

'What Has Been Written Upon the Forehead, the Eye Must See': An Arabic-Jewish Author Between Baghdad and an Israeli Transit Camp

«Lo que ha sido escrito en la frente, el ojo lo debe ver»: Un escritor judeoárabe entre Bagdad y el campo de refugiados en Israel

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Abstract

As an integral part of Arab society since the pre-Islamic period, Jews participated in the making of Arabic literature. We know of prominent Jewish poets such as al-Samaw'al ibn 'Ādiyā' in the sixth century A.D. and Ibrāhīm ibn Sahl in al-Andalus in the thirteenth century. During the first half of the twentieth century, Arabic literature in *fushā* (standard Arabic) written by Jews witnessed a great revival, especially in Iraq and Egypt, but this revival was cut short as a casualty of Zionism and Arab nationalism and the conflict between them. We are currently witnessing the demise of Arabic literature written by Jews; the Arabic language among Jews will probably remain mostly a tool of the military establishment and the intelligence systems as encapsulated in the dictum 'know your enemy' instead of being a medium for coexistence and knowing the Other. The article concentrates on the literary activities of one of the most talented Iraqi-Jewish authors, Shalom Darwīsh (1913-1997), whose promising anticipated literary future in Arabic literature encountered a deadlock following the aforementioned exclusion of Jews from 'Arabness'.

Keywords: Arabic literature; Arab-Jewish culture; Shalom Darwīsh; Iraqi-Jews; Baghdad

Resumen:

Desde el período preislámico, los judíos participaron en la producción literaria en árabe como parte integrante de la sociedad arabo-islámica. Conocemos a poetas judíos prominentes como al-Samaw'al ibn 'Ādiyā' en el siglo VI d.C. e Ibrāhīm ibn Sahl en al-Andalus en el siglo XIII. Durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, la literatura árabe en *fushā* (árabe estándar) escrita por judíos fue testigo de un gran resurgimiento, especialmente en Irak y Egipto, pero este resurgimiento se vio interrumpido a causa del sionismo y el nacionalismo árabe, y el conflicto entre ambos. En la actualidad estamos asistiendo a la desaparición de la literatura árabe escrita por judíos. La lengua árabe se conservará entre los judíos principalmente como una herramienta del ejército y los sistemas de inteligencia, como se resume en el dicho «conoce a tu enemigo», en lugar de ser un medio para la coexistencia y el conocimiento del otro. El artículo se concentra en las actividades literarias de uno de los autores judíos iraquíes con más talento, Shalom Darwīsh (1913-1997), cuyo prometedor futuro en el campo de la literatura árabe fue interrumpido tras la exclusión antes mencionada de los judíos de la arabidad.

Palabras clave: Literatura árabe; cultura judeo-árabe; Shalom Darwīsh; judíos iraquíes; Bagdad



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1. Introduction

There were already Jewish authors, mainly poets, in the pre-Islamic period as well as after the rise of Islam. During the 11th-13th century in Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus), Jewish poets were so at home writing in *fuṣṣḥā* (standard literary Arabic) that they were able to achieve wide recognition for their literary works (Stern, 1963: 254-263). Since the mid-13th century, however, Jews were nowhere as open to participation in the wider Arabic culture, and at home in *fuṣṣḥā*, as from the 1920s in Iraq¹. This cultural involvement was encouraged by the process of modernization and secularization of the Iraqi Jews since the second half of 19th century. Because of the escalation of the Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine during the late 1940s, the Arab identity of the Jews, which had been firmly consolidated during the 1920s and 1930s, underwent a speedy fragmentation in a way that left the Jews no alternative but to immigrate to Israel. Since the 1950s the Arab-Jews have been gradually deliberately excluded from Arabness to the point that we can speak now about a kind of unspoken agreement between Zionism and Arab nationalism to perform a total cleansing of Arab-Jewish culture. The national struggle over Palestine has by no means hindered the two movements from seeing eye to eye in this respect, despite the difference between them – the one inspired by European colonialism and the other, an anti-colonial venture. Both movements have excluded the hybrid Arab-Jewish identity and highlighted instead a «pure» Jewish-Zionist identity against a «pure» Muslim-Arab one.

We are in fact witnessing the demise of Arab-Jewish culture – a tradition that started more than fifteen hundred years ago is vanishing before our own eyes. Until the twentieth century, the great majority of the Jews under the rule of Islam adopted Arabic as their language; now Arabic is gradually disappearing as a language mastered by Jews². The present article examines the insistence of Iraqi-Jews immigrating to Israel during the 1950s to continue their Arabic literary activities despite the reluctance of the two clashing national movements to keep Arab-Jewish culture and identity alive. These attempts failed and gradually most of them stopped writing in Arabic – only few of them successfully shifted to writing in Hebrew, mainly in the field of fiction. The present article will concentrate on the literary activities of one of the most talented Iraqi-Jewish

1. On the historical background of the Jews in Iraq, see Rejwan (1985).

2. On Arab-Jewish Identity and culture, see Snir (2015 and 2019).

authors, Shalom Darwīsh (1913-1997), whose promising anticipated literary future in Arabic literature encountered a deadlock following the aforementioned exclusion of Jews from Arabism. But before dealing with the literary activities of Darwīsh, it is important to provide some background.

2. The Revival of Arab-Jewish Culture: «Love of the Fatherland is Part of the Faith»

Jewish writing in standard literary Arabic during the twentieth century began mostly in Iraq, predominantly in the field of journalism; it developed as a result of the liberalization process that took place in the Ottoman Empire after the Revolution of July 1908 (also known as the Young Turk Revolution) and as a result of secularization and the arrival of modern education in the local community. In 1909, the first issues of two newspapers that were edited by Jews, *al-Zuhūr* (The Flowers) and *Bayna al-Nahrayn* (Mesopotamia), were published. It was argued that the first Iraqi-Jewish author to publish a book in *fushā* was Salīm Ishāq (1877-1949), a lawyer who served as a translator in the German embassy in Baghdad before the First World War. The title of the book, which was published in Baghdad in 1909, was said to have been either *al-Inqilāb al-'Uthmānī* (Moreh, 1973: 46) or *al-Thawra al-'Uthmāniyya* (Moreh, 1981: 24) (both mean «The Ottoman Revolution»). While both titles refer to the subject of the book, the debate itself suggests that there is still some doubt as to the proper wording of the title. I have not found the book in any library; no mention of it appeared in any other publications. Mīr Baṣrī (1911-2006), however, mentioned a book published by Ishāq in 1910 entitled *Hawādith al-Zamān* (Time Events). Baṣrī, who, according to the details he provides about its content, actually read the book, said that it was written in Hebrew characters in the Jewish Arabic vernacular infused with *fushā*. The book concentrates on the reforms of the «Young Turks», especially their 1908 constitution (Baṣrī, 1993: II, 72-75). Ishāq's subject matter could hardly have been more emblematic: the «Young Turks» seemed to herald a new dawn, especially as their 1908 constitution promised full emancipation for ethnic and religious minorities.

From the beginning of the 1920s did Iraqi Jews start to produce Arabic *belles lettres* in *fushā*, and their works were brimming with Arab-Muslim themes and motifs as well as with enthusiastic Arab nationalism and Iraqi patriotism. These works quickly became part of mainstream Arabic literature and gained the recognition of Arab writers and scholars. Palestinian historian Abbas Shibliak (b. 1944) says of that period that the Jewish writers and artists of Iraq were part of the general cultural life of the Arab East, maintaining connections and sometimes working relationships with writers and artists in other Arab countries: «It is significant that in Iraq (unlike Lebanon, Egypt, or Tunisia for instance) there were few if any Hebrew or Zionist newspapers. The works of the Iraqi-Jewish intelligentsia were Arabic in essence and expression» (Shibliak, 1986: 28). An interesting indirect testimony to that turning point was given in 1924 in *Nuzhat al-*

Mushtāq fī Ta'rīkh Yahūd al-'Irāq (The Trip of the Man Filled with Longing into the History of the Jews of Iraq) by Yūsuf Rizq Allāh Ghunayma (1885-1950), who while describing the social classes of the Iraqi Jews remarked that the latter were involved with all kinds of occupations:

إلا أنك لا تجد بينهم من حملة الأقلام وأصحاب المجلات والجراند. وسبب ذلك أنّ اليهودي يرمي إلى ما به نفعه وسوق التأليف والكتابة كاسدة في ديارنا فإتّهم في هذا الباب يتبعون المثل اللاتيني القائل عش أولاً ثم تفلسف.

But you cannot find among them writers and owners of periodicals and newspapers. The reason for this is that the Jew wants to work at what can benefit him while the market of composing and writing in our midst is selling badly. So in this matter they are following the Latin proverb which says: «Living comes first before philosophy» (Ghunayma, 1924: 188; and Ghanimah, 1998: 149).

However, on 10 April 1924, only a few months after Ghunayma's book was published, the first issue of *al-Miṣbāḥ* (The Candlestick) (1924-1929) was published: its owner, its editor, and most of its writers were Jews³. The journal's aim was to contribute to Iraqi Arab-Muslim culture with no Jewish agenda whatsoever. In the first ten months in which the poet Anwar Shā'ul (1904-1984) led the editorial board (Snir, 2005: 34-48), *al-Miṣbāḥ* was a vehicle for the distribution of revolutionary ideas, a natural continuation of Shā'ul's dynamic activity in prior years (Snir, 2005: 23-41). The Arabic literature written by Iraqi Jews at the time was an integral part of the general modern Arabic literature of the period. It was a secular literature inspired by a cultural vision whose most eloquent dictum was *al-dīnu li-llāhi wa-l-waṭānu li-l-jamī'* (religion is for God, the fatherland is for everyone) (Shā'ul, 1980: 119, 223), which was probably coined in the Coptic Congress in Asyut (1911) by Tawfīq Dūs (1882-1950), a Coptic politician and later the Egyptian Minister of Transportation (Carter 1986: 290, 304, n. 2). Based on the Arabic translation of Mark 12:17: *a'tū mā li-qayṣar wa-mā li-llāhi* (render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's), this dictum was inspired by the slogan of the Lebanese-Syrian Christian intellectuals of the nineteenth century: *ḥubb al-waṭān min al-īmān* (love of the fatherland is part of the faith) (cf. Shā'ul, 1980: 316) — this was also the slogan of *al-Jinān* (The Gardens), the periodical which was founded in Beirut in 1870 by Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819-1883) and that was published after his death until 1886 (it was also edited by his son Salīm al-Bustānī (1848-1884)). The Iraqi Jews who adopted this dictum were very much encouraged by such Qur'ānic verses that could be interpreted as fostering cultural pluralism such as *lā ikrāha fī al-dīn* (There is no compulsion in religion) (*Al-Baqara* 256) and *lakum dīnukum wa-lī dīnī* (You have your path and I have mine) (*Al-Kāfirūn* 6).

An attempt to reconstruct the scope of the cultural and literary interests of the young secular Jewish intellectuals of Iraq in the first part of the twentieth century and the cul-

3. In the first issue of *al-Miṣbāḥ* (p. 8), I found a notification about the publication of Ghunayma's book.

tural sources from which they drew their inspiration paints a very clear picture. They were precisely like those of the young Muslim and Christian intellectuals at the time, who used similar libraries: classical and modern Arabic sources as well as translations of world literature. Nissīm Rajwān (Rejwan) (1924-2017)⁴, library was a typical example:

It was from quite an early age that I started reading Arabic books and magazines, starting with the numerous historical novels of Jorji Zaydan [1861-1914] and the many translations-adaptations of French and English romances and novels produced by the Egyptian Lutfi al-Manfaluti [1876-1924] and several Syrian and Lebanese literary hacks [...] by age 14 or 15 I had built myself a sizable home library — collected works of the best and most famous Egyptian writers, among them Taha Hussein [1889-1973], Ahmad Amin [1886-1954], Muhammad Hussein Haykal [1888-1956], Ibrahim Abdel Qadir al-Mazini [1890-1949], Tawfiq al-Hakeem [1898-1987], ‘Abbas Mahmoud al-‘Aqqad [1889-1964] and others. Also, Arabic classics like *Kitab al-Aghani*, *Rasa’il Ikhwan al-Safa*, Ibn al-Atheer’s [1160-1233] *History*, The *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldun [1332-1406], and the collected poems of such classics as Al-Mutanabbi [915-965], Al-Ma‘arri [973-1058], Ibn al-Rumi [836-896] and others. Bound volumes of carefully collected and kept weeklies like *Al-Risala* of Muhammad Hasan al-Zayyat [1885-1968] and later his *Al-Riwaya*, Ahmad Amin’s [1886-1954] *Al-Thaqafa*. The two leading monthlies, *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Muqtataf*, were also included⁵.

As other Arab authors did at the time, Jewish authors wrote in standard literary Arabic even when it came to dialogue in fiction, although the strong influence on such texts of popular literature in the vernacular, be it Jewish or non-Jewish, was undeniable⁶. Drawing on Arab literary modernism and various Western literary trends they had become familiar with, Jewish authors wrote poetry (Snir, 2005: 79-134) extensively, but it was as short story writers that they were to make their most significant contributions to Arabic literature. Jewish authors were well aware of the Western literary techniques that had found their way into the experiments then being made throughout the Arab world, especially in Egypt and Iraq⁷. The Iraqi scholar Muhsin J. al-Musawi (b. 1944) writes

4. Rajwān published essays on films in the *Iraq Times* between June 1946 and August 1948, and between May 1947 and August 1948 he also served as the newspaper’s literary critic after the former critic, Elie Kedourie (1926-1992), left to England to pursue his studies.

5. Rejwan (2004: 97-98). Anglicized transliterations of the Arabic names and titles have been retained as they originally appear in Rejwan’s book; the dates in square brackets have been added.

6. Iraqi Jews had their own specific vernacular, which they used at home and in their daily contact with each other while at the same time managing to speak with their Muslim neighbours in the latter’s own colloquial Arabic. See Blanc (1963).

7. On the influence of Egyptian literature on the crystallization of the Iraqi-Jewish short story, see Ahmad (1969: 87-88).

that «the Iraqi-Jewish intelligentsia was, and proved to be, more Iraqi in commitment»⁸. And indeed, the Jews were so well integrated within the cultural and national enterprise of the new Iraqi state, that their literary works can by no means be described as Jewish. Their writings were part of the Arabic literature of the time and were subject to the same influences that literature by non-Jews was. This also meant that part of their inspiration came from the mainly English and French short stories that were available in Arabic translation, many of which were translated by Jews⁹.

3. Immigration and Adaptation

Toward the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, largely in the framework of the mass immigration of Iraqi Jews, many talented writers and poets arrived in Israel among them: Murād Mīkhā'īl (1906-1986), Ya'qūb Balbūl (1920-2003), Nuriel Zilkha (1924-2015), Ibrāhīm Obadyā (1924-2006), Sammy Michael (b. 1926), Aharon Zakkai (1927-2021), Ishāq Bār-Moshe (1927-2003), Nīr Shoḥet (1928-2011), Shlomo Zamir (1929-2017), Shimon Ballas (1930-2019), Salīm Sha'shū'a (1930-2013), Sālīm al-Kātīb (b. 1931), Najīb Kaḥīla (b. 1931), Shmuel Moreh (1932-2017), David Semah (1933-1997), Sasson Somekh (1933-2019), and Samīr Naqqāsh (1938-2004). The harsh material conditions, the difficulties of adapting to the new Israeli-Jewish society and culture, and the lack of knowledge of Hebrew took their toll on most of them. They underwent an «experience of shock and uprooting», as the aforementioned poet and scholar Sasson Somekh says, and under these conditions «it became difficult to think about literature» (*Iton 77*, January-February 1988: 32). Nevertheless, and in spite of the difficulties in adapting to the fundamentally different Hebrew-Jewish society, the fact that they arrived to a state where Arabic was considered at the time an official language, apart from Hebrew, gave them, at least in the beginning, the hope that they would be able to continue their literary careers.

Following the events of 1948, the greater part of the Palestinian Arab urban intelligentsia abandoned the territories of Palestine, while those who remained inside the boundaries of the State of Israel were generally from the poorer or the uneducated village population. This cultural vacuum was partially filled by the aforementioned immigrating Jewish authors and others. And indeed, not a few of these authors continued to write and publish in Arabic, while adhering to the poetics they had grown accustomed to in Iraq, which was suffused with English and French influences. A significant thematic change appeared in their literary work: alongside the conventional subjects which had preoccupied them in Iraq — love, social and ethical problems, the status

8. Al-Musawi (2006: 20-21). On the literature of Iraqi Jews, see Snir (2005 and 2019) and the references in both of them.

9. Jewish writers were among the major translators of Western literature into Arabic in Iraq. Prominent among them were the aforementioned Anwar Shā'ul as well as Na'im Ṭuwayq (1916-1989) and Yūsuf Makmal (1914-1986); see Mudhi (1988: 173). On the translation of Western literature in Iraq in general, see Mudhi (1988: 99-103) and Snir (2015: 100).

of woman, fate and its illusions, death and thoughts on life — topics touching on the pressing social and political circumstances of the new society became frequent in their work. Furthermore, as far as concerned Arabic writing by Jews in Israel, those works which dealt with traditional themes were marginal. It was precisely its preoccupation with issues of urgency which granted importance, however limited, to Jewish writing in Arabic during these years.

Following the efforts of the Israeli governmental Ashkenazi establishment to paint Jewish immigration from the Arab world in Zionist colors¹⁰, Arab-Jewish intellectuals with split personalities had to cope with the new situation. Many hastened to present themselves as Zionist while referring to their Arab identity as a mark of disgrace. They underwent a process of growing identification with the Zionist state, largely a result of the change in their status as a Jewish majority in the Israeli-Hebrew society, the reverse of their status in Iraq as a minority within an Arab-Muslim majority.

Although Israeli patriotism quickly permeated the writing of most of the immigrant authors, the emigration to the new society did not bring a total change in the fundamental world views of all of them. Characterizing the writing of the authors who immigrated to Israel as opposed to those who remained in Iraq, the aforementioned poet and scholar Shmuel Moreh says that the Iraqi-Jewish poets who immigrated to Israel wrote poetry full of national pride for Israel and her achievements — whereas in Iraq their poetry was «marked by melancholy, in Israel it became optimistic and throbbing with the emotion of being a part of the people and state». In contrast, the poetry of those who remained in Iraq «became more melancholic and pessimistic, and contained complaints on the vicissitudes of the time, on the dispersion of friends and on their fears and suspicions» (Moreh, 1981: 23 [English introduction]). This generalization however seems to be only derived from a projection of their wretched ends in Iraq onto their feelings in the past. Moreover, having internalized the negative attitude of the canonical cultural center to Arab culture, the immigrating authors learned to reject their own roots in order to get closer to the heart of the Israeli Zionist collective. The negative impact of all this on youth growing up in Arab-Jewish families was very apparent. Trying to conform to the Sabra (a native-born Israeli Jew) norm, children were made to feel ashamed of the Arabness of their parents. In his autobiographical story, «Pictures from the Elementary School» (Shamosh 1979: 79-87), the Syrian born writer Amnon Shamosh (b. 1929) confesses that as a child he forbade his mother to speak Arabic in public. «For our parents», the Moroccan born poet Sami Shalom Chetrit (b. 1960) says, «all of us were agents of repression» (*Yediot Ahronoth*, 7 Days, 8 August 2003, 54). The Iraqi born Yehuda Shenhav (b. 1952), a Tel Aviv University professor and one of the activists of *Ha-Keshet Ha-Demokratit Ha-Mizrahit* (The Oriental Democratic Spectrum) (Chetrit, 2004: 290-295), described his own experience:

10. An example is the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center in Or-Yehuda (BJHC) founded in 1972; its museum opened 16 years later has adopted the memorialization practices used in Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs's and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Israel's national Holocaust memorial; see Meir-Glitzstein (2002: 165-186).

On the first Thursday of every month, the Egyptian singer Um Kulthum [1903-1975] would begin to sing and I would begin to tense up. As the Oriental tones filled the house my mother would gradually make the radio louder and louder and I would not know where to bury myself. I would try to turn the radio off and she would turn it back on and make it even louder. I had become a foreign agent in my own house¹¹.

Among the immigrants who continued to write in Arabic, it was soon possible to discern two groups generally operating in parallel with the dominant cultural trends among the local Arab-Palestinian minority at the time: those who preferred to be active under the aegis of the Zionist-Ashkenazi establishment and those who joined the Communist Party or expressed sympathy with its positions. The Histadrūt, the Israeli General Workers' Federation, played an important role in encouraging and cultivating what was called «positive» culture within the Arab-Palestinian minority through literary prizes and literary competitions, as well as through the founding of the Arab Book Fund¹². Those literary and cultural activities dealt with the yearning for peace and «Arab-Jewish brotherhood»¹³, but avoided any controversial issues such as the government's policy toward the Arab-Palestinian minority and the way immigrating Jews from Arab lands were absorbed into Israeli society. Consequently, the works produced by these immigrants tended to emphasize more traditional themes such as male-female relations, social and ethical problems, the status of women, fate and its illusions, and universal questions of existence.

In the opposing camp stood the leftist Jewish writers who joined the local Communist party, whose Palestinian intellectuals had not abandoned Israel following its establishment in 1948. The governmental ban on Communist writers, Jews and Arabs, inspired the government's sponsored «Association of Arabic Language Poets» to refuse to collaborate with them (*al-Jadīd*, December 1955: 40-43). The journals of both camps were fiercely competitive, but the Communist journals stood out, particularly *al-Ittiḥād* (The Union), established in 1944, and *al-Jadīd* (The New), founded in 1953, for their quality and wide circulation. They did not hesitate to deal with topics considered taboo by the governmental press, which the Arab public perceived as the trumpet of the ruling party, even attributing to it hatred of Arabs. In contrast to those writers who were supported by the governmental establishment, a preoccupation with political and social problems was dominant in the writing of the Communist authors. Besides this thematic

11. A lecture at the School for Peace Neve Shalom / Wāḥat al-Salām, Israel, March 2000; *School for Peace Annual Review 1999 — 2001*, January, 2001. For Shenhav's views, see Shenhav (2006).

12. See, for example, Agassi (1959). It was published by the Arab Book Fund and contained works that earned prizes in a literary competition put on by the Histadrūt in 1958. The introduction of the book by the author, Eliyahu Aggassi (Iliyāhū Aghāsī) (1909-1991) illustrates the efforts to produce «positive» culture.

13. While in Iraq, Arab cultural and national identity encompassed Jews side by side with Muslims and Christians; in Israel, since the 1950s, the Jewish identity has become in itself a cultural and national identity. Thus, because of the political conflict, the natural Iraqi hybrid Arab-Jewish identity turned into a sharp dichotomy of Jewish versus Arab.

difference, it was possible to discern, in their writing, a significant poetic difference: while those writers close to the establishment in general clung strictly to conservative Arabic poetics, the Communists were already inclined, in the early 1950s, toward the modernism of «free verse», despite the fact that this new poetics had hardly been digested by the Palestinian Arab poets in Israel. The Jewish poets had already absorbed this poetics in Iraq, where it had first flourished and identified with Communist writers.

In the present article I will concentrate on the rich literary work of one of the most talented Arab-Jewish authors, Shalom Darwīsh, who considered himself outside the above literary-ideological camps and never participated in the aforementioned political controversies. Even after his immigration to Israel, and despite the «demand» directed to the Arab-Jewish writers and intellectuals to declare their preferred political allegiances, Darwīsh saw himself as an Arabic author whose only pledge of allegiance is for his literary work.

4. Shalom Darwīsh as a Pioneer of the Iraqi Art of the Short Story

Shalom Darwīsh was born in 1913 in ‘Alī al-Gharbī in southern Iraq, where from the 1870s several Jewish families lived within the Muslim Shiite majority. His father was a cloth merchant of Kurdish origin from Arbil, while his mother was from Baghdad. He went to a non-segregative government school attended by both Muslim and Jewish children; only religious studies were conducted separately, with each community having its own teacher. In 1921, after his father’s death, Darwīsh and his family moved to Baghdad, as his mother wanted him and his older brother – the writer and physician Salmān Darwīsh (1910-1982) – to get a good education. He attended the Midrash Talmud Torah School, which had a curriculum focusing on religious studies; when he was ten years old he transferred to al-Waṭaniyya School in the ‘Abbās Afandī quarter — the headmaster at the time was the Iraqi-Jewish educator ‘Ezra Ḥaddād (1900-1972). Darwīsh subsequently moved to the Rāhīl Shaḥmūn School and then attended the Central Secondary Evening School. In 1938, he graduated from the Baghdad Law College and worked as the secretary of the Jewish community, but in 1944 he resigned from this position to engage in his profession as a lawyer. As a member of the National Democratic Party, he was elected to represent the party in the Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-Nuwwāb al-‘Irāqī), the lower house of the Iraqi Parliament. However, in protest against what was seen as rigged elections, he was ordered by the leadership of the party to withdraw from the legislative body.

Already in 1928 Darwīsh was publishing stories in the local literary press, and during the 1930s and 1940s he became a distinguished writer mentioned by scholars as a pioneer in the Iraqi art of the short story¹⁴. Darwīsh published about twenty stories in *al-Ḥāšid* and in other Iraqi periodicals, especially *al-Bilād*. His early short stories were

14. For a list of Darwīsh’s short stories published in newspapers and magazines, see Mudhi (1988: 502-506).

no different than the sentimental and romantic stories published by other Iraqi writers of the time; moreover, they were lacking in the very same realistic orientation and psychological analysis that would come to characterize his later stories. Such were the stories «'Indamā Tathūru al-Dhikrayāt» (When Memories Are Stirred Up) (*Al-Ḥāšid* 27 [January 1932]: 18-19) and «Ḍarb min al-Mujūn» (A Sort of Impudence) (*Al-Bilād* 125 [July 1930]: 4). In «Sihām 'Aynayhi» (The Arrows of his Eyes) (*Al-Ḥāšid* 17 [November 1930]: 17-18), Darwīsh used the ancient Arabic poetic motif of the eyes of the female beloved as arrows to describe how an amorous relationship emerged between the narrator and a girl attending a lecture he delivered to young people. In «Taḥaṭṭama Qalbī» (My Heart Was Shattered) (*Al-Ḥāšid* 2 [July 1930]: 17-18), two lovers arrange a meeting in a public garden. As a result of an argument with a friend he meets on his way to his beloved, the lover has to rush away, and in his haste he falls and injures his leg. Arriving at the meeting place, he does not find his beloved. In another story, «Multaqā al-Shifatayn» (The Meeting of the Lips) (*Al-Ḥāšid* 27 [January 1932]: 11-19), the meeting of the lips concludes a dialogue in the form of questions and answers.

In his later stories, Darwīsh addressed the social problems present in his Iraqi society, such as the attitude of the wealthy toward the lower classes, the status of women in traditional Arab society, and the need to consider their feelings and extend to them equal rights, including access to education. The views of the author are reflected in the attitude of the narrator as well as in the position of the implied author. For example, in «Fayrūz Ṭarīd al-Janna» (Fayrūz the Paradise's Outcast) (*Al-Ḥāšid* 44 [July 1932]: 20-21), the black servant, Fayrūz, falls in love with Wadād, the Pasha's daughter, who shows him no respect. When the Pasha found him kissing the photograph of his daughter, he hit him and later expelled him from the palace (cf. Mudhi 1988: 236-239). In «Khādim al-Qahwa» (The Coffee Shop's Servant) (*Al-Ḥāšid* 36 [March 1931]: 14-15), the author addresses the consequences of a father's insistence that his daughter not marry her lover because the latter lacks financial resources (cf. Mudhi 1988: 239-242). In «Mārī» (Mārī [the name of the heroine]) (*Al-Bilād* 17 [28 November 1929]: 17) Sālim marries Mārī only for her money, and after he is aware of her being ill he refuses to let her consult a doctor (cf. Mudhi 1988: 235-236). Like Anwar Shā'ul in «Violette» (Snir 2019: 50-55, 193-194, 209-211), in «al-Hāribān» (The Two Escaping Men) (*Al-Ḥāšid* 15 [November 1931]: 18-19) Darwīsh addresses the issue of marriages between old men and young girls whose wants and desires are not taken into consideration. Adham Bek's wife has a relationship with a young man in order to free herself from her miserable life with her elderly husband (cf. Mudhi 1988: 248-250). In several stories, Darwīsh criticizes society for its double standards, namely those toward men and those toward women. In «Ba'da Suqūṭ al-Baṣra» (After the Fall of Basra) (*Al-Bilād* 25 [December 1929]: 10-11), Jamīla escapes with her children to Basra, which the British army had captured from the Turkish army; her husband was serving in the latter. While living in a tent, she is raped by Farīd, and as a result of losing her honor she prefers to let the people think that she became mad. The title of the story alludes to the saying *ba'da kharāb*

al-Baṣra (after the destruction of Basra), which refers to something that comes too late. As a result of the war and the attitude of traditional society toward women who are left alone without a guardian to defend them, it is too late to save Jamīla from her suffering (cf. Mudhi 1988: 243-245). In «al-Sāqīṭa» (The Fallen Woman) (*Al-Ḥāṣid* 4 [August 1931]: 18-19), Darwīsh deals with the question of prostitution in Iraqi society through the misery of Raḥīma. Her lover cheated on her after he destroyed her honor, and she became a prostitute. In order to escape her fate, she commits suicide (cf. Mudhi 1988: 245-247). The life of a female prostitute is also the subject of «‘Alā Ṣakhrat al-Ḥāqīqa» (On the Stone of Reality)¹⁵. In «‘Azmī Bek» (‘Azmī Bek [the name of the hero]) (*Al-Ḥāṣid* 6 [September 1931]: 20-21) and «al-Tajriba al-Qāsiya» (The Harsh Experience) (*Al-Ḥāṣid* 31 [February 1931]: 14-15. Cf. Mudhi 1988: 247-248), Darwīsh deals with wives who are unfaithful to their husbands. The story «al-Bāḥiṭh ‘an Abīhi» (The Man who Searches for his Father) (*Al-Ḥāṣid* 18 [November 1931]: 20-21), deals with the problem of foundlings in local society and the psychological complications that these children suffer (Mudhi 1988: 251-253).

Although one critic describes Darwīsh’s early attempts at the art of the short story as «love letters recording the author’s suffering from his unkind lover» (Mudhi 1988: 234), Darwīsh was highly critical of the stories published at the time in Iraq — the girls are ever ready to die for love, their beautiful faces are often compared to the sun at midday, and their eyes are often described as green and sweet. He protested against the prevailing literary oeuvres in Iraqi literature that sought a wide readership by using adventures and romances with poor artistic awareness. He published in *al-Ḥāṣid* a column entitled *Waswasāt Iblīs* (The Insinuations of the Devil) and in 1931 appeared his play *Ba ‘da Mawt Akhīhi* (After the Death of his Brother) (Darwīsh 1931).

Ten years later, he published his first volume of short stories entitled *Aḥrār wa-‘Abīd* (Free Men and Slaves) (Darwīsh 1941), which included eleven stories. Most of the characters in these stories are from the margins of society, and the focus of the author is generally on their psychological states and inner lives, feelings, and thoughts. Critics have often mentioned Darwīsh’s highly analytical ability to focus on a particular personality, on a certain incident in a person’s life, or even on a peculiar psychological trait (Al-Ṭālib 1979: 136. Cf. Mudhi 1988: 258). One of the famous stories in the collection is «Abū Shawārib» (The Man with the Mustache) (Darwīsh 1941: 7-15). Mabruk is a simple traffic policeman, whose mustache occupies an important role in his life. Married with four children, Mabruk sees his mustache as the decisive sign of his masculinity and power, and he spends many hours in front of the mirror in order to shape it. When he falls in love with a certain girl, he understands from Umm Qaddūrī, an old woman whom he asks to arrange a meeting with the girl’s family, that the only

15. *Al-Ḥāṣid* 50 (July 1932): 18-19. On the story, see Mudhi (1988: 247). Darwīsh deals with the issue of prostitution in other stories he published later such as «al-‘Arūs» (The Bride) (Darwīsh 1948: 117-130). Through the figure of the heroine, Nihād, the author shed light on the motives which drove women into a life of prostitution, especially a lack of education and poverty. They are nothing but victims of a cruel society. On the story, see Mudhi (1988: 276-279).

thing preventing him from marrying the girl is his mustache — the girl insists that he get rid of it. The author then focuses the reader's attention on the inner struggle of the protagonist, which culminates when Mabrūk is sitting in the hairdresser's chair asking him to get rid of the mustache that he had been taking care of for the last twenty-five years. The story concludes as follows:

When the scissors approached hesitatingly in order to fulfill their role, two tears from Mabrūk's eyes rolled down on his cheeks and fell on his lips and the scissors withdrew out of respect. Mabrūk grabbed with his teeth his tongue as if he was afraid that his weakness would be exposed to the hairdresser. The hairdresser took out of his pocket a dirty handkerchief and wiped off the two pearls which lied down on the mustache, and then he wiped with the same handkerchief his nose and put it again in his pocket. When the scissors once more appeared to start again their action, Mabrūk stood up like a madman and left the hairdresser shouting: «I will never marry her, I will never marry her» (Darwīsh 1941: 15).

Most critics who have written about this story have mentioned the author's ability to provide a living portrait of the character of Mabrūk and the author's analytical approach in dealing with Mabrūk's feelings and psychological motives (Mudhi 1988: 259-262). «Jabān» (Coward) (Darwīsh 1941: 48-54) is another story in which Darwīsh penetrates into the complicated soul of the human being; this time it is the soul of a husband, Abū Shihāb, an alcoholic who suffers from sexual impotence. As a result of his condition, his wife humiliates him, and he finds refuge in drinking and in humiliating other people. While sitting in the pub, he tries to find a way to get rid of his wife, but as soon as he arrives home «he does not find in himself any tendency to resistance while his wife catches him by his ear and leads him inside the house, and he absent-mindedly obeys her like a lamb» (Darwīsh 1941: 54. Cf. Mudhi 1988: 262-263).

Another story, «Thaman al-Shuhra» (The Price of Fame) (Darwīsh 1941: 78-84), explores the soul of a man whose self-deception and delusions push him into a dead end. Even after the palaces he built in his dreams collapse, the conclusion he arrives at is a kind of self-deception, that is, «greatness and marriage are two opposites that could not meet each other» (Darwīsh 1941: 84. Cf. Mudhi 1988: 263-265). «Fī Sanat 2541» (In the Year 2541) (Darwīsh 1941: 33-38), was written in the form of a letter sent by Jamīl to a woman («my lady doctor»), who asked his father for permission to marry him. Jamīl explains his refusal to marry her by stating that he is unwilling to accept the suffering that the marriage will bring. Through that story, whose events take place six hundred years after the date of its publication, the author tried to shed light on the low status of the women in Iraqi society of the 1940s (cf. Mudhi 1988: 265-267). This reversal of roles uses the topos of the world upside down (*mundus inversus*) as a tool for critically approaching social conventions (cf. Snir 1994: 51-75). Another story «al-Hirmān» (The Deprivation) (Darwīsh 1941: 55-59), deals with the psychological impact

of an undressed dummy of a woman in a shop window on a young man suffering from sexual deprivation (cf. Mudhi 1988: 267-269).

The realistic orientation of the collection *Ahrār wa- 'Abīd* as a whole was expressed in three stories: in «Rāsīm Afandī» (Rāsīm Afandī [the name of the hero]) (DARWĪSH 1941: 69-77), the hero is a clerk whose employer starts to employ him for private matters. Unfortunately, after many years of devoted service the clerk sees a boy begin to serve the employer. Through the competition between the old servant and the boy, the story is able to unpack the complex nature of human relationships (cf. Mudhi 1988: 269-272). In «al-Mazlūm» (The Ill-Treated) (Darwīsh 1941: 39-46), Darwīsh deals with the issue of oppression in society by looking at a dream experienced by the narrator (cf. Mudhi 1988: 272-273). In «al-Marīd» (The Sick Man) (Darwīsh 1941: 85-91), the last story of the collection, the hero finds himself being ignored by the people around him including his wife. In order to make them look after him, he deliberately falls. However, after a period during which he is looked after the previous situation returned: those around began to ignore him once again (cf. Mudhi 1988: 273-274).

The real breakthrough of Darwīsh in the revival of Iraqi literature came with his second collection of short stories, *Ba 'd al-Nās* (Some People), when his talent as an Arabic author was recognized by Iraqi as well as Arab critics and scholars.

5. «Village Folk» Arriving in «the Big City»

In 1948, Darwīsh published his second collection, *Ba 'd al-Nās* (Some People). His «warning» to the readers, at the opening of the collection, reflected his new literary conception as well as the direction adopted by the majority of contemporary Iraqi authors in the art of the short story:

If the reader by buying this book wants to enjoy reading stories with bewildering plots and exciting surprises, it is better for him to return the book to the bookseller and take his money back with thanks [...] All of [the heroes] are just «some people» whom we are used to meeting in our daily lives.

Convinced that the Jews of Iraq were an integral part of the Iraqi-Arab nation, much as their Muslim and Christian compatriots were, Darwīsh depicted his heroes not as Jews but as Iraqi anti-heroes with blurred religious identities. Among the topics of his stories one can find the relationships between the sexes, prostitution, immorality, and various social aspects of local Iraqi society. Most of the stories were written with the aim of remedying contemporary social and moral abuses. One of the stories in this collection entitled «Qāfila min al-Rīf» (A Caravan from the Village)¹⁶ was based on Darwīsh's life experience. Concentrating on the sacrifice of human values demanded by

16. The story was published in Darwīsh (1948: 1-29). It was republished in Moreh (1981: 119-138). For an English translation, see Snir (2019: 216-227).

modernization, this quasi-autobiographical story is a narrative of a journey undertaken by a widow that is prompted by her desire to find the best educational opportunities for her children. One of the children, the narrator, is called Salīm, which is the Arabic version of the author's first name Shalom. The family leaves its remote village and sets out for Baghdad. Accompanying them is a she-goat, Rabsha (literally, «Dawn» — because she was born at dawn)¹⁷, who is beloved by all the family members and to whom they are very much devoted. She symbolizes the good naive values of the countryside. The story is about their grief at the separation from their home in the village and then in Baghdad the separation from the she-goat, which was like a member of the family.

In writing the story, the author was inspired by the style of the Egyptian writer Ṭāhā Husayn (1889-1973) in his autobiographical novel *al-Ayyām* (The Days) (1926-1927) (Ḥusayn 1929). For example, like Husayn's narrator, Darwīsh's narrator recounts the events of the past from the point of view of the present as well as making use of the historical present tense¹⁸. This use was not so frequent in the Arabic fiction of the 1940s as to risk becoming «automatic stock» — consequently, its use was highly effective and efficient from the point of view of its assumed literary function. Also, apart from Ya'qūb Balbūl's story «True Copy» (Snir, 2020: 109-145), Darwīsh's story was one of the first Iraqi-Jewish stories to use the colloquial Arabic language of the Baghdadi Muslims.

Owing to the political tension in the Middle East at the time, the story was considered by the Iraqi authorities to be originally written as an allegorical account of the author's alleged Zionist inclinations. There was no basis to this claim — while in Iraq Darwīsh never held Zionist views, and even after his immigration to Israel he was very hesitant to embrace Zionism. At any rate, the suspicious attitude toward the story is evidence of the great tension that existed at the time between the Jews and the authorities in Iraq as a result of the conflict in Palestine (Snir 2005: 174-182).

Apart from the she-goat, the mother is also a central figure in the story and she is described as a means of protection — the narrator alludes to this as well through the attachment between the family and Rabsha:

How can one explain that attachment? If they'd been asked to explain the attachment between themselves and that black creature, they couldn't have described it in any meaningful terms. They were village folk who didn't have fancy words and phrases at their disposal. But you could perceive in their eyes and their facial expressions an abundance of love and compassion such as in the eyes and features of mothers' faces when they talk about their offspring.

The mother also protects Rabsha, who is essentially considered to be a member of the family — in some sense she is a measure of the family's well-being — like the ca-

17. It is etymologically derived from *ghabash*, but the author used *rabsha* thinking that the letter *ghayin* was a disruption of the letter *rā'*, which Iraqi Jews pronounce as *ghayin*.

18. On the relationship of the narration in *al-Ayyām* with the genre of autobiography, see Al-Qāḍī (1993: 207-232).

naries that miners used to bring into the mineshafts to detect harmful fumes. The mother pets her back and hair, and the family looks upon her as mothers look upon their offspring — with love and compassion. And Rabsha as well «takes care» of the family. For example, after arriving in the big city she does not want to cross the street, and refuses to «shut her eyes» and obey. Sight is considered to be knowledge: Rabsha sees the dangers and is unwilling to cross the street, but eventually she is forced to — much like how the family is forced to leave their village. Also, Rabsha searches for food and knocks it over and is summarily beaten by the householders hosting the family in Baghdad. But through that incident, she sends a message to the members of the family: Rabsha does not understand this foolishness, as they should be trying to proactively address their immediate concerns like food, water, and shelter, and they should not rely upon others to help them. The family is bound to make missteps in its first experience of the city, and retribution is swift and uncompassionate, as Rabsha is mercilessly beaten, called a «bitch» and told to «get out». The description of the people who live in the house as «householders» (*ahl al-dār*) — they are described as «unhinged» and «criminals» — reinforces their status of possession: they literally hold the house, which implies physical control; meanwhile, the family members are only «guests», which reinforces their temporary position. What is that «something» that Salīm sees in the «astonished eyes» that also «frightens and even terrifies him»? Adults do not even know how to fix the situation: the house is incredibly cramped, and there exist uncertainty and change: their lives cannot be as they once were with Rabsha in the village.

Salīm is affectionately described as a «spoiled child» by his mother; he is clearly indulged to whatever extent is possible. The phonetic similarity between Salīm desperately yelling «Mama!» and Rabsha's repeated yelling «Maa, maa, maa» when he is frightened points to Salīm's dependency on the female figures — male figures in the story are not very powerful and steadfast: even the goatherd is swayed to be lenient by Salīm's tears. The women are much more pragmatic and focused: his sister Salīma, for example, gives up her bracelet for the good of the family without question — a virtuous martyr — she will not be getting an education, so her only option is marriage, and even here the options before her are limited by her family's financial woes. Also, real strength in the story seems to come from the ability to communicate and cooperate with people — as when the mother realizes that in order to stay in the house she must get rid of Rabsha — rather than from the ability to dominate and control people, the former being a much more feminine view of societal structure. Additionally, the very idea of a caravan, mentioned in the title, invokes the concept of interdependency. Caravans existed to provide protection for travelers that could be found in groups: the family in the story must work together as a unit to ensure its survival, and the female characters are responsible for this solidarity.

As for the narrator's focus, it shifts throughout the story: first he speaks from the perspective of the younger son, and later he speaks of the whole family as «they» (rather than «we» as if the narrator was no longer speaking from the perspective of the son). At other times, the narrator speaks in a general third-person omniscient Thomas Hardy

style, seeming to address the reader directly with platitudes and questions such as «it was a special attachment that the eye couldn't see and only the heart knew» and «what did they eat?». This technique has the effect of distancing the family from the reader. Another example of the narrator's shifting focus is the parallel he presents between Rabsha and the steamship — the narrator notably clarifies the pronoun that is used in the first paragraph, possibly highlighting the similarities between the boat and the she-goat, in that they could be easily confused and need to be distinguished. It reveals the family's confusion about the boat ride / journey, in that the new journey is uncertain. When crossing the street, the she-goat is «given over to confusion, going forward and retreating». The boat is animated in order to personify the struggles of the journey, or perhaps it is used to further distinguish it from the she-goat: the former struggles but eventually prevails wearily, whereas the latter in the end does not succeed and faces an ambiguous fate. Referring to the family as «the little caravan» rather than «his family» or «their family» distances the reader from the family. Thus, the identity of all the family members is homogenous and group-oriented — phrases like «they were village folk who didn't have fancy words and phrases at their disposal» makes the family seem inferior and somewhat exoticized, and takes advantage of their provincialism. Changes in the narrator's perspective, as in when the narrator focuses on «he», make the family members more individualized. Imagery of a «little caravan» gives rise to unity among the family members: goat and family share a common fate — both have been orphaned.

The mother is evidently cognizant of the real danger faced by her family in the village («where it had neither shelter nor breadwinner but experienced only poverty, illiteracy, and anonymity»). She realizes the necessity of education as a way out of destitution («her deep sagacity»), taking the crucial step to move to Baghdad. She is willing to sacrifice everything for her children, but she has absolutely no plan as to how to get money for educating her children, let alone providing basic necessities for them, probably because the situation is too overwhelming and she had used up the last ounce of her fortitude to move away from the village. Also, she seems to have a fatalistic attitude toward the idea of God providing for her family: the family must stay with old friends; their stay is clearly an imposition, as the house is cramped; and Rabsha's presence only further underlines their being outsiders, since the cramped city house is clearly not like their old rural home, which could accommodate livestock.

Eventually, the narrator's focus moves to Salīm as he becomes more and more upset and his distress causes him to distinguish himself — he gets the «courage of despair» to question the goatherd's motives for buying Rabsha. However, this courage does not correlate with his mother's ideal of manhood, since it causes him to weep — «Salīm, it's not nice to cry like this. You're already a man». Paradoxically, Salīm's unmanly behavior is what gives him courage, while the mother's sensibilities are much more practical (selling Salīma's bracelet). Conversely, the gaunt man is the symbol of death: he wears dirty clothes, smiles like a dog, and is missing a leg — the householders originally believe the she-goat to belong to the «lame man».

To sum up, Darwīsh's story dates from 1948, the year of the creation of the State of Israel, but despite the Jewish identity of the author, it does not consist of any allusion to Arab-Jewish identity as such. It tells a story of a family that is moving to Baghdad from the countryside of Iraq without any explicit or even implicit allusion to the flight to Israel. The narrative is structured in the present, with flashback scenes, mainly to explain the love that the family feels for Rabsha, the she-goat. The relationship of the she-goat to the family is meant to allegorically represent the idea of losing something important to the definition of self and personal subjectivity in an attempt to fit in with a larger society. The clarity of the voice of the little boy, Salīm, is the most powerful aspect of the story: his relationship to Rabsha is one of equality, and his reluctance to give her up is illustrative of an attachment to the past that has been abandoned in order to build a new future. The fact that Rabsha gives milk to the family signifies that she is representative of some sort of life force, the remnant of the family's old existence. The danger of crossing the «big street» in Baghdad is, most likely, an expression of crossing a boundary that cannot be recrossed, a sort of finality that begins the story at the end of an older one. Reviewing Darwīsh's literary output throughout his career as an author, one can see that he was able to commit to the art of the short story without relinquishing any of his aesthetic values, and that he invested his creative energy into his work so as to achieve the highest degree of literary accomplishment.

6. After the Immigration to Israel

In 1950, Darwīsh immigrated to Israel via Iran and retrospectively mentioned two episodes during the 1940s which shook his belief that Iraq was the only homeland for the Jews. The first was the trial and execution of Shafīq 'Adas (1900-1948), a wealthy businessman from Basra, who was arrested on false charges of siding with the clandestine Zionist movement. It was a turning point in the modern history of Iraqi Jews, and the author considers the British to be another villain involved in this injustice for their refusal to interfere. It then became clear to the Jews that Iraq was no longer their homeland. The second episode concerned Reuben Baṭṭāt (1888-1962), a retired judge, who, while being ill, was sentenced to jail without himself or his lawyer being present. The false charge in this case was that in the early 1920s, many years before the trial was held, he had approved a trust which a Jew had set up in his will in favor of four religious foundations in Palestine (cf. Snir 2005:148).

In Israel, Darwīsh worked as a civil servant in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially as a representative of the authorities among the Palestinian minority, and then he worked as a lawyer. But he continued to be as creative as he was before his immigration, publishing short stories and articles in newspapers and literary magazines, especially in *al-Yawm* (The Day). In one of his quasi-biographical stories written in Israel,

«Ḥadīth al-Nāqira» (The Story of the Perforator)¹⁹, he describes how during one of the narrator's missions as an officer of the Ministry in northern Israel he meets an emigrant couple from Iraq, Yūsuf and Toyā; this meeting brings back nostalgic recollections of his life in Iraq. Darwīsh uses a specific framing narrative that makes the story effective: the first person speaker begins the story in 1953, which creates one layer of framing in which the narrator in the present is looking back on a past event. Then, when the narrator recognizes the man and woman he meets, he flashes back to his childhood, where most of the short story takes place, before returning to 1953 and the «second present», as that frame of the story may be called. This technique gives the reader the sense that the narrative is colored most significantly by time: indeed, elements of nostalgia come heavily into play, as does a strong sense of injustice about Muslim-Jewish relations at the time, and they are lent strong legitimacy by the fact that the narrative is framed in another time but with the same narrator. These layers of the story are most significant because they have the ability to establish change over time for the main characters, something Toyā reflects on when she asks the narrator if she had changed from what he remembers in his childhood. Yet, more significantly, the framing narrative enables the reader to see the story as inevitable, actually reflecting the unchanging nature of the characters, because we are introduced to them before we know their earlier story. Thus, our understanding of what happens to Toyā and Yūsuf as young adults is informed by what we know about them in the «second present» of the story. We thus see them as constant; their identity remains the same, despite the shifts in time, which lends a sense of human continuity to the story despite its existential bent. Thus, we see that, beyond the obvious stance this story takes concerning the condition of Arabized Jews in both Israel and in Iraq, Darwīsh makes a larger claim concerning what it means to have any selfhood at all.

Referring to the story, Emile Marmorstein equates Yūsuf and Toyā with the Jewry of Iraq: Yūsuf represents its «sober virtues of industry and endurance» and Toyā its «warmth and excitement». The relationship in the remote Iraqi past between them and the two symbols of the Muslim community, 'Īsā and Mūsā, illustrates «the differentiation in the minds of Iraqi Jews between the envy and brutality of nationalist youth and the more decorous older generation from whom help and protection could be expected». According to Marmorstein, the subsequent loss of Yūsuf's eye in Israel reflects in allegorical fashion «the inevitability of the process in which they were helplessly involved» (Marmorstein, 1964:100). And, indeed, this is what the narrator emphasizes at the end of the story through the voice of Toyā:

19. The story was published in Darwīsh (1976: 71-83). For an English translation, see Snir (2019: 242-250). For an earlier English translation, see Marmorstein (1964: 92-100). Marmorstein indicated that it had been published in one of the Arabic journals in Israel but without providing any specific references. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate the original publication, but I assume that the story was published in Arabic during 1964. On the story, see Mudhi (1988: 303).

«When we immigrated to Israel, the Perforator was on the airplane with us. Then it stayed with us and succeeded here where it had failed there. It was here that my husband stumbled, fell to the ground, and struck his head on a board with a nail sticking out. When I rushed to him to help him get up, I found that the nail had put out his eye, the same right eye that ‘Īsā bet he could put out». With a sigh, she again repeated that fate had decreed the loss of Yūsuf’s eye and that when he had escaped from the pebble propelled by Hājja ‘Aliyyah’s son, the nail had lain in ambush; if the nail hadn’t succeeded, the cock would’ve pecked out his eye. She quoted the proverb: «What has been written upon the forehead, the eye must see».

In 1976, Darwīsh published his third collection of short stories *Baydat al-Dīk* (The Egg of the Cock) (Darwīsh, 1976). In one of the stories, «Abū Liḥya» (The Bearded) (Darwīsh, 1976: 39-46. Cf. Mudhi 1988: 304-305), which was based on his autobiographical experience from his childhood, he describes the Jewish teacher at the school in ‘Alī al-Gharbī teaching religious studies to Jewish children. Disappointed by the inferior status of Arabic literature in Israel, and being aware that as a Jew he could never be accepted as a legitimate writer in Arabic literature, he tried his hand at writing in Hebrew and published several short stories as well a novella with the title *Phraim! Phraim!* (Ephraim! Ephraim! [the name of the hero]) (Darwīsh, 1986), after the name of the narrator’s son. The protagonist Doris narrates the story, and in her own voice we hear how she is being married off at age twelve to Yehūda, an albino much older than she is.

7. Conclusion

Darwīsh passed away in Haifa, his work having fallen into utter oblivion after having not been read by both Jewish and non-Jewish readers and scholars. This is a sad state of affairs, especially against the background of the bright future that had awaited his literary writing during the 1940s – Darwīsh was a pioneering Arabic author, one of the Iraqi-Jewish writers who tried to recapture the Andalusian golden age of Arab-Jewish culture. In his study of the Iraqi short story after the Second World War until the 14 July Revolution of 1958 (Al-Ṭālib, 1976: 35-46), the Iraqi scholar ‘Umar al-Ṭālib (1932-2008) considers Darwīsh as one of the major Iraqi writers. He mentions, for example, his first collection *Ahrār wa-‘Abīd* as being one of the first Iraqi collections in which the author makes use of the vernacular (‘*āmmiyya*) (Al-Ṭālib, 1976: 39, n. 30), and he refers to his second collection *Ba’d al-Nās* as being one of the Iraqi literary works that were dedicated to «only local issues and topics» (Al-Ṭālib, 1976: 38). Darwīsh’s above-mentioned story «Qāfila min al-Rīf» and some of his other stories are referred to as examples of literary works that bucked the romantic trend, as it were, to concentrate on the life of the people and their miseries (Al-Ṭālib, 1976: 39, n. 35). While in Iraq,

little did he foresee at the time that ideological and political developments in Palestine would crudely constrict his literary projects. As with other Arab-Jewish writers, the last years of his life he was forgotten by readers in the Arab world and when he passed away in 1997 there was almost no mention of his death in Arabic or any other language. He was excluded from Arabic literature because of the aforementioned unspoken agreement between the two national movements, Zionism and Arab nationalism, to perform a total cleansing of Arab-Jewish culture. In fact, after 1948, the Arabic literature that twentieth-century Arabized Jews produced were gradually relegated to the margins of Arab culture despite all great hopes and high expectations. But as the great Arab poet Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (915-965), one of the Arab-Jewish authors' favorite poets from the golden age of Arabic poetry, had already said:

مَا كُلُّ مَا يَتَمَنَّى الْمَرْءُ يُدْرِكُهُ تَجْرِي الرِّيحُ بِمَا لَا تَسْتَهِي السَّفِينُ

A man can never gain everything he hopes for; the winds blow contrary to what ships wish (al-Mutanabbī [n.d.]: 472).

We are currently witnessing the demise of Arab-Jewish culture; a tradition that started more than fifteen hundred years ago is vanishing before our very eyes. The main factor in the Muslim-Christian-Jewish Arab symbiosis up to the twentieth century, from the Jewish point of view, was that the great majority of Jews under the rule of Islam adopted Arabic as their spoken language. This symbiosis does not exist in our time because Arabic is gradually disappearing as a language spoken on a daily basis by Jews. The image of an hourglass is an apposite one: the grains of sand are quickly running out. Furthermore, in the field of literature, there is not even one Jewish writer of record who was born in Israel after 1948 and who is still writing in Arabic. A Jew who is now fluent in Arabic must have either been born in an Arab country or have acquired the language as part of his training for service in the military or security services; in the former, numbers have rapidly decreased while in the latter, the numbers are always increasing. The Israeli-Jewish canonical elite does not see the Arabic language and Arab culture as intellectual assets. There is no better illustration of this point than the structure of the comparative literature departments at Israeli universities, where one can hardly find tenured scholars who have a knowledge of Arabic or who have taken the trouble to study Arabic literature. In short, we all know that the chapter of Arab-Jewish symbiosis has reached its end, and the hourglass will not be turned over anytime soon, if at all²⁰.

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20. On the demise of Arab-Jewish culture and identity, see Snir (2015), especially, the conclusion at pp. 219–228.

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