

Plurality of languages ... Plurality of homes

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The invitation to speak about " the experience of translation into Arabic " paralyzed me. During a phone conversation with Anat Fried, responsible for the multi-lingual cartels, I could not say anything, and my silence embarrassed me. I asked for a few days to think. I remembered that at the opening event of the "Little Hans" CPCT in Haifa, I wondered about the necessity of the decision that was taken to translate simultaneously into Arabic, since I thought Hebrew is a language accessible to Arabic-speaking colleagues in Israel.

During this conference, as well as in other similar events where it was possible to listen to the simultaneous translation in Arabic, I found myself embarrassed again, moving back and forth between the translations into Arabic and Hebrew, and finally staying with Hebrew. I also noticed that reading psychoanalytic texts is easier for me in Hebrew than in Arabic, even though I read and enjoy literature and poetry in both languages. What I am trying to convey here is that when I read an analytical text in Arabic, I feel that I must do several readings until the text reaches me. In Hebrew, it's easier. The text is more accessible to me. I can give an example with the word transference. When I meet it in a Hebrew text, my reading continues, whereas its Arabic equivalent, the word "takhvil", tells me nothing of what I suppose knowing about *transference*. I have to linger- to stop - and remind myself that "takhvil" means 'transference'.

It is important to note that Arabic has two languages. The spoken language, which is the language of the people, of the street, has different accents and minor modifications in different regions, while the literary language is the language of government, of establishment, as well as the language of religion. Literary language has an elitist status, belonging to the community of scholars and educated people, and to those close to power and government. Mustafa Safouan, an Egyptian psychoanalyst living in France and a student of Lacan, called for the popular spoken language to be taught in schools, rather than leaving it in the street and underestimating it¹. He called for science and the humanities to be taught in the spoken language in order to make them accessible to the people. In this context, I can also share my experience of watching cartoons with my children; when a film is dubbed in literary Arabic, it is nice, but when it's dubbed in spoken Arabic, it's hilarious.

Analytical texts are often translated into the literary language. As one whose learning and training are conducted mainly in Hebrew, I sometimes experience literary Arabic as a foreign language. In my analysis, I speak in Hebrew, not out of preference for the Hebrew language: if I had lived in France, my analysis would probably have been in French. There are moments in analysis where what I want to say cannot take place in

1. Safouan , M. , Hoballah , A. ;" Ashkaliat Almojtamaa Alarabi – qeraa min mandor althleel alnafsi ", Issues in Arab Society, reading from a Psychoanalytic Perspective, published in Arabic in 2008

Hebrew, so spoken Arabic comes to my rescue, and it also finds a place in analysis. At the opening event of the CPCT “Little Hans”, we chose to present the cases in spoken Arabic, and the reactions of the Arabic-speaking audience were definitely moving.

However, despite the opportunity to present my text in Arabic, I chose, after much reflection, to present it in Hebrew. Any attempt to translate the text into spoken Arabic seemed lame and unsatisfactory to me. In Israel, Arabs often identify each other by one’s accent, which allows one to identify which area someone else comes from, and which religion or ethnic group he belongs to. I was born and raised in a village identified with a unique heavy Druze accent, my father’s village. My mother is from another village, which is also identified by a heavy Druze accent, but very different. Over the years, my mother has softened her way of talking and she now has a fine intermediate accent. For some reason, I feel my accent as a patchwork that is not faithful to any source, or origin. In order to present my text in spoken Arabic, I had to consider so many others, that the task became particularly heavy. At this point, the Hebrew came to my rescue.

I presented this text, at a work evening on cartels products with Alexander Stevens; when reading the lines where I speak about my analysis, I was surprised by my own reaction, which was perhaps a moment of encounter with a real: my tears strangled me, or as it is said in Arabic: “Ghaset fe albaqui”. I stayed a few days with what forced itself on me in front of the audience, trying to figure out where it came from. The title I chose for this text “Plurality of languages ... plurality of homes” replaced the first title that came to my mind: “Language as a home ...Really?” The process of participating in a multilingual cartel has led me to think that we always live in language as foreigners. In any language. Language seems nevertheless to be a kind of home, making it possible for one to bear this body...this self and to do something with it. But foreignness is certainly part of the package. The plurality of languages allows me a certain plurality of homes, which is a good thing. ●

Translation from French: Annette Feld, Frank Rollier.