulin och feminin. Den svenska frasen är med andra ord flertydig på ett helt annat sätt och med helt andra semantiska implikationer än den arabiska.

Dikten börjar typiskt nog i en liknande grammatisk och betydelsemässig vaghet. Andra och tredje versraderna lyder *kharajat min aṣdāf l-mā’ wa-ja’at / fī layl*.¹⁹ Första ordet *kharajat* är ett verb i perfekt (motsvarande svenska perfekt och preteritum) och radslutet *ja’at* likaså. Verben betyder ”träda ut” respektive ”komma” bland annat. Subjektet uttrycks med ett bundet morfem, ändelsen *-at* (3 f. s.). Eftersom de arabiska kongruensreglerna som sagt säger att inanimata nomen i plural syntaktiskt räknas som feminin singular, kan satsen semantiskt sett betyda flera olika saker:

1. ”*Hon* steg upp ur snäckorna i vattnet och kom /en natt”.
2. ”*Den/det* steg upp ur snäckorna i vattnet och kom /en natt” (då arabiskan bara har två genus och saknar neutrum).
3. ”*De* steg upp ur snäckorna i vattnet och kom /en natt”.

Den arabiske läsaren är tvungen (eller tillåten) att skjuta upp den definitiva tolkningen, men i en svensk översättning måste subjektet genast preciseras. Eftersom våra fristående personliga pronomen har mer exakt definierade korrelat än arabiskans motsvarande morfem, minskar polysemin i strofen. När Bahari och Rydberg översätter ”Insvept i natten stiger *hon* upp ur vattnets snäcka” (min kursivering) är valet oåterkalleligen gjort, och något annat vore omöjligt.²⁰ Problemet som uppstår, är att identiteten på denna ”hon” förblir en obesvarad gåta genom resten av dikten. Den arabiska verbändelsen *-at* syftar kanske inte alls på någon person, utan på ett eller flera ting, som skulle kunna vara ”minnet” (f.) eller ”orden” enligt min läsart. Att originalversen har pluralformen ”musslor/snäckor” och inte singular ”snäcka” är ett indicium för detta: det är svårt för en ensam person (*hon*) att stiga upp/ut ur flera snäckor samtidigt. Musslor/snäckor är en metafor som också skulle kunna syfta på de pärlmorinlagda trädistor eller bokstöd, som är typiska för ett traditionellt syriskt privatbibliotek, om nu inte ordet står för drömmar och det fördolda helt enkelt.

Ett annat indicium för ett inanimat subjekt i öppningsversen är diktens tema. Det finns en röd tråd i dikten som jag tolkar den: poetens bearbetande av

¹⁹ Adūnīs: ”Thamūd”, 9.

²⁰ Adonis: *En tid mellan askan och rosorna*, 130; *Detta är mitt namn*, 121.

det poetiska arvet ("minnet") och sökande efter ett levande språk ("bladen; "orden"), som en gång präglat den arabiska poesin och kulturen ("det andra Damaskus") men som nu gått förlorat, ett språk han önskar återuppväcka på nytt. Denna läsart fungerar inte i den svenska texten, där den oförutsägbara växlingen mellan *hon*, *du* och *de* som subjekt i satser där arabiskan är formmässigt konsekvent, försvårar möjligheterna till ett sådant sammanhang. Det är stor skillnad mellan översättningen "*Hon* avtecknade sig i träden,/i glöden blev *hon* synlig,/ men ändå kände jag inte igen *henne*."²¹ (mina kursiveringar) och "Det vilda körsbärsträdet pekar på *det* [minnet?]/ glöden pekar på *det*/ men jag kände inte igen *det*." (min övers.)

Arabiskans kongruensregler går inte att imitera på svenska. Denna syntaktiska struktur utgör en potentiell källa till oöversättlighet i all transponering av dikt från arabiska. Men Adonis laborerar mer än de flesta med den möjlighet till vaghet och mångtydighet som reglerna ger, när han medvetet undviker att precisera pronominas korrelat. Hans dikter ställer höga krav på läsaren att själv lägga ihop och skapa sammanhang. I så mening är många av hans texter likt ofullbordade partitur eller pussel. Det betyder inte att syftningarna är godtyckliga och alla översättningar lika goda. Det torde finnas en underliggande logik även i det outtalade. Läsarens medskapande måste dock med nödvändighet bli annorlunda på svenska; tvingad av språket har översättaren redan gjort många kritiska val, preciserat betydelser och stängt öppna referens utan att det märks.

Det finns otaliga exempel på grammatiske asymmetri mellan svenska och arabiska. Ibland förhåller det sig tvärt om, att arabiskans former är mer determinerade än svenskans. När dikttaget i "Thamud" utbrister *nāmī* ("sov", imperativ, 2 f. s.), syftar verbformen kanske på "Damaskus" mitt i samma strof, städer betraktas nämligen syntaktiskt som feminin. En direkt översättning av formen till svenska ger ingen liknande grammatiske vägledning om vem eller vad som uppmanas sova, eftersom vårt imperativ har ett enklare paradigm. Syftningen blir alltså med nödvändighet mindre precis i svensk översättning, med konsekvenser för hur innehållet kan eller bör förstås. I Baharis och Rydbergs tolkning av dikten finner vi dessutom en blankrad innan imperativa, trots att originalt bara har ett tankstreck på motsvarande ställe i texten. Det försvårar syftningen ännu mer. Frågan är om kopplingen till Damaskus som möjlig adressat för uppmaningen över huvud taget går att göra?²²

²¹ Ibid., 129 & 121.

²² Adūnis: "Thamūd", 21; *En tid mellan askan och rosorna*, 136; *Detta är mitt namn*, 128. Bahari och Rydberg supplerar imperativa med ett tidsuttryck och översätter *nāmī* som "Sov nu!".

Även den arabiska meningsbyggnaden är ibland vansklig att tolka, särskilt i modernistiskt koncipierad poesi, där semantiken inte ger någon säker upplysning om satsdelarna och deras inbördes relation. Kasusändelserna är inte alltid utsatta i texten vilket öppnar för olika läsarter; nominalsatsen saknar kopula som måste suppleras av läsaren. Att arabiskan saknar distinktion mellan gemen och versal samt normerad interpunktion, bidrar till att tvetydighet lätt uppstår i fråga om var en viss mening börjar och slutar. Men dessa tolkningsproblem delar översättaren med den arabiske läsaren, som faktiskt ofta inte heller vet. Skillnaden är åter att översättarens målspråk ofta kräver klart besked, medan en läsare i källkulturen kan låta osvuret vara bäst.

En tänkbar översättningslösning på den oklara syntaxens prominens hos Adonis är förstås att minimera bruket av skiljetecken och versaler och låta orden flöda, som en inre monolog av Joyce ungefär. Shawkat Toorawas engelska tolkning av "Hādhā huwa smī" (Detta är mitt namn), en av poetens mest omtalade dikter och svåra men samtidigt också mest översatta, följer denna väg med intressant effekt: "*A fruitful numbness trellises around the head are dreams beneath the pillows are my days a hole in my pocket lacerated the world/ Eve is pregnant in my trousers*".²³ Å ena sidan illustrerar översättningen hur svår satslösningen kan vara hos Adonis och vilka mångtydigheter som uppstår under läsakten. Å andra sidan är texten betydligt mer radikal på engelska än arabiska, eftersom stor bokstav aldrig förekommer i det senare språket, och skiljetecken är en ny konvention som inte möter i historiskt material.

Hesham Baharis första tolkning från 1987 av dikten visar att han använt samma strategi som Toorawa, och ändå blir syntaxen ganska så annorlunda.²⁴ Det är också intressant att notera, att den reviderade översättning som följer 2006 är helt normaliseras när det gäller interpunktion och versaler, så att stycket där lyder: "En fruktbarande domning förgrenar sig runt huvudet, en dröm under kudden, mina dagar är ett hål i min ficka och världen ruttnar. Eva är havande i mina byxor (...)"²⁵.

²³ Adūnīs: *Hādhā huwa smī* (Beirut: Dār al-ādāb, 1988 [1970]); Toorawa 1993: 32. För en alternativ engelsk översättning, se *Adonis. Selected Poems* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010), 113, där översättaren Khaled Mattawa i sin introduktion utnämner dikten till ett av 1900-talets mest originella poetiska verk (Mattawa 2010: xviii). För en mer kritisk syn på dikten, se Weidner 1999.

²⁴ Adonis: *Den förälskade stenens tid*, 31.

²⁵ Adonis: *Detta är mitt namn*, 52-53.

Intertextualitetens dilemma

Legenden som dikten ”Thamud” alluderar till, finns berättad i Koranen som är dess hypotext. Sex olika suror innehåller verser om folket Thamud, profeten Salih som predikade för dem, och Guds hårda straff för människornas ohörsamhet.²⁶ Thamud står i Koranen som en symbol för ett självgott samhälle dömt till undergång och anförs där som ett varnande exempel. Denna encyklopediska kunskap besitter flertalet arabiska och muslimska läsare, däremot färre svenska (eller kinesiska, amerikanska osv.). Den litterära allusionen är emellertid inte i första hand ett översättningsproblem – förutsatt att översättaren själv förstår den – utan ett receptionsproblem: hur ser den kompetenta läsaren ut? Även ett original kan vara så komplicerat i källkulturen att det lider brist på kvalificerade läsare nämligen, när det kräver en beläsenhet hos läsaren motsvarande den hos den beläste författaren. Göran Hägg talar om en sorts modernism som ”gör dikt till något som liknar korsord”.²⁷

Adonis texter är typiska korsord i den mening att endast ett fåtal om ens någon läsare besitter den stora kunskap, som krävs för att helt förstå alla litterära referenser och allusioner som de är programmerad för. Intertextualiteten spelar ofta en fundamental roll i Adonis poesi. De litterära referenserna är ett bärande element i kompositionen vare sig diktjaget kontemplerar New York (dikten ”En grav för New York”), Paris (dikten ”Begärets resa i materians geografi”), Aden (dikten ”Vaggan”) eller Damaskus (dikten ”I famnen på ett annat alfabet”). Mastodontverket *Boken* med sin poetiska rekonstruktion av skalden al-Mutanabbis liv och den arabiska historien demonstrerar också med bedövande tydlighet denna princip.²⁸ En trogen översättning bör bevara originalets mättnad och elitism.

Odet eller *qaṣīdan* ”Thamud” inleder samlingen *Korrespondenser och begynneler*. Titelsvitens där, ”Korrespondenser”, består av 24 kortare dikter (*qīṭā*) vars konstnärliga effekt i hög grad bygger på litterära allusioner. Det framgår också av titlarna: ”Skriften; Sökandet; Poaterna; Namnet; Erfarenheten; Barnen; Poeten; Den vilsne; Galenskapen [dedicerad till Elias Khoury]; Dialogen; Adonis; Mīdān-kvarteret; Qays; Gilgamesh; al-Niffarī; Shāghūr-kvarteret; Revolutionen; Barnen 2; Qasyūn; Abū Tammām;

²⁶ Surorna 7: 73-79; 11: 61-68; 15: 80-84; 17: 59; 27: 45-53; 54: 23-31.

²⁷ Hägg 2000: 589.

²⁸ Adūnīs: *al-Kitāb*, vol. I (London: Saqi, 1995). På svenska som *Boken, platsens gårdag nu*, övers. Hesham Bahari. Hela verket består av tre volymer (1995 – 2002) om sammanlagt cirka 1500 sidor poesi. Jmf. Mattawa 2010: xxiii-xxiv, där den litterära och kulturella kontextens problem diskuteras som ett återkommande översättningsproblem.

Baudelaire; Rainer Maria Rilke; Abū Nuwās; Marginalen.”²⁹ Utan betydande encyklopedisk kompetens från läsarens sida dräneras många av dessa dikter på mycket av sin möjliga mening. Abū Nuwās exempelvis är en av de stora poeterna i den arabiska litteraturhistorien, en 800-talsfigur känd för sin dryckenskap, skörlevnad och fräckhet. Namnet är dock tomt på associationer utanför den arabisk-islamiska kultukretsen, med reservation för möjliga ekon från *Tusen och en natt*.

Adonis framställer i sin korta dikt skalden som en representant för trotset. Språk och ord liknas vid split och blod som leder till söndring i himlen (*lughatun – fitnatun / kalimatun – damun / wa-l-samā’u muftaraqun*).³⁰ Tanken bör stå ganska klar även för den läsare som inte kan placera Abū Nuwās i historien, men den får ett större djup för den invigde. Denna idealläsare får ut mer av dikten eftersom hon vet att Abū Nuwās är en klassisk poet känd för en trotsig poesi och sin hedonistiska attityd till livet.

Ordet ”split” på arabiska, *fitna*, är oöversättligt genom sin mångtydighet och sina kulturella konnotationer: frestelse, förförelse men också politisk split och söndring. Som begrepp är ordet kopplat till den islamiska historien, där oppositionella och olitkänkande (men också den ogifta kvinnan) har anklagats för att utgöra ett hot mot samhället genom att sprida *fitna*. Kanske bör man därför behålla ordet translittererat i en översättning: ”Språk – *fitna* / ord – blod”? Den palimpsestlikla effekt och det historiska djup som detta laddade ord ger en modern arabisk dikt, är svåra att överföra till andra idiom. Ibland kan en translitteration faktiskt vara den bästa lösningen.

Ofta är det till synes oöversättbara en fråga om kulturell kompetens: Dikten ”Abū Nuwās” är i originalsamlingen placerad efter två ”korresponderande” miniatyrporträtt av författare ur den europeiska poesins kanon. För den genomsnittlige arabiska läsaren är Baudelaire och Rilke exotiska namn. Få har hört talas om dem, ännu färre läst dem. Att Baudelaire skrivit dikten ”Correspondences” som lånat namn åt Adonis svit, är inte ett uppenbart faktum i källkulturen. Många arabiska läsare är därför i en liknande position visavi dikten om Baudelaire som svenska läsare visavi dikten om Abū Nuwās. Men samma sak här, kunskap om Baudelaires poetiska identitet är inte omistlig för att uppleva dikten och finna en mening i den. En fras som slutversen *wa-l-jins qamīṣun min nūr* (Och sexualiteten är en skjorta av ljus) är en bild som lever även utan koppling till Baudelaires biografi. Att den litterära effekten av dikten

²⁹ Adūnīs: *al-Muṭābaqāt wa-l-awwā’il* (Beirut: Dār al-ādāb, 1988 [1980]); sviten ”al-Muṭābaqāt” omfattar s. 123-149.

³⁰ Ibid., 146.

troligen är större för den läsare som kan placera skjortan rätt i historien, är en annan sak.³¹

Korrespondenserna som Adonis pekar ut mellan klassiska arabiska diktare och mystiker å ena sidan och moderna europeiska poeter å den andra, bildar skulle man kunna säga en kiasm.³² Oavsett om man nalkas den i arabiskt original eller översatt, är den ena sidan hemtam och välkänd medan den andra främmande och obekant. Kontrasten är poetens syfte och de kulturella eller universella korrespondenserna poängen, som består även vid översättning – om kontexten respekteras och översättaren uppfattat allusionerna, det vill säga. Ändrar man sammanhanget genom urval och tillägg samt ny ordning på dikterna, som fallet är i de svenska antologierna, ändras tolkningsförutsättningarna.³³ Och när Ingmar Leckius i förordet till *Sånger av Mihyar från Damaskus* nämner ”[ä]nnu en samling med en förbryllande torr och abstrakt titel, *Analogier och premisser*” demonstrerar han vad den missade allusionen kan betyda.³⁴ Ty titeln är varken torr eller gåtfull, om *al-muṭābaqāt* översätts med ”korrespondenser” istället för ”analogier” och tillåts anspela på Baudelaires dikt, och om premisserna får bli ”begynnelser”.

Adonis blandande uppvisning i beläsenhet och lärdom i sina diktsamlingar gör honom svår att översätta. Dessutom svår att läsa. Vilket ibland är samma sak. En poesi där effekten huvudsakligen bygger på associationer framkallade av namn och begrepp ur litteraturhistorien blir en smal poesi för de redan invigda. Den avsedda dialogen förvandlas lätt till monolog.

Det finns en populär genre i den samtida arabiska poesin som vi kan kalla ”vändikter”. Kända poeter skriver hyllningsdikter som de tillägnar varandra. Utan kunskap om identiteten på de vänner som apostroferas i texten försvisser en del av poängen. I dikten ”Marrakech – Fez, rymden väver tolkningen” (Marākush – Fās, wa-l-faḍā’ yansaj al-tā’wīl), också den inkluderad i samlingen *Korrespondenser och begynnelser*, finner vi ett exempel på Adonis originella produktion i vändikternas genre. Dikten är komponerad i samband med en resa till Marocko 1979 och avsedd för uppläsning inför marockansk publik. Det övergripande politiska temat är arabisk samhörighet. Sista sidan av den långa texten innehåller en direkt hälsning till ”Herr Laâbi, Herr Khatibi och Herr Bennis” plus ”övriga vänner” som tack för reseupplevelsen. Dessa tre

³¹ Ibid., 144.

³² Jmf. juxtapositionen av dikterna ”Baudelaire” och ”Abu Nuwas” i *Detta är mitt namn*, 182-183.

³³ Adonis: *En tid mellan askan och rosorna & Detta är mitt namn*, ”Analogier och premisser”, svit om sju dikter, 27-33.

³⁴ Adonis: *Sånger av Mihyar från Damaskus*, 9.

personer, med förnamnen Abdellatif, Abdelkabir respektive Mohammed, gällde vid tiden som Marockos främsta författare.

Här har dikten en tydlig funktion av ceremoni. Att översätta det kognitiva innehållet låter sig nog göra, även den ceremoniella funktionen går kanske fram, men den svenska läsaren förblir ändå utestängd från festen. Förfunktionerna är för dåliga och de förprogrammerade associationerna körs aldrig igång. Att ta fotnoter till hjälp är en klassisk strategi för att lösa denna typ av intertextuella problem. Men den har också sina risker, kan man se: att förvandla den moderna författartrion i fråga till ”nordafrikanska helgon och mystiker” som görs i en fotnot till den svenska översättningen av dikten, är inte bara sakligt fel utan också vilseledande och förrädiskt exotiserande.³⁵

Verskonstens knut

De ovan diskuterade kortdikterna ”Abū Nuwās” och ”Baudelaire” är metriskt regelbundna kompositioner. Oftaliga av Adonis dikter är på samma sätt metriska till sin struktur, melodiska, rytmiska, klangfulla skapelser där vokalharmonier, assonanser och rim medvetet utnyttjas för estetisk effekt. All metriskt bunden dikt ställer översättaren inför samma dilemma: Vad göra med formen? Hur översätter man den? I flertalet översättningar av modern arabisk lyrik till europeiska språk råder det konsensus om att arabisk meter och rim är oöversättliga element. Jag vet inte någon översättare som på allvar försökt att återskapa verskonsten i diktningen, trots att den är så central för det estetiska uttrycket hos Adonis. I översättning går det tyvärr därför inte att särskilja hans metriskt bundna dikter från hans prosapoem.

I antologin *Modern Arabic Poetry* (1987) har Lena Jayyusi och John-Heath Stubbs översatt en liten dikt med titeln ”Beginning speech” (*Awwal al-kalām*), som är ett exempel på att Adonis faktiskt också har en ”enkel” sida, att han i sina kortdikter kan vara både tillgänglig och allmängiltig.³⁶ Dikten handlar om ”barnet som jag var” och den gemenskap och det främlingskap som råder mellan en människas identiteter under skilda faser av livet. Som avslutningsdikt i samlingen *Korrespondenser och begynnelse* har den en viss symbolisk tyngd. I original är den metriskt bunden. Samma versfot används genom hela dikten, som är strofiskt uppbyggd i fyra korta strofer grafiskt separerade på boksidan. Foten tillhör de klassiska versfötterna i arabisk metrik: fā’ilātun (– ∪ – –) med varianten (∪ ∪ – –). Denna fot är basen för det antika

³⁵ Adonis: *Den förälskade stenens tid*, 80; *al-Muṭābaqāt wa-l-awwā’il*, 93-122.

³⁶ Adonis: ”Beginning speech”, övers. L. Jayyusi och J. Heath-Stubbs i Jayyusi 1987: 139; *al-Muṭābaqāt wa-l-awwā’il*, 192.

versmåttet *al-ramal* ("det springande"), som dock inte tillämpas här. Istället består strof ett av fem fötter, strof två av åtta fötter, strof tre av tio fötter och strof fyra av sju. Versraderna är delvis olika långa vilket maskerar den rytmiska regelbundenheten. Samma effekt har överklivningen som även inbegriper en delning av fötter mellan raderna på ett ställe. I en rad utnyttjar Adonis *licentia poetica* för att hålla metern, då ordet "flod" uppträder vokaliserat *naharun* (med en inskjuten kort a-vokal mellan h och r) istället för det normala *nahrūn*. Grafiskt gestaltad ser diktens meter ut så här, utan markerade radslut (// = slut på strof):

-○---/-○---/○○---/-○---/-○---//
 -○---/-○---/○○---/-○---/○○---/-○---/○○---/-○---//
 ○○---/-○---/○○---/○○---/-○---/
 -○---/-○---/○○---/○○---/-○---//
 -○---/-○---/○○---/-○---/○○---/○○---/○○---

Strof 1 och 2 binds samman av slutrim, inrim och assonanser: *atānī / kilānī / khūṭānā* respektive *shay'an / mashaynā* samt en upprepning av *gharībā* som slutord. Strof 3 och 4 innehåller rena slutrim: *fuṣūlū / uṣūlū / naqūlū*. Helheten är utpräglat rytmisk och klangfull.

Den engelska översättningen däremot har en helt annan form som svårigen låter läsaren ana den arabiska verskonsten i botten. Dikten är förmodligen anpassad till en amerikansk estetik som inte tillåter meter och rim i modern poesi. Det traditionella draget i Adonis original lyser helt med sin frånvaro. De fyra stroferna är visserligen bibehållna, men radbrytningarna är andra och dikterade av uttolkarna som ärtill utelämnat en semantiskt besvärlig bisats.³⁷ I enlighet med en västerländsk modernistisk poetik är den engelska syntaxen uppbruten och oidiomatisk också i fall där den arabiska är mer normal: *One step / an alien river / flowing* gentemot *khūṭānā / naharun yajrī gharīban* (Våra steg / [är] en flod som rinner [förbi] främmande). Mångtydigheten är bevarad, men det språkliga uttrycket förändrat.³⁸

Det är lätt att misstänka att många Adonisöversättare inte behärskar traditionell metrik, inte kan analysera versmått eller skandera dikter i bunden form. Därför menar man helt sonika att rim och meter är ett icke översättbart element. Man löser verskonstens knut med ett Alexanderhugg. Men kvantitativ vers på grekiska har ju bevisligen gått att översätta till svenska i bunden form.

³⁷ I tredje strofen: : "bi-sm hādhā l-waraq al-dārib fī l-rīḥ"

³⁸ Jmf. med Khaled Mattawas engelska tolkning där motsvarande vers lyder: "our steps / a strange river running in between" i *Adonis: Selected Poems*, 193.

Och Shakespeares sonetter har också tolkats i versifierat skick. I min bokhylla står rimmade översättningar av den moderna Szymborska och så vidare och så vidare. Det finns därför ingen anledning att a priori omöjligförklara respekten för Adonis och andra arabiska poeters bruk av vers. Den givna översättarambitionen bör vara att på något sätt, i någon grad och till någon del också överföra rytmiska mönster och auditiva element från originalet, inte bara kognitivt innehåll som för övrigt också kan bero av formen.

Formen är verkligen inte något sekundärt hos Adonis. Den förutnämnda dikten ”Detta är mitt namn” exempelvis innehåller många prov på avancerad verskonst som också kan fungera som nycklar till tolkningen. Strofernas stavelseantal och rimscheman indikerar och synkoperar syntaxen. Den metriska strukturen är grundläggande för hela kompositionen. Upprepning av fraser tjänar som refränger. En semantiskt trogen översättning, om den är möjlig, blir ändå otrogen originalet genom att förråda formen. Estetisk upplevelse är ju inte bara en fråga om effekten som sådan, utan involverar också en uppskattning av den ”textstrategi” som framkallar den. Det poetiska språket är självreflekterande. Uttryckets substans är lika viktig som innehållet och innebördens.³⁹

Förtjusningen i den bundna formen är inte en ovana från 50- och 60-talet som poeten övergivit sedan dess. Visst är verskonsten särskilt påtaglig i de första verken av den unge Adonis. Genombrottssamlingen *Sånger av Mihyar från Damaskus* (*Aghānī Mihyār al-Dimashqī*, 1961) är helt präglad av meter och rim. Och dikter som ”Alkemins blomma” (*Zahrat al-kīmiyā’*) med rimschemat ABBACDCD, ”Fjättrad förvåning” (*al-Dahsha al-asīra*) med schemat ABBACC och ”Al-Saqr (Falken)” (*Ayyām al-Şaqr*) ur *Metamorfosernas bok* (*Kitāb al-tahawwulāt wa-l-hijra fī aqālīm al-nahār wa-l-layl*, 1965) är andra typiska exempel, som ter sig radikalt annorlunda i sina ”formlösa” svenska tolkningar.⁴⁰ Radikala experiment med den lyriska formen domineras under en period sedan, men prosadikterna har aldrig tagit över produktionen helt. Även nestorn älskar att rimma. En sen samling som *Kroppens början havets slut* (*Awwal al-jasad ākhir al-bahr*, 2003) är full av metriskt bundna och rimmade dikter, ja, majoriteten av poemerna tycks ha denna traditionella form. Kanske är det temat kärlek som föranleder det musikaliska uttrycket? Det handlar i dikterna om en fysisk och metafysiskt upplevelse på en gång. Det manliga diktjetaget besjunger kvinnan både som ideal och person, när han riktar sig till en ungdomskärlek och minns deras relation. Sviter med namn

³⁹ Eco 2001: 93-94.

⁴⁰ Adonis: *En tid mellan askan och rosorna & Detta är mitt namn*, 39, 40, 42-43. Övers. Sigrid Kahle.

som ”Musik” (I, II, III) och ”Våg” (I, II) markerar sonoritetens och rytmens betydelse. Erotiken och det kroppsliga står i centrum: det handlar om navelskådande i bokstavlig mening.⁴¹ Metaforerna och scenerna påminner märktigt nära om bilder och teman från ”Älskarens metamorfoser” fyrtio år tidigare. Det är som cirkeln nu slutits för kärleksdåren Adonis.

Omfängsproblem

Eftersom Adonis varit enormt produktiv under sin karriär är omfattningen av hans verk i sig ett översättningsproblem. Hela hans poetiska oeuvre på arabiska lär knappast rymmas i en flytt till något annat språk. Författarens *Samlade verk* (*al-A 'māl al-shi 'riyya al-kāmila*, 2 vol.) från 1988 redan, omfattar 1500 sidor text, och hans penna har inte saktat ned sedan dess. Titlarna är både många och omfattande. Den enorma *Boken* i tre delar består av ytterligare 1500 sidor, och den nyss nämnda samlingen *Kroppens början havets slut* har ett för Adonis vanligt format om 200 sidor. Vissa samlingar och längre dikter har dessutom utgivits i mer än en version, ibland betecknad ”definitiv” ibland inte, vilket tidvis gör det svårt att fixera källtexten.

I de svenska Adonis-antologierna har dilemmat med omfånget bland annat angripits med fragmentiseringsmetoden. Dikten ”Älskarens metamorfoser” exempelvis som är en lyrisk svit i sju avdelningar på över 30 sidor i arabiskt text (i *Samlade verk*), blir i svensk version till en kortdikt om en sida motsvarande första sidan av tre i inledningsavdelningen av originaldikten.⁴² Dikten ”Al-Saqr (Falken)” om 16 sidor (originalupplaga) alternativ 9 sidor (*Samlade verk*) på arabiska, fragmentiseras på liknande sätt genom att korta stycken ur texten brutits ut till två självständiga dikter om vardera en sida på svenska.⁴³

En annan strategi som systematiskt används i Alhambras antologier för att få rum med Adonis ofta långa dikter är kompressionen. När poeten söker effekt genom att glesa ut orden och arrangera dem ett och ett i en lodrät spalt på boksidan exempelvis, en för honom vanlig teknik, ja då trycker den svenska översättaren/redaktören ihop samma ord till en enda lång mening på samma rad, eftersom det blir mindre utrymmeskrävande så. Texten komprimeras på andra ställen genom att synonymer utelämnas och upprepningar slopas, så att satserna generellt blir kortare. Resultatet blir, förutom förlorad precision och

⁴¹ Adonis: ”Musik,” I: 14.

⁴² Adūnis: *al-A 'māl al-shi 'riyya al-kāmila, al-mujallad al-awwal* (Beirut: Dār al-'awda, 1988), ”Tahawwulāt al-'āshiq”, 505-540; *En tid mellan askan och rosorna & Detta är mitt namn*, 41. Övers. Sigrid Kahle.

⁴³ Adūnis: *al-A 'māl al-shi 'riyya al-kāmila, al-mujallad al-awwal*, ”Ayyām al-ṣaqr”, 451-59; *En tid mellan askan och rosorna & Detta är mitt namn*, 42-43, övers. Sigrid Kahle.

variation, att en poetisk symfoni som *Singular i mångfaldens tecken* (*Mufrad bi-ṣīghat al-jam'*, 1977 & 1988), där det grafiska elementet spelar stor roll för upplevelsen, tar mycket mindre plats på svenska och ger ett helt annat visuellt intryck. Bokens två första avdelningar omfattar i sin ursprungsversion 110 sidor, i en senare något förkortad version (*Samlade verk*) cirka 70 sidor, men på svenska bara hälften av detta utrymme eller drygt 35 sidor.⁴⁴

När fragmenteringsmetoden och kompressionsstrategin kombineras med ett tredje frekvent tillvägagångssätt som jag kalla utelämnandet, blir effekten att den översatta texten förvandlas till ett slags collage. Det är den svenska läsaren knappast medveten om. Ordet ”urval” som anges vid vissa översättningar, ger inte en rättvisande beskrivning av tillvägagångssättet. Klippens omfattning eller placering syns ju inte. Vem kan ana raderna och sidorna som fattas? Att en hel sida arabisk text brutalt utelämnats mellan näst sista och sista strofen i den svenska versionen av ”Singular i mångfaldens tecken” exempelvis?⁴⁵ Eller att tolkningen innehåller många andra liknande luckor, både stora och små.

Baharis och Rydbergs ovan nämnda översättning av ”Thamud” är också den ofullständig. I originaldikten har jag funnit drygt 20 versrader eller längre fraser, som saknas i den svenska versionen. Utelämnandet förändrar dikten och betydelsen. Mångfalden och öppheten minskar. I det förut diskuterade exemplet, imperativet ”sov” (*nāmī*), medger grammatiken ytterligare en möjlig referent, nämligen ”mina ord” (f. s.) som ett alternativ till staden Damaskus: ”Är det därför mina ord frågar mig: / vad är detta för historia, sår eller kniv? [...] Sov! / [...]” (min övers.). Denna läsning är dock omöjlig i ”Adonis på svenska”, där två versrader fattas jämfört med den arabiska dikten på samma ställe, bland annat raden ”Är det därför mina ord frågar mig:” Översättarna av ”Thamud” respekterar inte heller originalets indelning i verser och strofer, och de manipulerar ofta syntaxen på ett genomgripande vis, som förvandlar den svenska formuleringen till en parafras. Den sammanlagda förvrängningseffekten av dessa översättningsval är hög. När man som läsare varseblir de stora skillnaderna mellan källtext och måltext på alla nivåer, träder översättarna definitivt ut ur osynligheten. Likt andar ur en flaska sväller de upp

⁴⁴ Adūnīs: *al-A'māl al-shi'riyya al-kāmila, al-mujallad al-thāni*, 495-573; *En tid mellan askan och rosorna*, 59-96, övers. Hesham Bahari och Ingvar Rydberg, samt 259-260, övers. Hesham Bahari och Ingemar Leckius; *Detta är mitt namn*, 65-101, övers. Hesham Bahari och Ingvar Rydberg, samt 217-218, övers. Hesham Bahari och Ingemar Leckius.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 96 resp. 101. Utelämnad text jämfört med versionen i *Samlade verk*, volym 2, från mitten på sidan 572 till mitten på sidan 573.

till ett molns storlek.⁴⁶ Men den stackare som råkat släppa ut dem får inga önskningar i belöning.

Avslutning

Kanske är det så att Adonis är en poet vars bildspråk är så våldsamt och känslouttryck så exhibitionistiska att hans litteratur faktiskt inte är översättbar? Även en förnyare av traditionen kan ibland bli lika högstämd och retorisk som de oöversättbara gamle. Otvivelaktigt är stilen hos Adonis både intrikat och svärpenetrerad. Att hans översättare har haft problem är därför inte så konstigt. Även mycket kompetenta läsare i målkulturen har bedömt honom som alltför svår ibland och kritiserat honom för att vara överdrivet vag.⁴⁷ Ställd inför vissa dikter måste jag hålla med. Trots många omläsningar av ett ode som "Thamud" är jag fortfarande osäker om betydelsen, och osäkerhetens element är kanske det, som är allra svårast att översätta. Det immanent obegripliga kan inte begripliggöras i en översättning; det tvingar uttolkaren ut på gissningarnas tunna is. Den estetiska värderingen blir då avhängig hur man ställer sig till det dunkelt sagda, är det också dunkelt tänkt eller tvärt om en befrämmande improvisation? Samtidigt finns det dikter i poetens produktion med högre konkretion och tydligare språk, en balans mellan esoterisk vision och gestaltad verklighet om man så vill, och i dem stannar jag gärna.

Som framgått av mina exempel skiljer sig den arabiske Adonis från Adonis på svenska ganska avsevärt. Det finns saker som tydligt gått förlorat, exempelvis rim och meter, det är lätt och se. De intertextuella referenserna också ibland. Huruvida något annat vunnits är svårare att säga. Det arabiska språkets struktur medger mångtydigheter som inte tillåts på svenska. Å andra sidan har nya betydelser uppstått vid transponeringen genom de val som översättarna gjort, både i grammatiken och i semantiken. Bedömningen av resultatet är en fråga om exeges och värdering av njutbarheten. Urvalet och redigeringen har gått ganska hårt åt ursprungstexten många gånger, ibland på ett otillbörligt vis. Utelämnandena är exempelvis för många. Respekt för originalet är inte principiellt svårare i Adonis fall än annars. Lika lite är det grafiska elementet i hans poesi oöversättligt på något sätt, bara kostsamt för förläggaren att vara trogen. Den imponerande svenska utgåvan av *Boken*, del I, nästan 400 sidor lång, 1 kg tung, i stort format med komplex typografi, demonstrerar väl både möjligheterna och problematiken.

⁴⁶ Liknelse av Eksell 2012: 6-7.

⁴⁷ Jayyusi 1987: 27.

Lösningen på många av de översättningsproblem jag här berört, är antingen att avstå försöket eller vara tydligare med vilka ingrepp som faktiskt gjorts. Ett annat alternativ är den tvåspråkiga utgåvan som låter den kunnige läsaren översätta simultant på egen hand och jämföra tolkningarna. Faksimilen av poetens handskrivna original i *Sånger av Mihyar från Damaskus* är ett steg på den vägen, fast främsta syftet här är illustrativt.⁴⁸ Översättning av arabisk litteratur är fortfarande på experimentstadiet, säger Kerstin Eksell.⁴⁹ Och introduktionen av Adonis på svenska är ett bra exempel på det.

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⁴⁸ Adonis: *Sånger av Mihyar från Damaskus*, illustrationer med parallelltext till nio dikter: 16, 48, 68, 80, 98, 136, 154, 174, 194. Den spanska volymen *Éste es mi nombre* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2006), övers.

Frederico Arbós, är en förebildlig tvåspråkig utgåva. Den presenterar en av de mest transparanta översättningarna av poeten som jag hittills sett.

⁴⁹ Eksell 2012: 7.

⁵⁰ De relevanta dikterna och diktsamlingarna av Adonis och de olika översättningarna är enbart nämda i fotnoterna.

Abstract

This is a case study of how the Arab poet Adonis has been translated into Swedish. The theoretical framework is the old issue of “untranslatability”. The method applied is a close reading of selected poems by Adonis and their published Swedish translations. What kind of translation losses have occurred in the transposition of the complex originals? The study examines this question through four critical focuses: 1) grammar and semantics, 2) intertextuality and culture, 3) poetic form, and 4) editing and selection. The analysis shows that “Adonis in Swedish” is a very different poet from “Adonis in Arabic” due to the combined effect of manipulations occurring in all these fields. Overall the result supports the claim that translation of Arabic literature in the Nordic countries is still on the experimental stage.

Keywords: Translation of Arabic poetry; poetry and translation; Adonis in translation; untranslatability; translation losses

The Greek Qur'an: Scholarship and evaluations

Christian Høgel¹
University of Southern Denmark

Abstract²

The early Greek translation of the Qur'an has received little notice, not least due to the many claims that it was a faulty and inadequate attempt of rendering the Qur'an into Greek. This article argues that the faults are very few and minor, and that the early translation (from before 870 CE) should instead be read as a serious example of early Qur'anic interpretation as well as a documentation of early Greek readership of the Qur'an.

Keywords: Translation, Qur'an, Greek, Niketas Byzantios, polemics, interpretation

Introduction

Within the last few years, the early Greek translation of the Qur'an, or what has been transmitted of it, has finally received the attention that matches its importance. Through an edition and a presentation of the approximately 82 preserved fragments accompanied by commentaries and translations, the main outlines of this translation are now settled.³ We do not know who the translator(s) was, or where and when he worked, but we do know that in 870's the translation was in the hands of Niketas Byzantios (Constantinople, late 9th century). Niketas quoted and paraphrased the translation in his polemical treatise, usually referred to as *Refutatio*.⁴ The complete translation was lost at some point, probably quite early, since writers who were active after Niketas do not display any first-hand knowledge of it. Later Byzantine polemicists, such as Euthymios Zigabenos (12th century), did not have access to the original translation but depended exclusively on Niketas' quotations and paraphrases included in *Refutatio*.⁵ Consequently, also

¹ E-mail address: hogel@sdu.dk

² I would like to thank the Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF 102) for its support.

³ For the edition, see Förstel 2009: 86-122; due to a less rigorous inclusion of what is taken to be quotations (and not paraphrases) of the translation, this edition lists 112 fragments; for an evaluation of the edition, see Ulbricht 2010. For the presentation, see Høgel 2010: 67-120., including 82 fragments with English translation.

⁴ An edition of the *Refutatio* of Niketas Byzantios is now found in Förstel 2000; the earlier edition (entitled *Confitatio*) is in PG 105.669-806. Förstel suggested the date 867-70 CE for the composition of Niketas' treatise. One fragment is attested in the Byzantine conversion formula for converts from Islam of unknown date and origin, see Høgel 2010: 69.

⁵ For edition with commentary of Euthymios Zigabenos, see Förstel 2009: 12-15 & 43-84.

our current knowledge of the Greek Qur'an depends solely on Niketas Byzantios' text.

On the basis of the preserved fragments, which represent perhaps one per cent of the whole Qur'an, we can infer some general characteristics of the translation: 1) it was a rigidly word-for-word translation (thus possibly originally an intra-linear translation); 2) it displays some quite extraordinary Greek phrases and words, including a surprising number of otherwise unattested words, partly of a vernacular character, or words only known from *lingua franca*; 3) in a few instances, the translation offers alternative interpretations of the Qur'an, some of them known from the Muslim tradition; and 4) the translation is highly consistent in its choice of words and transliterations, but the transmitted text also has its flaws (more on this below).

The Greek translation provides us with an excitingly early witness for the reading and understanding of the Qur'an, as well as a fascinating starting point for a scholarly discussion of the where, when, why, by whom, etc. The lack of answers to these questions (except the *ante quem* date of 870 CE) is, however, the main reason why the translation has not yet sparked off the historical, religious and philological discussions that we know from the Latin, and to some extent the Persian, translations. Until now, most scholarly work has concentrated on linguistic features, paying attention to the translation's peculiar but readable Greek, as well as on the quality and adequacy of the translation. This may seem surprising, given the immense importance of the other issues, but academic discussions require at least some approximations of the origin and value of a translation, before broader implications can be debated.

In evaluating the translation, there has been an almost universal agreement on the low quality of the Greek rendering of the Qur'an, but in many cases this conclusion is based on questionable arguments.. The assessment of the actual translation has often been mixed up with demonstrations of the misconceptions of Islam that Niketas offers his reader. This feature is then further connected to the many issues of mutual misrepresentations that take up so much space in the polemical literature. Thus, the translation has been viewed more as a product of polemical exchanges than as the result of an actual understanding of the Qur'anic text. There is, however, no reason for supposing that the translation was made for polemical reasons. I have suggested elsewhere⁶ that it was Greek-speaking Muslims who were responsible for the translation, and in my view this is indeed a possibility. The aim of this article is to give the translation a more just treatment than has been accorded to it earlier, and to emphasize that we do not really have

⁶ Høgel 2010

reason to criticize the quality of the Greek translation. It should be noted that most (purported or real) faults in the translation have already been identified as copyist's errors or as translations reflecting alternative interpretations – often recognized in the Muslim tradition. Further, some of the details that have been considered faulty are in fact results of conscious choices and based on an alternative approach to translation.

By going systematically through the words and passages that scholars have viewed as incorrectly translated into Greek, we will get a list of actually problematic passages. Often, a bad translation is the result of a translator's insufficient language skills, but in the case of the Greek translation of the Qur'an, the text was rendered by a translator (or translators) who was skilled in both Arabic and Greek, acquainted with Muslim traditions, but who was not educated in the higher Constantinopolitan circles (his Greek is proof of that). His translation, therefore, deserves intense scholarly attention, not least for its interpretation of the Qur'an.

To understand the nature of the surviving fragments of the Greek translation, one important distinction must be made. Niketas Byzantios used the Greek translation of the Qur'an for writing his *Refutatio*, a treatise that is obviously polemical, and he took no care to get the actual Qur'anic message through. Therefore, when he paraphrased the Greek Qur'an, much of the content came out disfigured and wrong, but when he quoted it, he simply copied the text as it appeared. Therefore, his paraphrases are often an inaccurate rendering of the Greek text, whereas his quotations are reliable. Fortunately, the translation was a strict word-for-word translation, which makes it possible to see when Niketas was copying, and when he was paraphrasing: if the Greek words come in exactly the same order as in Arabic, Niketas was transmitting the Greek Qur'an he had at his disposal. Only such word-for-word renderings from Niketas' text will here be considered as true fragments of the Greek translation.

Mai's criticism

Mai is the first to argue that the Greek translation of the Qur'an was of low quality. Mai was the editor of the *editio princeps* of Niketas' *Refutatio*, published in 1847,⁷ and in his prologue (taken from the reprinted version in the *Patrologia Graeca*), he acknowledges the Greek renderings of the Qur'an and suggests that Niketas either produced the translations himself or had access to an existing Greek version. Having been unable to find any such Greek translation, Mai states

⁷ I have not had access to Mai's edition, but his prologue appears in PG 105.665-670 together with a reproduction of his edition and commentary.

that “it is certainly not to be doubted that the Greeks must have translated the Qur'an into Greek, not only once but several times” due to their proximity to the Muslim world “which they have even received into the interior parts (*viscera*) of the Empire.”⁸ After these interesting, but probably mistaken assumptions about Greek translations of the Qur'an and his vague allusions to the fall of Constantinople (what else could be the *viscera* of the Empire?), Mai adds that

it is therefore quite entertaining [*festivum*] to see how much Niketas' Greek text of the Qur'an now and then differs from the Arabic that we commonly read; this must be due partly to the Greek translator's lack of skill, partly to the polyvalent vocabulary of Arabic, partly finally to the great variety of editions of the Qur'an,

after which he lists seven different editions. He then states that he will be cautious in commenting on these errors in translation. Nevertheless, in the commentary to his edition, Mai mentions a number of faulty renderings of the Qur'anic content identifying the errors by comparing the Greek text with the Latin translation by Maracci (1612-1700). Mai suggests corrections to some of the mistakes in the Greek text, but the remaining ones constitute the central body of what is often argued in later scholarly works to be examples of the Greek translator's incompetence. Below, I shall go through Mai's indications of mis-translations, pointing out how some of these may nevertheless be interpreted as sound translations of the text:

1. Mai has three footnotes (PG 105.708, 776, 784) on the Arabic *al-ṣamad* (Sura 112.2) being rendered as *holosfyros* or *holosfairoς*. This much-debated word also offered difficulties to Greek interpreters but, as has long been acknowledged, the Greek *holosphyros* is quite faithful to a possible meaning of the Arabic word, a fact which is partly acknowledged by Mai.⁹
2. In a passage that reflects the meaning of Sura 2.25 ff., Mai (PG 105.712) considers the Greek word *aischynetai* a mistake. The word, however, appears in a

⁸ For this and the following quotation of Mai, see his prologue in PG 105.667-8 (reproduction of A. Mai from 1847): *In singulorum satanici libri capitulum confutationibus, recitatur Graece Mohamedis textus, vel ipso Nicetae interprete. vel ex cuiusvis Graeci hominis translatione, quam neque in libris editis, neque in ipsis ut arbitror manuscriptis codicibus videre est. Certe Graecos Alcoranum non semel tantummodo, sed fortasse pluries, ad linguam suam transtulisse, dubitari nequit; cum immanem sectam in prospectu, imo et in imperii visceribus receptam haberent, et cum ejus doctoribus necessario contendent; id quod Graeca monumenta superstitionum disputationum testantur. Nunc itaque festivum est videre, quantopere interdum Graecus Alcorani textus apud Nicetam ab Arabico, quem vulgo legimus, differat: quam rem, partim ex interpretis Graeci imperitia, partim ob polysema Arabicae linguae vocabula, partim denique propter ipsius Alcorani editionum varietatem, contigisse credendum est.* The translation is mine.

⁹ See the excellent discussion in Simelidis 2011.

passage where the Greek words do not follow the Arabic version word for word. The passage should thus be interpreted as a part of Niketas' (often distorting) comments.

3. A very strange passage in the Greek Qur'an (translation of Sura 9.61), as quoted by Niketas, suggests that Jesus was the son of God, which is never stated in the Qur'an. Trapp has shown that the passage is corrupt: either Niketas or the copyist of his manuscript must have skipped a line in the Greek text. Trapp suggests a most convincing Greek wording for the missing line.¹⁰ Mai's criticism (PG.105.749) is therefore unjustified.

4. Mai (PG 105.769) finds the Greek *dedomenē* 'given' insufficient in representing Arabic *al-masjūr* (Sura 52.6), and rightly so. The Arabic word means 'swelling', here of the sea, and the word used in Greek would be forms of the verb οἰδάω or οἰδέω. It would be reasonable to suppose an original οἰδωμένη (or οἰδουμένη), being an admittedly unparalleled middle form of the Greek verb, which has been corrupted into the δεδομένη of the manuscript.

5. Mai (PG 105.772) is not satisfied with the Greek *aneu oneidismou* in the translation of Sura 68.3, since it does not quite correspond to the Latin he knows: *perennis* and *infinita*; but it corresponds well with the Qur'anic *ghayra mammūnin*.

6. The Greek *en ischyī* (ἐν ἰσχύι) 'in strength' definitely deviates from the most common understanding of the Arabic *fī kabadin* (Sura 90.4), which is normally translated 'in travail.' But this meaning is found in Muslim commentaries, as observed by Versteegh.¹¹

7. In one place, Mai states that the Greek *ek bdellēs* 'from a leech' (PG 105.708) is a bad translation of *min 'alaqin* (Sura 96.2). The passage is not a true quotation from the Greek Qur'an, since Niketas' words do not follow the Arabic word order. Nevertheless, the meaning closely follows the Qur'an, for Glei finds support for interpreting '*alaq*' as 'leech' in early Muslim tradition, and the same interpretation is found in the Latin translation of Ketton.¹²

¹⁰ Trapp 1981. The passage is also indicated by Khoury 1969: 120 n.16.

¹¹ Versteegh 1991: 61.

¹² Glei 2012: 18.

8. In seven instances, Mai (PG 772ff.) comments on words that have not been translated, but are transliterated into Greek: ἀκκά (Sura 69.1), ἄλαχονθ (Sura 85.4), ἀλταρικόν (Sura 86.1), ὅγερ (Sura 89.1), καρέ (Sura 101.1-2), ἀλέξαρ (103.1), καύθαρον (Sura 108.1). In some cases, Mai simply states that these words do not reproduce the meaning found in his Latin translations; in other cases, he recognizes the words as transliterations. Also Versteegh and Glei criticize the translator's use of transliterations (see below). However, most of these instances are easily explained. In suras 69, 85, 86, 101, 103, and 108, the Qur'anic text asks what the particular word means "What is ...?", and the translator therefore chose not to translate the word but, instead, reproduced the original Arabic word in the question. The transliteration in Sura 89, however, remains unsolved and is thus a possible mistake. In a recent article by Glei, another explanation for these transliterations is suggested, namely that the whole Arabic text could have been transliterated.¹³ This procedure would, however, be hard to account for, and since most transliterations – also the case of *kautharon* discussed by Glei – are explained above, one could argue that the idea should be abandoned.

9. The Greek rendering ἀγκάλας (as translation of the Arabic *aqlāma*, Sura 3.44) is faulty according to Mai, who offers two suggestions ἀστραγάλους and καλάμους (PG 105.725). But the status of the passage is unclear: the word order deviates from the Arabic. The passage may thus be a paraphrase, but a translation mistake cannot completely be ruled out, either.

10. The Greek title of Sura 7 *ta gnorismata* 'the known things' (*al-A'rāf* commonly translated as 'The Elevations') is indicated as wrong by Mai (PG 105.740), but Versteegh has shown parallels in the Muslim tradition.¹⁴

11. The Greek *ta lichmounta lichmon* 'those who winnow the winnowing-fan' is a strange rendering of the opening of Sura 51, as pointed out by Mai (PG 105.769). But the passage is much debated even in the Muslim tradition, and perhaps the chosen translation could point to yet another early interpretation.

12. In a difficult passage, the Greek translation has *Israel* for the Arabic 'Uzayr (or Ezra; Sura 9.31). Mai sees the translation as a deviation from the original (PG 105.745¹⁵). This is clearly a mistake, and appearing in a passage that is a word-

¹³ Glei 2012: 14.

¹⁴ Versteegh 1991: 61.

¹⁵ Repeated by Glei 2012: 21-22.

for-word translation, we can only suggest that the translator or the copyist included a wrong name.

13. The Greek *psōra* means ‘itch’, and not ‘moths’ as *farāsh* in Sura 101.4 is commonly taken to mean. This itch is probably wrong.

Thus, items 12 and 13 (as well as possible mistakes in items 8, 9 and 11) offer some support for Mai's claim that the translation was faulty, but given the difficulties that face any translator of the Qur'an, this is not much. Furthermore, the translator was obviously familiar with Muslim interpretative traditions, and this makes him a knowledgeable transmitter rather than a mere translator. Even though there is only little support for the negative assessment of the quality of the translation in Mai's commentary, his views have been influential. I will now take a brief look at Versteegh and Gleis, two other exponents of the theory of ‘bad translation.’ They are the only ones who have come up with new examples since Mai.¹⁶

Views of Versteegh and Gleis

In 1991, K. Versteegh published an article on the issue, entitled “Greek Translations of the Qur'ān in Christian Polemics (9th C. A.D.).” Unfortunately, Versteegh had not read the article by Trapp¹⁷ and therefore included erroneous information. Versteegh was still caught in the open question of the nature of the translation, speaking of “translations.” He was sure that Niketas did not master Arabic and therefore was dependent on a translation without having access to “feedback from Muslims, or from Arabophones … [which] would have brought into light the many inaccuracies in the translation.”¹⁸ However, Versteegh stated that it was “not really a bad translation at all,” but a “rather literal (one), perhaps in an intentional effort to increase the awkward character which the text must have had for Byzantine readers who were used to the text of the Biblical revelation.”¹⁹ Versteegh further concluded that “the Greek translation of the Qur'an did contribute towards a more intimate knowledge of Islam in the Western world.”²⁰

Still, Versteegh gives eight examples of inadequate Greek translations that according to him were due to insufficient knowledge of Arabic.²¹ Of these eight

¹⁶ The examples found in Güterbock 1912, Khoury 1969, and Förstel 2009 are all taken from Mai's comments.

¹⁷ Trapp 1981.

¹⁸ Versteegh 1991: 58.

¹⁹ Ibid. 60

²⁰ Ibid. 67.

²¹ Ibid. 60-61.

examples, two can be eliminated by Trapp's observations (concerning Sura 2.23 and 3.144); three are due to Versteegh's insufficient understanding of Greek;²² two cases are Niketas' erroneous interpretations; in two cases, Versteegh himself offers an explanation (regarding Sura 5.68 and 17.17); and finally, in Sura 17.4 the Arabic *marratayni* 'twice' is translated into Greek *deuteron* 'the second time', which really looks like a mistake.

Furthermore, Versteegh gives four examples of transliterations, which he characterizes as inadequate translations²³. All of them are taken from Mai, and are thus explained above. Further five mistakes due to inadequate exegetical knowledge are reduced to one, since Versteegh finds support for four of the translations in Muslim exegetical literature. In his final example, concerning *as-ṣā'iqatu* from Sura 4.153, Versteegh argues that the Greek translation *to theion* offers a lexical difference; yet, the Godhead is certainly meant in both the Arabic original and the Greek translation, consequently the mistake is a minor one at most. Versteegh also deems certain passages incomprehensible in Greek without referring to the Arabic original, but that could be claimed in many instances. Finally, the leech and the issue of *holosphyros* come up again, but these have already been accounted for above. Summing up, Versteegh's criticism comes down to a single passage where 'twice' is translated as 'the second time'. This could happen to any translator.

Finally, a quick glance at the recent contribution by Glei.²⁴ In his article, Glei lists eight examples of incorrect translations, which, according to him, are significant examples of translation problems and misunderstandings. But example 1 is a transliteration, due to the Arabic word being regarded as a proper name (as explained by Glei himself on p. 15). Example 2 is a paraphrase, which can be seen from the lack of word-for-word correspondence with the Arabic text. Example 3 is the difficult *holosphyros* for the Arabic *ṣamad*. The difficulties in translating this word should not be blamed on the translator, and certainly not on one who intended to convey a possible meaning. Example 4 is another paraphrase on the leech, also explained above. Example 5 (where Glei refers to a wrong Arabic text by including the end of Sura 9.33 instead of the end of 9.32, in addition to correctly giving the first half of 9.33) might be a true mistake: in translating the Arabic masculine pronominal ending *-hu*, the translator gives the corresponding Greek masculine pronoun *auton*, instead of the feminine *autēn*, which would have

²² The three cases are: (1) Sura 17.40, which could also be read as a question in Greek. (2) Sura 9.30, where the Greek *τὸν* could be understood as the variant form of *τίνον* and therefore understood as a question, which would suit the passage. (3) Sura 2.23: the Greek translation can be understood correctly, though Niketas has not done so.

²³ Versteegh 1991: 61-62 concerning all examples mentioned in this paragraph.

²⁴ Glei 2012.

been the correct choice. This mistake has serious implications for the meaning, as noted by Glei, and unless an emendation to *autēn* is accepted, this is indeed a mistake. Example 6 is the complicated case of *Israel* for the Arabic ‘*Uzayr*, probably another mistake as indicated above. That *Aḥmad* in Sura 61.6 is translated as *Muhammad* is in accordance with traditional Muslim interpretation, as noted by Glei in example 7, and therefore is not a mistake. In example 8, the translator has not made a mistake but has chosen a perfectly acceptable interpretation.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, we reach a maximum of eight mistakes (Mai 3-5, Versteegh adds 1-2 and Glei adds 1). This is not a very high number, given the difficulty of the Qur'anic text. Further, the Greek translation offers support for interpretation known also from the Muslim tradition, as well being a very early interpretation in its own right. Thus we have at our disposal a competent and interesting translation, which should be regarded as a valuable asset in the future discussions of the interpretative history of the Qur'an.

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Magic in the *hadīths*

Irmeli Perho¹

University of Helsinki

Abstract

The *hadīths* reporting on the incident where the Prophet was bewitched vary significantly in detail. An analysis of the details reveals varying attitudes towards magic in the Muslim community portrayed in the *hadīths*. The efficacy of magic was recognised but according to some *hadīths*, God's power was sufficient to counter the power of magic whereas according to other *hadīths*, protective spells were necessary tools to ensure that an act of witchcraft lost its power to do harm. In the *hadīths* magic is seen as a power distinct from God, whereas in the Qur'ān magic is a power that is ultimately subject to God's will.²

Keywords: Hadith, magic, spell, ritual, reponse to magic

Introduction

In the study of religion magic has been a problematic issue, a category that is difficult to define. Especially the relationship between magic and religion has been controversial. From the mid 20th century, some scholars refused to recognise magic as a meaningful category considering magic as a culturally biased Western concept. In their opinion, there was no distinction between religion and magic; both of them served similar functions, relied on supernatural forces and resorted to ritualistic behaviour.³ The rejection of magic as a category proved to be untenable, and gradually it has become increasingly acceptable to define certain actions as magic. However, magic still remains a diffuse category, and some scholars refrain from providing universal definitions⁴ whereas others favour open ended definitions.⁵ Regarding magic's relationship to religion, Dorothy Hammond maintains that magic is not a category distinct from religion but a term subordinate to religion. Magic is a term that describes one type of ritual behaviour

¹ E-mail address: irmeli.perho@helsinki.fi

² If not otherwise indicated, all the *hadīths* quoted in this article have been found at the *hadīth* database at www.al-islam.com (last retrieved in December 2012). The reference numbers and the titles of the chapters in the collection are quoted as given in the database. The English translations of the Qur'ānic verses quoted in this article are by Yūsuf 'Alī. The translation is available at http://www.muslimaccess.com/quraan/translations/yusufali/yusuf_ali.htm (last retrieved in December 2012).

³ The various scholarly views on magic are discussed in more detail in Versnel 1991: 177-181.

⁴ Bailey 2006: 23: "The goal should not be to revise and reassert grand theories and sweeping definitions of magic [...] Rather the goal should be to understand more completely how human societies and cultures have conceived, constructed, and reacted to magic."

⁵ Versnel 1991: 186-187.

and can be contrasted to other rituals or rites, but not to religion as a category.⁶ According to Hammond, magical practices express the belief that human beings have inherent power and will to influence the world around them. Therefore, within a religious system considering human beings as wholly dependent on powerful gods, magical practices would be viewed negatively.⁷

Also Jesper Sørensen defines magic as action and not a system of thought.⁸ Magical actions are rituals that are performed outside the control of established religions. Magic is a competing source of efficient rituals, and the competition leads to a conflict between controlled authorised ritual actions that are based on established religious doctrine, and magical practices that are uncontrolled, representing an alternative ritual context. The competition forces the established religions to react, and Jesper Sørensen lists three general types of reaction: appropriation, rejection and segregation. When magical rituals are appropriated, they are included in the established ritual systems and provided with interpretations that are compatible with the religious doctrine. Segregation represents a state of truce where magic is kept outside of the scope of the established religion but accepted as a practice among certain marginal social groups. Rejection is expressed by actively combating magical practices, either by rejecting the efficacy of the magical rituals or by accepting their efficacy but condemning them evil and immoral. Forcing the established religions to react, magic becomes an innovative force that causes changes in the existing religions, or the magic rituals evolve into foundations of a new religion. Thus magic and religion are not two equal systems that oppose each other, but instead they have a dynamic relationship. Magic with its concrete goal-oriented rituals challenges the symbolic interpretations provided by the established religions forcing them to re-evaluate and even change their traditional ritual systems.⁹

Islam's doctrine recognises the existence of magic (*sihr*) and according to the Qur'ān, it was the devils and two angels – Hārūt and Mārūt – who taught people magic (Q 2:102). The verse places magic partly in the domain of the devils, but at the same time it is knowledge that is taught by angels who, by definition, are God's faithful servants.¹⁰ The angels taught magic, but at the same time they warned people from blasphemy that would endanger their salvation. This indicates that it was permitted to learn about magic, but the danger lay in

⁶ Hammond 1970: 1355.

⁷ Ibid. 1334, 1335.

⁸ Sørensen 2007: 13.

⁹ Ibid. 188-191.

¹⁰ In later Islamic literature Hārūt and Mārūt became angels that had succumbed to temptations and subsequently suffered an eternal punishment (s.v. "Hārūt and Mārūt" (William M. Brinner) in: *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*).

using it and trusting powers other than God. The verse further underlines that the powers the magic users resorted to were ultimately subject to God's will: "But they could not thus harm anyone except by God's permission" (Q 2:102). If the verse is analysed on the basis of Jesper Sørensen's categories, the attitude expressed in it is a rejectionist one, i.e. the existence and power of magic is acknowledged, but it is condemned as evil and danger to salvation. However, at the same time, the verse can also be seen to promote accommodation, as the magic users and the power they wield are made dependent of God's will and power. Their evil actions will only take place if God allows it, and magic becomes a part of God's creation, like good deeds and bad deeds; like belief and unbelief. In this way magic is accommodated to Islam's doctrinal structure that is based on an omnipotent God.

The *hadīth* collections and Qur'ān commentaries contain reports that can be connected with magic. The most obvious one is the story about how the Prophet himself was bewitched. There are several variants of the story, and the aim of this article is to examine them and discuss the reaction patterns that they display.

Bewitching of the Prophet

According to the *hadīth* reports, the Prophet was bewitched by a man and the witchcraft caused him physical suffering.¹¹ One of the shortest versions of the story is given by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855) in his *al-Musnad*:

The Prophet was bewitched by a Jew. The Prophet suffered from it for days. Gabriel came to the Prophet and said: "A Jew has bewitched you. He tied a knot against you and placed it in such and such well. Send someone to fetch it." The Prophet sent 'Alī who retrieved the knot, brought it with him and disassembled it. The Prophet got up as if he had been released from shackles. The Jew was not told and the Prophet never met him.¹²

Other versions of the *hadīth* give further details: The caster of the spell is identified as Labīd ibn Aṣam¹³ but he is not always a Jew. According to one version he is an ally to the Jews and a hypocrite (*munāfiq*), i.e. a person converted to Islam but not a true believer.¹⁴ Other versions are silent of his

¹¹ The ḥadīths have been studied earlier by Lecker 1992 and Cook 2000. Lecker focuses on Labīd, the practitioner of magic, whereas Cook examines how the story is presented and discussed by Qur'ān commentators, representing various time periods.

¹² Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, Awwal musnad al-kūfīyīn, nr. 18781. The transmitters of the *hadīth* are Abū Mu'āwiya from al-A' mash from Yazīd ibn Ḥayyān from Zayd ibn Arqam. The same *hadīth* is also quoted by al-Nasā'ī (d. 915) *al-Sunan*, Kitāb al-tahrim nr. 4080.

¹³ Sometimes the patronym is given as al-Aṣam.

¹⁴ al-Bukhārī, *al-Sunan*, Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 5432: "ḥalīf lil-yahūd wa-kāna munāfiq."

religious identity but only mention that he belonged to Banū Zurayq. Regardless of his religious affiliation it is clear that he was hostile towards the Prophet, and Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833) in his biography of the Prophet recognised this and listed him among the enemies of the Prophet, only shortly referring to the bewitching itself: “Among the Jews of Banū Zurayq [there was] Labīd ibn Aṣam who bewitched the Prophet.”¹⁵ Apart from naming the caster of the spell, Ibn Hishām also mentions the effects of the spell by stating that the enchantment “kept [the Prophet] away from his wives.”¹⁶ This must mean that the witchcraft caused impotence, an effect that is referred to in the *hadīth* variants that use expressions such as “he used to think (*kāna yarā*) that he comes to his wives but he does not”¹⁷ or less explicitly “he used to imagine (*kāna yukhayyalu ilayhi*) that he did something but did not do it.”¹⁸ The latter expression is also quoted by al-Ṭabarī (d. 922) in his Qur’ān commentary,¹⁹ but he also quotes a further variant that stresses the hallucinatory character of the ailment: it led the Prophet “deny his sense of vision (*hattā kāna [...] yankuru başara-hu*).”²⁰

Some of the *hadīth* variants describe the “knot” used by Labīd in great detail: it consisted of a comb (*mushṭ*) and some hair (*mushāṭa*) or scrap of cloth (*mushāqa*).²¹ Even though it is not explicitly mentioned, the comb and hairs must be those of the Prophet, as it is a usual practice in magic to use ingredients that are part of the intended victim or have been used by him. The scrap of cloth mentioned in some versions would then accordingly come from the Prophet’s clothing. The ingredients were packed in the spathe of a spadix of a male date palm (*juff ṭal ‘at nakhlat dhakar*). As Michael Lecker has pointed out, the use of the spathe is a strong indication that the intention was indeed to harm the Prophet’s sexual ability. The spadix can be connected to male sexuality as it produces the pollen which is white and has a strong odour that lexicographers have described being similar to that of sperm.²²

Most of the *hadīths* do not inform of the time the Prophet suffered from the

¹⁵ Ibn Hishām 1375/1955: 1:515.

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ al-Bukhārī, *al-Sunan*, Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 5432.

¹⁸ The expression appears in several variants, e.g. al-Bukhārī, *al-Sunan*, Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 5430 and Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 3545.

¹⁹ al-Ṭabarī 1420/2000, 2:437, *hadīths* nr. 1692-1693. Cook 2000: 330, claims that al-Ṭabarī did not quote the bewitchment *hadīths* in his *tafsīr*. Cook focused on the commentaries on Sūra 113 and, indeed, al-Ṭabarī does not refer to the Prophet’s bewitchment in that context but he quotes the traditions when commenting the verse 2:102.

²⁰ al-Ṭabarī 1420/2000, 2:438, *hadīth* nr. 1694.

²¹ al-Bukhārī, *al-Sunan*, Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 5430 and Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, Bāqī musnad al-anṣārī, nr. 23826 have comb and hair, whereas al-Bukhārī, *al-Sunan*, Kitāb badhī’ al-khalq, nr. 3095 and *ibid.* Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 5432 have comb and scrap of cloth.

²² Lecker 1992: 563.

effects of the spell, but Ahmad ibn Hanbal quotes a variant where the Prophet's ailment is said to have lasted for six months.²³ In the above translated variant, also quoted by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the ailment is said to have lasted for several days, and Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 762), an early Qur'ān commentator, agrees with the short time span stating that the witchcraft spread through the Prophet, and its effect intensified for three days until the Prophet became very ill.²⁴ The Prophet prays and receives a vision, where he is advised how to counter the spell and be relieved of its effects. In the above translated version, angel Gabriel appears to him and tells the Prophet what to do, but in most variants the Prophet has a dream vision of two unidentified men or angels who talk to each other about his condition. The Prophet listens to the conversation and learns about the spell and its caster. He also learns that the magical object is hidden in a well. After waking up, the Prophet acts upon the information that he had been given. In some variants the Prophet sends 'Alī²⁵ or some unidentified persons²⁶ to the well to retrieve the object, but in most variants he goes there himself, either alone or together with some of his companions. In these latter variants the Prophet returns from the well and goes to 'Ā'isha to tell her about what he saw and did at the well.

In the variants, the Prophet's exchange with 'Ā'isha falls into three main groups, where the Prophet's words remain the same but 'Ā'isha's questions or words to him vary. First the Prophet describes to 'Ā'isha what he saw when he arrived: the water of the well was red like diluted henna, and the palms were like heads of devils. The place was clearly tainted by evil: the water was murky – maybe red or green – and the palm trees are reminiscent of the Zaqqūm tree of Hell that “springs out of the bottom of Hell-Fire, the shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils” (Qur'ān 37:64-65).²⁷ 'Ā'isha then asks the Prophet what he did. In some of the variants the question is phrased: “Did you take it out (*istakhrajta-hu*)?” or “Why did you not take it out (*a-fa-lā istakhrajta-hu / fa-hal-lā akhrajta-hu*)?”²⁸ In another set of *hadīths*, the verb 'Ā'isha uses is *ahraqa*, ‘to burn’: “Why did you not burn it (*a-fa-lā ahraqta-hu*)?”²⁹ or “Burn it (*ihriq-hu*)!”³⁰ In yet another set of variants, it is explicitly mentioned that the charm was

²³ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, Bāqī musnad al-anṣārī, nr. 23826.

²⁴ Muqātil ibn Sulaymān 1423: 4:933. Cook 2000: 325 provides a shortened version of the story in English translation.

²⁵ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, Awwal musnad al-kūfiyīn, nr. 18781.

²⁶ al-Nasā'i, *al-Sunan*, Kitāb al-taḥrīm, nr. 4080.

²⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī 1418/1997: 10:282-283 (Kitāb al-ṭibb), comments on the colour of the water and compares the palms to Zaqqūm.

²⁸ al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb badhī' al-khalq, nr. 3095; ibid. Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 5430; ibid. Kitab al-da'wāt, nr. 6028.

²⁹ al-Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-salām, nr. 2189. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, Bāqī musnad al-anṣārī, nr. 23779.

³⁰ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, Bāqī musnad al-anṣārī, nr. 23827.

retrieved from the well, and in these *hadīths* ‘Ā’isha’s question deals with a counter spell (*nushra*): “Why did you not make a counter spell?”³¹ The formulation is either: *a-fa-lā ay tanashsharta* or *fa-hal-lā ta ‘nī tanashsharta*, where an explanatory *ay* ‘or’ or *ta ‘nī* ‘she means’ is placed between the interrogatory expression *a-fa-lā* and the verb.

Ibn Ḥajar explains the explanatory words within ‘Ā’isha’s lines as inclusions that are meant to underline the fact that the verb used by the transmitters of the *hadīth* may not have been exactly the one that was used by ‘Ā’isha, but the question was indeed about a counter spell (*nushra*). However, Ibn Ḥajar also notes that the verb *tanashshara* may not only be interpreted as a derivative of the noun *al-nushra* ‘spell,’ but also from the noun *al-nashr* that means unfolding or publication. Thus, in Ibn Ḥajar’s interpretation, ‘Ā’isha’s question would not relate to a spell but, instead, have the same meaning as *a-fa-lā akhrajta-hu* “Why did you not take it out?”.³² The problem with accepting Ibn Ḥajar’s alternative interpretation is that in the *hadīth* variants where the verb *tanashsharta* appears, the charm has already been retrieved from the well before ‘Ā’isha asks her question. This indicates that she expected some further action, separate from the retrieval, to ensure that the charm would become harmless. She could have inquired about using a counter spell, as in my translation above, or she may have meant that the charm should be destroyed. If the verb *tanashsharta* is used in the sense of ‘unfolding,’ ‘Ā’isha’s question could be translated: “Why did you not break it up?”³³

The Prophet’s answer in all the variants remains the same: “God, He is powerful and great, has already cured me and I did not want to expose people to the evil in it.” Finally, in all of these variants, the Prophet orders the well to be covered.

Magic and God’s power

It is obvious that the community as portrayed in these *hadīths* believed in the existence and efficacy of magic. The reports tell that the spell caster was actually considered powerful enough to cause physical harm. On the outset, this seems to limit the power of the Prophet’s God who was not able to prevent the effect of magic, but is the power of magic equal to the power of God? The various reports offer different answers to the question. They do it by including a dialogue between ‘Ā’isha and the Prophet. The Prophet’s words that identify God as the one who

³¹ al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-ṭibb, nr. 5432; ibid. Kitāb al-adab, nr. 5716.

³² Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1418/1997: 10:288 (Kitāb al-ṭibb).

³³ In Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, Bāqī musnad al-ansārī, nr. 23826. The verb is *intashara*, ‘to unfold, to scatter.’

cured his ailment, are given slightly different meanings depending on the questions posed by ‘Ā’isha. In the variants where ‘Ā’isha asks whether the Prophet took the magic object out of the well, the Prophet’s negative answer and his reference to God as the healer indicate that God’s power is stronger than the magic influence. It was not necessary to take the object out of the well or destroy it, because the power of the magic had been broken by God. However, the magic is not rejected as ineffective: the story itself illustrates its efficiency on the physical wellbeing of the Prophet. In addition, even though God’s power had rendered the charm ineffective, some residue of power seems to have lingered on the charm, because the Prophet ordered the well – and the charm – covered up.

The variants where ‘Ā’isha inquires whether the Prophet had burned the charm, or where she actually requests him to burn it, reflect an attitude where the magic object is seen to retain power. It may well be that the Prophet has been cured by God, but it is still safest to destroy the object. The Prophet refuses to burn the object underlining that it had been sufficient to retrieve the object from the well. That action together with God’s healing broke the power of magic. The third variant with ‘Ā’isha asking whether the Prophet had made a counter spell against the charm retrieved from the well, adds a further nuance by suggesting that magic has to be countered by magic. Here the Prophet’s negative answer is used to reject the notion that God’s power should be supplemented by resorting to magic, i.e. to powers other than God.

Magic countered with magic

In the above discussed long version of the story, God’s power alone is sufficient to heal the Prophet and no human effort is needed: no counter spell is needed nor is it necessary to destroy the charm. This is underlined by the Prophet’s words: “God has already cured me.” In the beginning of the article, I gave an English translation of a short version recorded in Ahmad ibn Hanbal’s *Musnad*. The short version differs significantly from the long version of the story. The major difference is that the Prophet’s statement – “God has already cured me” – is absent and, instead, the Prophet’s healing is closely tied to the breaking of the magic charm: “[‘Alī] retrieved the knot, brought it with him and disassembled it. The Prophet got up as if he had been released from shackles.” It is obvious that the magic charm remained powerful and human action was needed to cancel its power. It was only when the charm was broken that its harmful effect disappeared and the Prophet was healed. God’s intervention seems to restrict itself to sending Gabriel to guide the Prophet to proper action.

The early Qur’ān commentator Muqātil ibn Sulaymān tells in his *Tafsīr* a

variation of the story that combines many of the details in the above discussed long version and the short report recorded by Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal. The details of the dream vision as reported in the long version are all there, whereas in keeping with Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal's short version, it is 'Alī who is sent to the well to retrieve the object. In Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal's version the magic charm is called "a knot" but no further details are given. According to Muqātil ibn Sulaymān the charm did not consist of the Prophet's comb and hair but was instead a string with eleven knots. The knotted string was placed in the husk or spathe (*qishr / juff*)³⁴ of a spadix of a palm and the package hidden in the well. The angels in the Prophet's dream vision instructed him to dry the well, retrieve the husk and burn it. After that the Prophet had to recite the two last Sūras of the Qur'ān, the so called *al-Mu'awwidhatān*, 'the Two Protectors.' Together, the Sūras contain eleven verses and the recital of each verse broke a knot. When the Prophet had broken all the eleven knots, he was free of the witchcraft.³⁵

Obviously, to counter the magic tied in the knotted string a mere physical burning would not have sufficed, but stronger action was required. In the story, the reciting of the two Sūras becomes a counter spell that finally voids the effect of the charm, and the Prophet is healed. According to Jesper Sørensen, any ritual that is performed in order to influence the physical world involves magical agency. By reciting the verses, the Prophet performed a ritual which was expected to expel the physical symptoms that he experienced, and to make him well. The power which the Prophet resorted to, was God and thus his action was acceptable within the doctrinal frame of Islam. Jesper Sørensen further describes the magic action as a process of transferring sacred power to a ritual space, where the profane and sacred blend to make the ritual effective. Magical agency is the element that transfers the sacred power to the ritual space.³⁶ When the Prophet performed the ritual, his intentional act of reciting became the magical agency that blended the sacred into the profane. The verses represent God's words and by reciting them in the context of the ritual, the Prophet tapped into the power of God and blended it into his recitation. In this way, God's power is harnessed to counter the magic power tied in the knots.

³⁴ Both words appear in Muqātil's version of the story: *juff tal'a, qishr tal'a*.

³⁵ Muqātil ibn Sulaymān 1423: 4:933. Muqātil does not present any chain of transmitters to his version of the story.

³⁶ Sørensen 2007: 85-87 illustrates the theory by showing how in the Catholic ritual of Eucharist, the mythic actions and real world actions of the priest come together and blend in the ritual space. The magical agency needed for reaching the goal of the ritual is invested in the priest.

Reaction patterns

When the *hadīth* variants are analysed using Jesper Sørensen's categories of responses to magic, they seem to contain characteristics of two types of response, i.e. segregation and rejection. The variants that identify the caster of the spell as a Jew, an ally to the Jews or a hypocrite, are in fact confining magic practices to a particular group, namely enemies of Islam and the Prophet. Thus they define magic to be a custom of a marginal group and regard it as a practice of non-Muslims or hypocrites who may follow some of the outer requirements of religion, but have not truly internalised the faith.

The portrayal of magic as a non-Muslim practice is further underlined in the variants where the Prophet refuses to retrieve the charm or destroy it, but instead points out to 'Ā'isha that God is the one who has the true power: "God has already cured me." The reaction can be identified as that of segregation which is the situation of truce between the established religion, here nascent Islam, and the practitioners of magic, the "others." The truce like situation is further illustrated by Ahmad ibn Hanbal's short variant, where it is specifically mentioned that the Prophet never confronted the spell caster or punished him in any way: "The Jew was not told and the Prophet never met him." As is befitting of segregation, the Prophet allowed the Jew and other spell casters to keep their magic practices, but by refusing to cast a counter spell he made it clear that magic is not a practice that Muslims should resort to.

In most of the variants magic is characterised as evil: the descriptions of the well and its surroundings underline the wrongness caused by the charm. The connection between magic and evil is typical of the rejection of magic. Rejection does not necessarily mean that magic is denounced as ineffective; it may also mean that the power of magic is recognised but condemned as evil.

The acceptance of the efficacy of magic makes people feel exposed to it, which creates a need of protection against the power of magic. Jesper Sørensen sees this need of protection as the moment where magic comes to exert influence on the established religion. The acceptance of magic's inherent power leads to a development of new rituals, or changes existing rituals from symbolic to more goal-oriented actions.³⁷ This development is illustrated by Muqātil ibn Sulaymān's story, where the reciting of *al-Mu'awwidhatān* becomes a ritual that effectively dispels magic.

³⁷ Sørensen 2007: 190.

Conclusion

Hadīths are not necessarily authentic reports of historical events which took place in the Prophet's time; rather they reflect issues that were discussed by the Muslim community in the first two centuries of Islam. The *hadīths* telling about the bewitching of the Prophet are not evidence that the incident actually took place. The story is preserved in a number of variants indicating its wide dispersal and popularity. Obviously magic was a phenomenon known to the Muslim community, and the *hadīth* variants express the different ways that the community dealt with the issue. The above discussed variants portray magic as an activity of the enemies of the Prophet and Islam. In some of the variants, God intervenes with His healing power countering the effect of the spell. In other variants, the Prophet has to use God's words as a strong spell to counter the magic.

In the Qur'ān verse on the origins of magic, the believers are warned against the danger of blasphemy inherent in the magical practices: resorting to powers other than God endangers the individual's soul and salvation. Similar danger of eternal punishment is reflected in the *hadīth* variants where it is the enemies of the Prophet and not the true believers who resort to magic. Further, the Qur'ān verse places magic within the power of God. As bad actions in general, also magic is dependent of God's will. In this regard, the *hadīth* variants are less clear. In the stories, God's power ends up stronger than the evil magic, but magic remains distinct from God's power.

The idea of magic being subject to God's power is rather abstract and belongs to the established religion's tendency to interpret rituals symbolically rather than considering them goal oriented effective tools. For example al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) considered it permissible for a Muslim to wear protective amulets or use incantations as long as the person did not believe in the power of the amulet or the incantation itself.³⁸ He should rather consider them as means of seeking refuge in God and remember that ultimately everything depended on His will.

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