

CULTURE CONTACTS AND THE MAKING OF CULTURES

Papers in Homage to
Itamar Even-Zohar



Edited by

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Gideon Toury

CULTURE CONTACTS AND THE MAKING OF CULTURES

Papers in homage to Itamar Even-Zohar

Edited by

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy

Gideon Toury

Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv University: Unit of Culture Research

2011

Copyright © 2011 Unit of Culture Research, Tel Aviv University
& Authors.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by photostat, microform, retrieval system, or any other means, without prior written permission of the publisher or author.

Unit of Culture Research
Faculty of Humanities
Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, 69978 Israel
www.tau.ac.il/tarbut
tarbut@post.tau.ac.il

Culture Contacts and the Making of Cultures: Papers in Homage to Itamar Even-Zohar / Rakefet Sela-Sheffy & Gideon Toury, editors.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-965-555-496-0 (electronic)

The publication of this book was supported by the Bernstein Chair of Translation Theory, Tel Aviv University (Gideon Toury, Incumbent)

Culture Contacts and the Making of Cultures: Papers in Homage to Itamar Even-Zohar

Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet 1954- ; Toury, Gideon 1942-

© 2011 – Unit of Culture Research & Authors

Printed in Israel

Table of Contents

To The Memory of Robert Paine	V
Acknowledgements	VII

Introduction

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy	1
---------------------	---

Part One

Identities in Contacts:

Conflicts and Negotiations of Collective Entities

Manfred Bietak	
The Aftermath of the Hyksos in Avaris	19

Robert Paine†	
Identity Puzzlement: Saami in Norway, Past and Present	67

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy	
High-Status Immigration Group and Culture Retention: German Jewish Immigrants in British-Ruled Palestine	79

Wadda Rios-Font	
Ramón Power y Giralt, First Delegate to the Cádiz Courts, and the Origins of Puerto Rican National Dis- course	101

Israel Gershoni	
Culture Planning and Counter-Planning: The Young Ha- san al-Banna and the Formation of Egyptian-Islamic Cul- ture in Egypt	131

Gisèle Sapiro	
Recadrer la mémoire collective: l'exemple de la France à la Libération	147
Nitsa Ben-Ari	
Popular Literature in Hebrew as Marker of Anti-Sabra Culture	219
Jón Karl Helgason	
The Role of Cultural Saints in European Nation States	245
Part Two	
Repertoire Formation: Invention and Change	
Orly Goldwasser	
The Advantage of Cultural Periphery: The Invention of the Alphabet In Sinai (Circa 1840 B.C.E)	255
Gabriel M. Rosenbaum	
The Rise and Expansion of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic as a Literary Language	323
Gideon Toury	
The Invention of a Four-Season Model for Modern Hebrew Culture	345
Panchanan Mohanty	
Why so Many Maternal Uncles in South Asian Languages?	365
Thomas Harrington	
Urbanity in Transit: Catalan Contributions to the Architectural Repertoire of Modern Uruguay	391

Nam-Fung Chang The Development of Translation Studies into a Discipline in China	411
Yaacov Shavit The Reception of Greek Mythology in Modern Hebrew Culture	437
Saliha Paker Translation, the Pursuit of Inventiveness and Ottoman Poetics: A Systemic Approach	459
Notes on Authors	475

THE RISE AND EXPANSION OF COLLOQUIAL EGYPTIAN ARABIC AS A LITERARY LANGUAGE

Gabriel M. Rosenbaum

Preface: A Personal Note

When I came back to Tel Aviv University to do my master's degree at the Department of Arabic, I took several courses at the Department of Literature, most of them with Itamar [Even-Zohar] and some with Gideon [Tourey]. At that time, Itamar and his colleagues and students promoted the polysystem theory developed by Itamar (finally shaped and published together with collected articles in Even-Zohar 1990; since then, it is constantly being updated in electronic publications). I was greatly impressed with that theory which could look at and describe not only literature but any activity connected to human behavior. The Polysystem Theory, as well as other studies by Itamar, affected my academic work in years to come as, I am sure, it affected the work of all participants in this workshop. But the greater bonus was getting to know Itamar the person, full not only with wisdom but also with a sense of humor (some of which I documented while sitting in his classes), and always ready to listen and to help with good advice. It was a great honor to participate in the workshop, and I thank the organizing committee for inviting me to take part in it.

1. Introduction

I would like to start my description with a quotation from the Egyptian press. Three weeks before coming to this workshop I came across an article in an Egyptian daily newspaper, whose outset reads as follows:

لغتنا العربية الجميلة هي أفضل لغات العالم، فهي لغة القرآن الكريم، وهي لغة أهل الجنة وهي اللغة التي تجمع بين كل الشعوب العربية ويتمنى التحدث بها كل المسلمين في شتى أنحاء العالم حتى لو لم يكونوا عرباً.

Our beautiful Arabic language is the best of the world languages, as it is the language of the honorable Quran; it is also the language of the dwellers of Paradise, and it is the language that unites all Arab peoples; all Muslims all over the world wish to speak it even when they are not Arabs (*Al-Ahrār* 2007).

The article is entitled *Luġatuna al-gamīla* ("Our Beautiful Language"), a title which is also an allusion to a famous radio program dealing with the correct use of Arabic; its outset summarizes the common opinion in the Arab world about Arabic; hundreds, perhaps thousands of articles, convey the same message. Later on, the writer of the article attacks the use of both foreign words and the colloquial in the media, and calls for replacing them with standard Arabic. This call reflects a typical attitude often expressed in Egyptian newspapers in articles and in letters to the editor. One random example is an article entitled *Luġatuna al-gamīla tata'ākal. al-'āmmiyya wal-'alfāz al-'agnabiyya tuhaddid al-'arabiyya!!* ("Our Beautiful Language is being Eaten Away; the Colloquial and Foreign Expressions Threaten the Arabic [Language]"). The message is expressed in the title that also contains the collocation "our beautiful language" (Namnam 1998).

The quotation above is taken from an article written by a twelve-year-old girl who won the first prize in a writing competition for children, undoubtedly not only because of its eloquence but also because of the ideas expressed in it, ideas that conform with the ideology maintained by the cultural establishment in Egypt as well as in any Arabic speaking community (the girl's name is not given). In Egypt, however, new norms in written literature nowadays challenge the traditional norms reflected in the twelve-year-old girl's article.

In Egypt the colloquial language has become also a written (see Rosenbaum 2004) and a literary language, in addition to the standard language. This is a revolutionary and so far unique development in Arab culture, obviously contradictory to mainstream Egyptian culture and to Arab culture as well. Texts in colloquial Arabic are being written in other places in the Arab world, but Egypt is the only Arabic-speaking country where this happens on a large scale and where the spoken dialect has become a second written language used in poetry, prose, drama and to an increasing extent in the printed press and on road billboards, too.

2. A Note on the Status of Egyptian Arabic in General and the Dialect of Cairo in Particular

The most prestigious spoken dialect in Egypt is that of Cairo; it is also the main dialect used as a literary language in Egypt. Usually when

one refers to "colloquial Arabic" in Egypt what one means is the Cairene dialect. This dialect is also the main language used in films, on television, in the theater and in songs. Radio and television broadcasters often conduct their interviews in the dialect of Cairo. Egyptian literature written in the colloquial makes use of other dialects as well, mainly for purposes of realistic portrayal of characters or in local and folkloristic poetry, but the dialect of Cairo is the one that is mainly used as a language of literature.

It is worth noting that many of those writing in Cairene Arabic were not born in Cairo, although for many Cairo became their place of residence and work. These writers, who are not native speakers of Cairene Arabic (but more often than not have adopted it as their spoken variety), use it as their language of literature, and imitate its structures, morphology and lexicon.¹ Cairene Arabic has thus become the standard for written Egyptian Arabic and the model to be imitated.

Egyptian Arabic, i.e. the dialect of Cairo, is also the Arabic dialect best understood by non-Egyptian speakers of Arabic; it is understood in varying degrees in other Arab countries due mainly to the influence of Egyptian radio, Egyptian music whose performers enjoy a tremendous popularity throughout the Arab world (for example, there is hardly any native speaker of Arabic who does not know by heart some of the songs of Umm Kulthūm, the diva of Egyptian as well as of Arab music, and most can even sing or declaim some of the lyrics in Egyptian Arabic), Egyptian cinema and television and also written literature and the press. The dialect of Cairo enjoys great prestige outside of Egypt as well. More than once I heard speakers of non-Egyptian dialects of Arabic saying that the Egyptian (that is, Cairene) dialect is, in their words, "the most beautiful", and some also believe that it is the most "correct" dialect and the closest to standard Arabic. This encourages Egyptian writers who want to use the colloquial, because they assume that the non-Egyptian reader will understand at least some of their Egyptianisms.

¹ Sometimes elements of non-Cairene dialects penetrate literary and semi-literary works written by non-Cairenes, often for stylistic reasons; see, e.g. Zack 2001 on the style of al-Qa'īd's *Bird's Milk* (1994).

3. The Change of Norms in Egyptian Literature

Egyptian society, like all Arabic-speaking societies, exists in a state of diglossia (see, e.g., Fergusson 1959; Boussofara-Omar 2006); modern Standard Arabic (*Fuṣḥā*) is used in literature and for official communication, and the dialect (*‘Āmmiyya*) is used for personal and non-formal communication. *Fuṣḥā* is more-or-less uniform throughout the Arabic-speaking world, whereas *‘Āmmiyya* differs according to geographical location and groups of speakers. Modern *Fuṣḥā* is naturally different from Classical Arabic – its vocabulary absorbed many new words and meanings (some of which may differ from one Arab country to another), but its grammar and morphology have basically remained the same. In scholarly writing the term *‘Āmmiyya* refers to any Arabic dialect. Egyptian *‘Āmmiyya* is usually referred to as CEA (Colloquial Egyptian Arabic), an acronym used hereafter also to refer to written Egyptian *‘Āmmiyya*. Modern Standard Arabic, *Fuṣḥā*, is referred to as MSA in modern scholarly writing, and hereafter I shall use this acronym when referring to modern Standard Arabic in Egypt.

Traditionally, Arabic literature has been, and still is, written in the standard language. Arabic, the language of the Quran and other holy texts, as well as the classical poetry which is a source for pride in Arab culture, is considered the sublime and the most perfect and eloquent language. The colloquial has for fourteen-hundred years been considered an inferior language, not fit for use as a vehicle of "serious" literature. Opposition to using it as a language of literature has deep roots in Arab culture, Egypt included, and is still fierce.

In Arab society there is a constant fear of losing contact with the Arab and Islamic heritage, whose texts are written in *Fuṣḥā*, once *‘Āmmiyya* becomes a written language, and today there is also a fear of political fragmentation if the various dialects were to become written languages. The "bad" examples from the Arab point of view are Europe, where the various dialects of Latin that had become written languages promoted the formation of independent political entities each of which uses a language not understood by the others, and Malta, whose spoken Arabic dialect has become a written language using the Latin alphabet, and thus contributed to Christian Malta breaking off from the

Arab world;² Malta is also the only Arabic speaking country that does not call its language Arabic but rather Maltese. From a practical point of view, many writers feel that if they want to be read and understood in all Arab countries they should write in Standard Arabic.

Centuries of disparagement toward *‘Āmmiyya* in Arab society have led many speakers of Arabic to believe that the variety they speak is inferior and a corrupted form of the sublime *Fuṣḥā*; it is their dream that *‘Āmmiyya* will disappear and *Fuṣḥā* will become the only language of the Arabs. Arab societies, therefore, refuse to recognize their mother tongues as respectable languages and refuse to make them national languages.

Texts in the colloquial were written in Egypt and in other parts of the Arabic-speaking world already in the nineteenth century and to a more limited extent even earlier, but their cultural status was low and they were not considered worthwhile literature, if considered literature at all. What has changed in Egypt is the scope of writing in the colloquial and the status and prestige of texts written in that variety. The position of writers who wrote in CEA and of texts written in CEA, which have not been appreciated in the past, has changed, too, and now some of them are located in the center of the Egyptian literary system and enjoy high status in Egyptian culture.

Because the few texts written in CEA before the twentieth century were not appreciated they usually were not preserved. Thus, for example, most of the plays written in CEA between the years 1870-1872 by the founder of modern Egyptian theater, Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘a, have not been preserved; today Ṣanū‘a enjoys high prestige, but most of his work is lost.

Despite opposition to the use of CEA, pressure to write texts in it arose from several directions. One was the influence which the realistic

² The loss of Malta from the perspective of Arab and Islamic culture is reflected in two well-known expressions in Egyptian Arabic, *‘iddan fī māḷṭa* – "called to prayer [in a mosque] in Malta," meaning "a voice calling in the wilderness," since the Maltese are Christians and no one will heed the call to pray in a mosque; and *ba‘d-i ḥarāb māḷṭa* – "after the destruction of Malta," meaning "it's too late, now you remember?!, there's nothing we can do any more." The Arabic-speaking world fears that if the dialects were to become independent languages, what happened in Malta may recur.

trend in Western literature had on writers who were trying to come up with ways of faithfully representing the language spoken by the characters in literary texts. Another was the flourishing of the theater in Egypt and the increased number of dramatic works intended to be performed on stage. Plays in MSA were not easily comprehensible to a large part of the audience, that until today prefers performances in CEA. It should also be noted that realism had become the dominant trend in drama as well, and that many playwrights also write in other genres in which they use CEA as well.

In the middle of the twentieth century a number of writers and playwrights attempted to find solutions to the problem of the language of dialogue in prose and drama. Some attempts have been made to seek a compromise between CEA and MSA, of which the most famous is Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm's experiment in creating a style that he called a "third language" (see, e.g., Somekh 1991: 40-45), but they did not succeed, and CEA ended up becoming the main language in drama (see Rosenbaum 1994). In prose CEA is an option, equal in status to MSA in the dialogue; CEA is penetrating the language of narration as well, but at a slower pace.

A different type of demand to write in CEA comes from some Egyptians who want to culturally detach themselves from the Arab world and to emphasize the unique and separate local, even Pharaonic, identity of Egypt. Such ideas were expressed in the past and to a lesser extent also today, but until now have not received significant support. A few of those who write in CEA would be happy to replace MSA with CEA, but most of them do not necessarily share this feeling and they still regard themselves as part of Arab culture.

The norms of the language of poetry, too, appear to be changing. Theoretically the norm requiring poetry to be written in MSA is still dominant. In practice, however, writing poetry in CEA is flourishing and the number of poetry collections published in the colloquial is tremendous. It is worth noting that the two most prominent poets in Egypt today, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnūdī and Aḥmad Fu’ād Nigm, write in CEA and enjoy great prestige in Egyptian culture. However, the debate between the supporters of using CEA in literature and its opponents, in

Egypt as well as elsewhere in the Arabic speaking world, still goes on but is less intense.³

CEA has also penetrated semi-literary and non-literary texts. The presence of CEA in the contemporary Egyptian press is amazing (see Rosenbaum, forthcoming). There is a tradition of writing cartoon captions in CEA; also, CEA has been used in humoristic and satirical magazines, but now it is also used in headlines and in articles in "serious" newspapers, thus changing the style of the press, too. In several contemporary newspapers and magazines there are large sections that are being written entirely in CEA or in a mixed style. From time to time there are new weeklies like *Iḏhak lil-Dunya* ("Laugh to the World" 2005), *al-Rīša* ("The Quill" 2005) and *al-Dabbūr* ("The Wasp" 2008) that appear for several months and use CEA as a dominant language; the two monthlies *Ihna* ("We") and *Kilmitna* ("Our Word"), that are directed to the younger generation, are written mostly in CEA. CEA is also widely used in advertising, and nowadays it frequently appears on street and road billboards, so texts written in the colloquial are always available for the passers-by (Rosenbaum 2008b).

Egyptian Arabic is found increasingly in non-fiction as well. Texts in CEA are also collected and published by Egyptian scholars who come from the fields of folklore, sociology and anthropology. Some of their studies contain extensive quotations of narrative texts and dialogues in CEA whose style is similar to realistic literary dialogues and narration. Examples of such books are a study of Egyptian anecdotes that contains a section of humorous stories and jokes told in the colloquial (Ša'īlān 1993: 265-364); a study that contains many recorded monologues by women from low strata of society (al-Turkī, Ṭaryā, Malik Rušdī and Āmāl Ṭanṭāwī 2006); a book that contains a large section of reports told by informants explaining traditional ways of preparing popular medicines (Ġunaym 2007: 74-154); a study on preparing the bride for the wedding (‘Alī n.d.: especially 229-293); most of the book on folktales in al-Daḡhaliyya consists of stories in CEA collected from informants (Faraḡ 1975: 87-410).

The last bastion of MSA is the corpus of some non-fictional texts, such as legal, religious and academic ones, in which MSA is still the

³ A lot has been written about this debate; two examples are Gully 1997 (in English) and Šārūnī 2007 (in Arabic).

dominant language. But even here there are some exceptions. One significant example is a book entitled "The Present of Culture in Egypt"; one of its chapters is dedicated to the defense of CEA and its use (Qindil 1999: 303-335). The book is written in MSA except for this one chapter, which is written in CEA; clearly in this chapter the language is the message: non-fiction can indeed be written in CEA.

The wave of writing in CEA is very strong today, and undoubtedly it is changing the structure of the Egyptian literary and cultural systems. But in most cases this is done in an unorganized way. Those who participate in this wave may be regarded as idea-makers or entrepreneurs (as described by Even-Zohar 2005) who change Egyptian culture and consequently Arab culture as well, but there is no doubt that they are not part of a movement but rather a large group of many individuals. There is no organized movement of writers in CEA, but there has been a discernible movement of literature in CEA from the margin toward the center in the Egyptian literary system, where it is now located.

This change in the norms of writing is taking place *de facto*, without the establishment's approval. Works written in CEA are recognized as literature, but are not being taught at school, and there is no academy of CEA, parallel to the Academy of Arabic (i.e. *Fuṣḥā*), that may promote its use; it is doubtful whether such an academy will ever be established. The change of norms has already attracted the attention of some scholars who recognize the fact that CEA is becoming a legitimate vehicle of modern Egyptian literature.⁴ Since according to the new norms drama is mostly written in CEA, and poetry may be written in CEA, and since it is already accepted to write the dialogue in prose in either CEA or in MSA, the focus in the description below is on prose narration.

⁴ See, e.g., Somekh 1991; Holes 2004: 373-382; for a short account of literature published in colloquial Egyptian Arabic see Davies 2006: 598-602; Manfred Woidich, a renowned dialectologist of Egyptian Arabic, is constantly using evidence taken from printed Egyptian literature in addition to materials collected from informants, as he did in *Kairenisch-Arabische*, his monumental description of Egyptian Arabic (2006).

4. The Penetration of Egyptian Arabic into Prose

4.1. Mixed Styles

CEA at first was mostly used in prose in the dialogue, and also for *realia*, objects found and used in daily life. By the mid-twentieth century it became acceptable *de facto* to use CEA in the dialogue, but it was also accepted that the narration should be written in MSA only. Gradually, however, CEA also penetrated the narration. Even in the texts of writers who oppose the use of CEA in writing such as Nagīb Maḥfūz, the Nobel laureate, elements of CEA can be found in the language of the narration, albeit concealed at times (see, e.g., Somekh 1993). In the writings of authors who support writing in CEA such elements are obviously much more common.

Today the use of CEA side by side with MSA is not only tolerated by Egyptian writers but in many cases is sought for and desired. This is clearly manifested in two types of style.

One type is a style that I have called *Fuṣḥāmmiyya*. In an article published some years ago (Rosenbaum 2000), I described a certain style of texts in which MSA and CEA are used alternately; for example, parallelisms and hendiadys are created by using elements taken from both varieties. This style is employed by writers who support or have no objection to the use of CEA in written literature.

Another type is created by changing the point of view through the use of CEA, a technique now employed by many Egyptian writers. In many cases this change is brought about through "free indirect discourse" (or "free indirect style", *style indirect libre*) and using the interior monologue (*monologue interieur*), often written in either overt or disguised CEA. This stylistic device is used not only by writers who are in favor of using the colloquial in literary texts, like Yūsuf Idrīs, but also by writers who believe that literature should be written in MSA only, like Nagīb Maḥfūz. Both kinds of writers thus contribute to the spread of the mixed style and the use of CEA inside narration written in MSA (for examples see Rosenbaum 2008a).

The penetration of elements of CEA into texts written in MSA, or into the language of narration which is predominantly MSA, has considerably increased in the last decade. Two recent best-sellers of that kind are the prose collections "A Cup of Coffee" (‘Āṣī 2007) and "What the Sick Person Has Done to the Dead Person" (Faḍl 2008); both contain

short stories that include CEA in the narration. This style is also common in non-fiction prose, especially satirical or critical texts of Egyptian society; some recent examples are Nigm 2008; al-Bīsi 2009; ‘Abd al-Salām 2008; ‘Umar Ṭāhir 2005 and 2007; all of these collections of prose contain extensive passages in CEA, in both the dialogue and the narration. Many writers of both fiction and non-fiction no longer hesitate to insert CEA into their prose. The poet Aḥmad Fu’ād Nigm, who belongs to the older generation, may add narration in CEA to a poetry collection as in Nigm 1995, or write prose in a mixed style as in Nigm n.d. This style reflects a novel situation in Egyptian literature: writers now can choose items out of a broader stock to be used in their repertoire, and may even create stylistic contrasts using the two varieties, an option that is not available for writers in MSA only.

4.2. Mixed Styles as a Translation Problem

In addition to the array of problems facing any translator, translators of modern Egyptian literature also face the difficulty of identifying the elements of CEA in the text, particularly when these are disguised and integrated within MSA. The task of identification is made more difficult by the fact that both languages utilize the same alphabetical signs (some of which have different functions in the two varieties; see Rosenbaum 2004). A translator (and a reader as well) who is proficient in Egyptian Arabic will usually distinguish these elements without any trouble. However, one who is not, even one whose native language is another dialect of Arabic, may experience difficulties in understanding the text and interpret elements of CEA as those of MSA. This problem occasionally results in inadequate translations of Egyptian literature (for some examples see Rosenbaum 2001).

4.3. Books and Texts Written Entirely in Egyptian Arabic

A remarkable rarity which until toward the end of the twentieth century was limited to non-canonical literature but which has penetrated into canonical literature today is the writing of whole prose texts, novels or short stories, entirely in the colloquial.

This kind of writing eliminates the stylistic differentiation between the language of narration and the language of dialogue that has been possible due to the use of MSA and CEA for different purposes in one

text. Consequently, in such texts the situation has become similar to that which exists in literature written in MSA only, in which also no stylistic differentiation exists between the language of narration and the language of dialogue. The decision to write in this way constitutes in fact an act of defiance against both the claim that CEA is unfit to serve as a language of literature, and the claim that when it is used in literature it should be confined to writing dialogues only, as it is not fit for writing narration.

A few texts of this kind were written in the first half of the twentieth century. Some of them were *mudakkirāt* ("memoirs") written in the first person and thus bypassing the narration obstacle (although narrative sections may be reported by the narrator in the first person); one example is al-Nuṣṣ 1930. These texts, however, were written by authors whose cultural status was marginal (and who occasionally also used pseudonyms), and the cultural establishment ignored them. Today prose written entirely in CEA is the only kind of literature in which the use of the colloquial *per se* can still arouse the indignation of critics.

The year 1965 was significant as it witnessed the publication of three novels written entirely in CEA. One of the better-known attempts to write such a novel in Egypt, still in the *memoirs* style, was undertaken by Luwīs ʿAwaḍ in 1942, after returning from England where he had been studying. He wrote an autobiographical novel in which he described his travels and studies (ʿAwaḍ 1965). The novel was rejected for publication by the censor, at first because it was written in CEA, and was eventually published in 1965.⁵ Ṣabrī wrote a novel in the first person; his novel was preceded by a long introduction by the author about writing in CEA. Muṣarrafa wrote a novel from the third-person omniscient narrator point of view; an interesting feature of this novel is that many of its interior monologues are printed in boldface.

⁵ In the introduction to his book ʿAwaḍ describes in detail his discussions with the censors about his book and tells the story of its publication (ʿAwaḍ 1965: 7-21). The book was published by the Rūz al-yūsuf institute in its prestigious series *al-kitāb al-dahabī* ("The Golden Book"); more poetic justice to this book was done years later when it was published again in different editions by two other prestigious publishing houses, the state-owned al-Hayʿa al-miṣriyya al-ʿamma lil-kitāb in 1991, and Dār al-hilāl in 2001.

Prose written entirely in CEA before the 1990s, however, was scarce, and most of it was written from the first-person point of view. One device to avoid the challenge of dealing with narration was to write prose that contained dialogues only. A famous attempt was made by Bayram al-Tūnisī in 1923 followed by a sequel in 1925 (al-Tūnisī n.d.). These two volumes contain dialogues between husband and wife only, without even a single word of narration.⁶

An interesting experiment on contending with the problem of writing narration was undertaken by Ruṣḍī (1955) in one of his short stories. In this story there is dialogue only, but only the first interlocutor is heard while his partner is implied and the information he supplies is reconstructed through the words of the first one. From time to time there have been sporadic attempts to write prose that mostly relies on dialogues and contains extensive passages in CEA, as in 'Afīfī 1961 and al-Ḥamīsī 2006.

The years 1993-1994 mark a turning point in the status of prose written entirely in CEA, with the publication of two books by prominent and prestigious writers.

Aḥmad Fuʿād Nigm (1993), who writes poetry in CEA only, published two volumes of his memoirs. The two volumes proved very popular among readers and were sold out in a short time. Another edition appeared in 2001, by another publisher, in one volume and with an added chapter which was not included in the first edition.

Yūsuf al-Qa'īd, a prominent prose writer in Egypt, published a fiction novel in CEA (1994).⁷ It is worth noting that the publisher himself had reservations about writing prose fiction in the colloquial; these reservations appeared on the back of the last page. It is possible that had this novel been written by someone of lesser status in Egyptian culture the publisher would have rejected the book, and that it was only the writer's prestige that persuaded the publisher to accept it. Indeed, it was the very fact that the author was one with such a solid cultural standing that prompted critical attacks on the book's language, in Egypt as well as elsewhere in the Arab world.

⁶ On Bayram al-Tūnisī and his work see Booth 1990; on this book see *ibid*, 313-339.

⁷ See above, note 1.

Al-Qa‘īd’s novel was the last novel in CEA that was severely attacked because of its language. Novels written in CEA and published a few years later faced no criticism of their language; criticism of the use of CEA in literature has not completely disappeared, but considerably weakened and became a marginal ritual, not necessarily connected to the appearance of a particular book. At the end of the 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century the flow of books in CEA, novels or collections of short stories, fiction and non-fiction (some of which written entirely or nearly entirely in CEA) by a new and young generation of writers, has encountered hardly any criticism or opposition, despite the increasing number of publications. Some examples are ‘Abd al-‘Alīm 2005; ‘Abd al-Mun‘im 2005; ‘Alī 2000; Farag 1999. One of the books in that style was recently published by Yūsuf Ma‘āfi who often writes in a mixed style; his last prose collection (2009) is his first prose work that is written entirely in CEA. Al-‘Assāl 2002-2003 is another example of memoirs written entirely in CEA.

A new phenomenon in Egypt is publishing books that at first appeared on the internet (see below). Short stories written in CEA also appear in newspapers and magazines. One example is a short story by ‘Abd al-Bāqī (1994) published in the weekly *Ṣabāḥ al-ḥēr*.⁸ This story is written from the third-person omniscient narrator point of view and does not reflect any distinction between the languages of narration and dialogue.

5. A Note on the Contribution of Electronic Communications to the Expansion of Egyptian Arabic

Egyptian Arabic is widely used in various electronic means of communication, such as blogs, e-mail letters, chat sites and cellular telephone messages (SMS: "short message service"). When these methods were still new, a large part of this writing activity was done in Latin transcription, because software in Arabic was not yet widely available. Now most electronic communication in Egyptian Arabic is being done in Arabic letters. Many blogs and other texts now appear in various

⁸ This story later appeared in ‘Abd al-Bāqī’s collection of poetry and short stories, together with other stories written in the same style, under the title *Mōt is-Sayyid ‘afandi* ("The Death of Mr. Sayyid": ‘Abd al-Bāqī 1999: 394-399).

sites on the internet in Egyptian Arabic; a noteworthy one is the new version of Wikipedia, the famous online encyclopedia, completely written in Egyptian Arabic (*Wikipedia [Egyptian] 2009*); this version of Wikipedia, separate from the standard Arabic one, strongly emphasizes the Egyptian aspects of Egypt and its people, culture and language (versus the Arabic ones), and is becoming a large source for non-fiction texts in Egyptian Arabic. Many other Egyptian sites are now written entirely in CEA.

The internet is now also bringing about an acceleration in the publication of literature in Egyptian Arabic. Several books written entirely or partly in Egyptian Arabic and published in recent years, started in blogs; their popularity attracted publishers who took it upon themselves to publish them in book versions, some of which have become best-sellers in Egypt. A known example is the prose collection *I Want to Get Married* by Ġāda ‘Abd al-‘Āl, written entirely in CEA; the first edition appeared in 2008, and by the time this paper was being prepared for print (May 2009) there were already five editions.⁹ The book was printed by one of the biggest and most prestigious publishing houses in Egypt, Dār al-šurūq, in its new series *Mudawwanat al-šurūq* ("al-Šurūq's blog"). Thus, the internet as a whole is becoming another entrepreneur that promotes writing in Egyptian Arabic.

Another type of books which originated in the internet is anthologies of short texts written by various writers that appeared on the internet and were subsequently collected and published in book form. For example, Al-Basyūnī 2009 and al-Būhī 2008.

6. Concluding Remarks

From time to time a writer or an intellectual calls for replacing MSA with CEA; CEA in their opinion should become the official language of Egypt. The fact that Egyptian Arabic is understood or partly understood by most of the Arabs strengthens their point.

Those who call for replacing MSA with CEA, however, are not the leading figures in the Egyptian cultural system. In the first half of the twentieth century there were some distinguished intellectuals, for ex-

⁹ On the style of this book see now Rosenbaum 2010; there are now (2011) already nine editions.

ample Salāma Mūsā and Luwīs ‘Awaḍ, who called for taking such a step, but they themselves seldom used CEA, and their own style usually conformed with the prevailing norms of writing in MSA (see, e.g., Su-leiman 2003: 180-190, 197-204); their call usually remained unanswered. Nowadays there are not many loud voices calling for writing in CEA, but there are many, both central and marginal figures, who write in CEA, without connecting this action to ideology.

A possible explanation is that in the first half of the twentieth century Egypt was still looking for its identity. The idea of a Western Egypt or a Pharaonic Egypt was accepted by some thinkers, or at least not totally rejected, and using CEA seemed one way of maintaining an independent identity, unconnected to the rest of the Arab world. However, although Egyptians as a whole are proud of their Pharaonic past and often proudly indicate that they have seven thousand years' history of culture behind them, and although some of them still have questions about their own identity, Egypt as a political community has taken the decision to define itself as an Arab and Islamic entity. Politically, the call for CEA is not popular; artistically, there is a broad tendency to write in the Egyptian version of Arabic. Most writers who nowadays use CEA do not bother themselves with ideological questions. They simply feel that writing in CEA can serve their artistic and stylistic goals, and it is by the work of many writers, central and marginal, that the norms have changed and that Egyptian literature as well as Egyptian press seems so different from their counterparts in the rest of the Arab world. I do not foresee that in the visible future there will be an Academy for Egyptian Arabic or that Egyptian Arabic will be taught in Egyptian schools, but its central position in Egyptian writing has become a fact.

The extensive use of CEA by culturally prominent writers has given legitimacy to this use. Today more and more authors write in CEA, and more publishers are ready to publish CEA texts. The status of CEA in Egypt has in many cases become equal to that of MSA and in the genre of drama it has even exceeded it; in the latter case, that means that a playwright who wants his plays to be performed and to occupy a significant place in Egyptian culture will write them in CEA.

Some writers in Egypt prefer writing prose texts in CEA only, but many prefer using both MSA and CEA. Doing so extends the spectrum

of stylistic options available to these writers, in comparison to writers who insist on using only MSA or only CEA.

In my opinion, the mixed styles like *Fuṣḥāmmiyya* and free indirect style written in CEA, which arouse less opposition than texts written entirely in CEA, contribute more to the legitimacy of CEA as a literary language, because in such texts its status is equal to that of MSA.

The status of CEA is being determined *de facto*, without any official institution to support it. There is still some opposition to the use of CEA in literary and semi-literary texts in Egypt, especially texts written entirely in CEA, but the severe attacks on its use have weakened. Every now and then there is an article in the newspaper or a letter to the editor whose authors complain about the spreading use of CEA and warn of its danger. But in the current situation these voices can no longer stop the express train of CEA. The rise and expansion of Egyptian Arabic as a literary language is a first case of its kind and a revolutionary change in the history of Arabic literature and culture in general, and in Egyptian culture in particular, a change which is still taking place right now.

Postscript

Since the workshop took place, in 2008, the writing and publication of books in or with Colloquial Egyptian Arabic increased tremendously each year. Writing in the colloquial on the net during that period expanded, too, and further accelerated the publication of books based on texts published on the net.

The January 2011 Revolution in Egypt that toppled President Mubarak and his regime, was organized and launched mainly by internet users in Egypt through the social networks, the same milieu which many writers and consumers of literature in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic come from.

Egypt is now in a transitional phase, and it is not clear where it is going, politically and culturally. Currently (June 2011), however, writing and publishing in the colloquial are flourishing more than ever.

References

- ‘Abd al-‘Āl, Ġāda 2008. *‘Āyza ‘atgawwiz* ("I Want to Get Married"). Cairo: Dār al-šurūq.
- ‘Abd al-‘Alīm, Ḥusayn 2005. *Bāzil* ("Puzzle"). Cairo: Mirit.
- ‘Abd al-Bāqī, Samīr 1994. "Is-Sayyid ‘afandi" ("Mister Sayyid"). *Šabāḥ al-ḥēr*, February 10: 45-46.
- 1999. *Āḥir ḥudūd al-zagal* ("Last Frontiers of Zagal [rhymed popular poetry]"). Cairo: Dār Qabā’.
- ‘Abd al-Mun‘im, Šafā’ 2005. *Min ḥalāwit ir-rūḥ* ("Last Fling of Life"). Egypt: Dār Sanābil (2nd edition).
- ‘Abd al-Salām, Ihāb 2008. *Azmit rigāla* ("Shortage of Men"). Cairo: Dār al-fārūq.
- ‘Afīfī, Muḥammad 1961. "Kayfa tušbiḥ sā’iq lūrī?" ("How to Become a Truck Driver?"). In Muḥammad ‘Afīfī. *Ḍaḥkāt ‘ābisa* ("Gloomy Laughs"]. Cairo: Dar al-ma‘rifā, 42-47.¹⁰
- al-Ahrār* 2007. "Luġatuna al-gamīla" ("Our Beautiful Language"). December 18.
- ‘Alī, Ṭaryā Ibrāhīm, N.d. *Al-‘Arūs: tazyīnuha watagmīluha fī al-turāt al-ša‘bī* ("The Bride: Making Her up and Adorning Her in the Popular Tradition"). Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī.
- ‘Alī, Muḥammad Nāšir 2000. *Ūlā ‘awwal* ("First Grade"). Egypt: Al-Maglis al-‘alā lil-ṭaqāfa.
- ‘Āšī, Ḍuḥā 2007. *Fingān Qahwa* ("A Cup of Coffee"). Cairo: Dār šarqīyyāt.
- ‘Assāl, Faṭṭiyya 2002-2003. *Ḥuḍn al-‘umr: al-sīra al-ḍātiyya* ("Bosom of Life: The Autobiography"). 4 Parts in 3 vols. Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-mišriyya al-‘amma lil-kitāb.
- ‘Awaḍ, Luwīs 1965. *Mudakkarāt ṭālib bi-ṭa* ("Memoirs of a Student with Scholarship Abroad"). Cairo: Mu’assasat rūz al-yūsuf.¹¹
- Basyūnī, Maḥmūd ‘Alī ed. 2009. *Dawlat al-facebook* ("The Country of Facebook"). Cairo: Dār al-šurūq.
- al-Bīsī, Sanā’ 2009. *Mašr ya wilād* ("Egypt Oh Boys"). 2nd edition. Cairo: Nahḍat Mišr.

¹⁰ Published again under the title *Fann qiyādat al-lūrī* ("The Art of Driving a Truck") in ‘Afīfī, Muḥammad 1988. *Ibtasim min faḍlak* ("Smile, Please"). Cairo: Aḥbār al-yawm, 187-191.

¹¹ On different editions of this book see above note 5.

- Booth, Marilyn 1990. *Bayram al-Tunisi's Egypt: Social Criticism and Narrative Strategies*. Exeter: Ithaca Press.
- Boussofara-Omar, Naima 2006. "Diglossia". In *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, vol. 1, eds. Kees Versteegh et al. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 629-637.
- Būhī, Aḥmad ed. 2008. *Mudawwanāt miṣriyya lil-gayb: kitāb yu'allifuhu al-ša'b al-miṣrī – mašrū' waṭan* ("Egyptian Blogs for the Pocket: A Book Composed by the Egyptian People – a Homeland Project"). Cairo: Dār 'uktub.
- al-Dabbūr* 2008. ["The Wasp": Weekly].
- Davies, Humphrey 2006. "Dialect Literature". In *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, vol. 1, eds. Kees Versteegh et al. Leiden and Boston: Brill,, 597-604.
- Even-Zohar, Itamar 1990. *Polysystem Studies*. [=Poetics Today 11: 1].
- 2005. "Idea-Makers, Culture Entrepreneurs, Makers of Life Images, and The Prospects of Success". In Itamar Even-Zohar. *Papers in Culture Research*: 184-202. [Www.tau.ac.il/~itamarez/works/books/EZ-CR-2005.pdf](http://www.tau.ac.il/~itamarez/works/books/EZ-CR-2005.pdf) (May 28 2009).
- Faḍl, Bilāl 2008. *Mā fa'alahu al-'ayyān bil-mayyit waqīṣaṣ 'uhrā* ("What the Sick Person Has Done to the Dead Person and Other Stories"). Cairo: Dār al-šurūq.
- Farag, Fattūh Aḥmad 1975. *Al-Qaṣaṣ al-ša'bī fī al-daḡhaliyya* ("The Popular Story in al-Daḡhaliyya"). Cairo: Al-Maglis al-'alā liri'āyat al-funūn wal-'ādāb wal-'ulūm al-'iḡtimā'iyya.
- Farag, Sāmīh 1999. *Banhof 'iṣṭrāssa: ḥikāyat al-'uṣṭa al-kahrabā'i* ("Banhof Strasse: The Story of the Master Electrician"). Egypt: Al-Markaz al-miṣrī al-'arabī.
- Ferguson, Charles A. 1959. "Diglossia". *Word* 15: 325-340.
- Gully, Adrian 1997. "Arabic Linguistic Issues and Controversies of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries". *Journal of Semitic Studies* 42, No. 1 (spring): 75-120.
- Ġunaym, Muḥammad Aḥmad 2007. *Al-Ṭibb al-ša'bī: al-mumārasāt al-ša'biyya fī dīlta miṣr – dirāsa anṭrūbulūjiyya fī qurā muḡāfazat al-daḡhaliyya* ["Popular Medicine: Popular Practice in the Egyptian Delta – An Anthropological Study in the Villages of al-Daḡhaliyya Province"]. Cairo: 'Ayn lil-dirāsāt wal-buḡūṭ al-'insāniyya wal-'iḡtimā'iyya.

- al-Ḥamīsī, Ḥālid 2006. *Tāksi: ḥawadīt al-mašawīr* ("Taxi: Journeys' Tales"). Cairo: Dār al-šurūq.¹²
- Holes, Clive 2004. *Modern Arabic: Structures, Functions and Varieties*. 2nd edition. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Iḍḥak lil-dunya* 2005. ["Laugh to the World": Weekly].
- Ihna*. N.d. ["We": Monthly].
- Kilmitna*. N.d. ["Our Word": Monthly].
- Ma'āṭī, Yūsuf 2009. *Kalām 'abīḥ giddan (wibil 'āmmiyya -l-mašriyya* ("Very Coarse Words [and in Egyptian 'Āmmiyya]"). Cairo: Al-Dar al-miṣriyya al-lubnāniyya.
- Mušarrafa, Muṣṭafā 1965. *Qanṭara 'allaḍī kafara* ("Qanṭara the Infidel"). Cairo: Markaz kutub al-šarq al-'awsaṭ.¹³
- Namnam, Ḥilmī 1998. "Luḡatuna al-gamīla tata'ākāl.. al-'āmiyya wal-'alfāz al-'agnabiyya tuhaddid al-'arabiyya!!" ("Our Beautiful Language is Being Eaten Away; 'Āmmiyya and the Foreign Expressions Threaten the Arabic [Language].) *Al-Muṣawwar*, September 4: 52-54.
- Nigm, Aḥmad Fu'ād 1993. *Al-Faḡūmī: Ta'rīḥ ḥayāt muwāḍin šāyil fi 'albu.. waṭan – mudakkarāt al-šā'ir Aḥmad Fu'ād Nigm* ("Al-Faḡūmī: Life Story of a Citizen Who Carries a Nation in His Heart – Memoirs of Poet Aḥmad Fu'ād Nigm"). Cairo: Dār sfinkis (1st part); maktabat madbūli al-šaḡīr (2nd part).
- 1995. *Kalb is-sitt* ("The Lady's Dog").¹⁴ Cairo: Maktabat madbūli al-šaḡīr.
- 2008. *Ya 'ahli ya ḥubbi ya ḥitta min 'albi* ("Oh Ahli My Love, Oh Piece of My Heart").¹⁵ Cairo: Dār al-šurūq.
- N.d. *Kalām Garāyid* ("Newspaper talk").¹⁶ Egypt: Dār Āfāq.
- al-Nuṣṣ, 'Abd al-'Azīz, 1930. *Mudakkarāt naššāl* ("Memoirs of a Pickpocket"). Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-yūsufiyya.
- al-Qa'īd, Yūsuf, 1994. *Laban il-'aṣfūr* ("Bird's Milk")¹⁷. Cairo: Dār Al-Hilāl.

¹² Translated into English as: Khaled Al Khamissi. 2008. *Taxi*. Trans. Jonathan Wright. Laverstock (UK): Aflame Books.

¹³ The year of publication is according to Sakkut 2000, vol. 3: 1312.

¹⁴ Is-Sit, "The Lady", is one of the popular nicknames of the singer Umm Kulthūm.

¹⁵ *Al-Ahli* is one of the two most popular football (soccer) teams in Egypt, the rival of *al-Zamālik*.

¹⁶ *Kalām Garāyid* (lit.: "Words of Newspapers") is an expression meaning "worthless words, words that do not have anything behind them".

¹⁷ *Laban il-'Aṣfūr* (lit.: "Bird's Milk") means "something impossible".

- Qindil, Bayyūmī 1999. *Ḥādir al-ṭaqāfa fī miṣr* ("The Present of Education in Egypt"). Alexandria: Dār al-wafā'.
- Riṣa 2005. ["The Quill": Weekly].
- Rosenbaum, Gabriel M. 1994. *The Language of Dialogue in Modern Egyptian Drama (Mainly Since 1952)*. PhD diss. Tel Aviv University. [Hebrew].
- 2000. "Fuṣḥāmmiyya: Alternating Style in Egyptian Prose". *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 38: 68-87.
- 2001. "Diglossia and Translation: Egyptian Literature in Hebrew and English". *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 24 (April): 8-17.
- 2004. "Egyptian Arabic as a Written Language". *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 29: 281-340.
- 2008a. "Mixing Colloquial and Literary Arabic in Modern Egyptian Prose through the Use of Free Indirect Style and Interior Monologue". In *Moyen arabe et variétés moyennes de l'arabe à travers l'histoire (Actes du premier colloque international)*, eds. Jérôme Lentin and Jacques Grand'Henry. Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium): Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste de Louvain: 391-404.
- 2008b. "The Use of Colloquial Arabic in Road Signposts in Egypt". Presented at the eighth AIDA Conference, Colchester (Essex University).
- 2010. "'I Want to Write in the Colloquial': An Example of the Language of Contemporary Egyptian Prose". *Folia Orientalia* 47, 71-97.
- Forthcoming. "The Influence of Colloquial Arabic on the Language of the Modern Egyptian Press". *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*.
- Ruṣdī, Raṣād 1955. "'Aḍāb al-gism wa' aḍāb al-rūḥ" ("Torment of the Body and Torment of the Soul"). In Raṣād Ruṣdī. *'Arabat al-ḥarīm waqīṣaṣ 'uḥrā* ("Women's Wagon and Other Stories"). Cairo: Maktabat al-'anglo al-miṣriyya, 57-75.
- Ṣabrī, 'Uṭmān 1965. *Riḥla fi-n-nīl* ("A Journey on the Nile"). Egypt: Dār naṣr al-ṭaqāfa.
- Sakkūt, Hamdi 2000. *The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction 1865-1995*. 6 vols. Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Ša'lān, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad 1993. *Nawādir ša'biyya miṣriyya* ("Popular Egyptian Anecdotes"). Cairo: Maktabat madbūlī.

- Šārūnī, Yūsuf 2007. *Luġat al-ḥiwār bayna al-‘āmmiyya wal-fuṣḥā fī ḥarakāt al-ta’līf wal-naqd fī ‘adabina al-ḥadīṯ* ("The Language of Dialogue between ‘Āmmiyya and Fuṣḥā in the Activities of Writing Fiction and Criticism in Our Modern Literature"). Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-miṣriyya al-‘amma lil-kitāb.
- Somekh, Sasson 1991. *Genre and Language in Modern Arabic Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- 1993. "Colloquialized *Fuṣḥā* in Modern Arabic Prose Fiction". *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 16: 176-194.
- Suleiman, Yasir 2003. *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.¹⁸
- Ṭāhir, ‘Umar 2005. *Šaklaha bāzīt: ‘albūm ‘iġtimā’i sāḥir* ("It Seems That It Went Wrong: A Satirical Social Album"). Cairo: Aṭlas.
- 2007. *Kābtin maṣr: ‘albūm sāḥir lil-murāḥiqīn* ("Captain Egypt: A Satirical Album for Adolescents"). Cairo: Aṭlas.
- al-Tūnisī, Bayram N.d. *Is-Sayyid wi-mirātu fī barīs; is-Sayyid wi-mirātu fī maṣr* ["The Mister and His Wife in Paris; The Mister and His Wife in Egypt"]. Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr.¹⁹
- al-Turkī, Ṭaryā, Malik Ruṣdī & Āmāl Ṭantāwī 2006. *Hākaḍā Takallamat al-nisā’* ["Thus the Women Spoke"]. Al-Qāhira: Dār Mīrit.
- Wikipedia (Egyptian) 2009. <http://arz.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (July 19).
- Woidich, Manfred 2006. *Das Kairenisch-Arabische: Eine Grammatik*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Zack, Liesbeth 2001. "The Use of Colloquial Arabic in Prose Literature: Laban il-‘Aṣfūr by Yūsuf al-Qa‘īd". *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 19: 193-219.

¹⁸ An identical edition has been published by Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹ This *maktabat miṣr* edition of the two volumes in one book, which is a revised edition of the first 1923 and 1925 editions, is still being reprinted and on sale in Egypt.

Rosenbaum, Gabriel M. 2011. "The Rise and Expansion of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic as a Literary Language." In *Culture Contacts and the Making of Cultures: Papers in Homage to Itamar Even-Zohar*. Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet & Gideon Toury eds. Tel-Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Unit of Culture Research, pp. 323-343. [ISBN 978-965-555-496-0] [e-book available from: http://www.tau.ac.il/tarbut/Publications/Even-Zohar_Homage_Book.pdf]

Gabriel M. Rosenbaum received his PhD from Tel Aviv University, and is an Associate Professor at the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In the years 2004-2006 he was head of the Department, and since October 2006 he is the director of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo. His research subjects are the literature, drama, language and popular culture of modern Egypt, as well as modern spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic. He is also working on a new dictionary of Egyptian Arabic, writes fiction literature, and has published translations into Hebrew of two modern Egyptian plays.