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## Literary Contacts and Where to Find Them: On Arabic Literary Models in Medieval Jewish Literature

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**Abstract** Literary contacts are generally assumed to consist of bilateral relations between two adjacent literatures, whereby one is considered to have "influence" over the other. The complexity of the problems encountered in the study of cultural and literary interference is demonstrated here by way of two medieval Jewish literary products which evolved as a direct result of the association between Jewish literature and Arabic culture. Moses ibn Ezra's *Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara*, written in Judeo-Arabic, and Judah al-Harizi's Hebrew *Maqamat* were both produced during the final phase of Jewish cultural contact with Arabic, in twelfth- and thirteenth-century northern Spain and Provence. Both are famous examples of Jewish works inspired by Arabic models, yet a reexamination of the cultural circumstances of their production reveals that it was not the Arabic-Jewish context that was responsible for their evolution, but rather a third, local yet non-Arabic one, grounded specifically in the relations between the individual authors and the Jewish cultural climate of that time in Christian Spain, in one case, and in the East (Syria, Palestine, and Babylon), in the other.

Cultural contacts, particularly literary contacts, are generally assumed in traditional theories to consist of bilateral relations between two adjacent literatures, whereby one is considered to have "influence" over the other. But very often we find cultural dynamics to be much more complex and elaborate, as literary contacts and relationships are often

established among more than two literatures concurrently, and in ways more subtle and intricate than can be defined as the mere “influence” of one literature over the other. Even what may appear to be a clear-cut case of the inspiration of one body of literature by another can turn out, upon close examination, to be a case of multiliterary contacts. It is not always easy to trace and account for such contacts, as they are not necessarily manifested in what are conventionally regarded by students of literature as the “concrete data” of the field, namely, written texts. At times a whole cultural context has to be reconstructed in order to understand the actual circumstances that made possible the writing or production of a particular text, that is, the processes which dominated and manipulated a literary field at a given point in time, of which the written texts are only the final products. This can be particularly difficult for historians studying the past, who have virtually nothing but written texts to go by. Yet considering these final products, the written texts, as “distinct facts” without taking into account the immediate context and circumstances of their production can be quite misleading.

It is within this framework, which regards the text as the product of an entire network of cultural relations, rather than as a single and discrete item, that the term “literary contacts” is most useful and acquires substantial value. It offers a far more sophisticated means of investigating cultural interference than the traditional, rather obscure concept of “influence,” which is rooted in Romanticist thinking. For there are undoubtedly instances in the history of all literatures when crucial segments, we feel, are dominated by what can be identified and described as “borrowings” from “another literature,” as “adaptations” and “appropriations” of various kinds, which are displayed on all levels. Speaking of elements’ being “taken” from “another literature” in terms of “cultural contacts” or “cultural interference” implies a different concept of literature and a whole range of hypotheses about it (see Even-Zohar 1990). It also implies a different set of questions regarding the nature of the relationships obtaining between two (or more) literatures.

What, then, are “literary contacts”? An underlying assumption is that “literary material” is conveyed from a source literature to a target one by way of certain transmission procedures. But what precisely is this “literary material”? Is it a theme, a motive, an idea, a pattern, a structure, a genre? In what way can a text be regarded as the product of more than one “homogeneous” body of literature?

These are, of course, only a few of the questions that are likely to be addressed in any discussion of cultural interference. For no account of an instance of cultural interference can be regarded as complete, or even satisfactory, if it does not attempt to explain the extent to

which the source repertoire is available and accessible to its borrowers, and without referring to the function fulfilled by these literary contacts in the target system. In other words, any account must be able to answer such questions as the following: What were the specific conditions in the target literature that created the need for contact with another literature (or other literatures)? In what ways precisely did the target literature exploit the source literature repertoire? How exactly have these contacts brought about a new dynamic within the target literature?

The case of medieval Jewish literary contact with Arabic literature illuminates the complex, if not tricky, nature of the problems involved in the study of cultural interference. This complexity stems from the fact that the investigation of this subject involves constantly calling into question all of our overt and implied assumptions regarding literature in particular, and culture in general, as well as many prevailing traditional views of Jewish literary history. Traditional ways of examining the nature and scope of the field in question are often unrewarding, even futile, and one would therefore do well to try to come up with more adequate hypotheses than those that have been conventionally asserted. For example, in tenth-century Babylon and Palestine cultural activities took place that have been regarded as so inherently Jewish that Arabic involvement was never considered to have played a part in their emergence. Yet their appearance at a particular moment and in a specific locale remains, for all intents and purposes, unaccounted for unless one considers the interference of an Arabic model. There are other instances (for example, in twelfth- and thirteenth-century northern Spain and Provence) where the presence of an Arabic model is not only well known, but is even considered a matter of common knowledge. Yet a reexamination of the previously overlooked cultural circumstances of such literary activities modeled on Arabic models soon shows that it was not the Arabic-Jewish context that was responsible for their evolution, but rather a third, local yet non-Arabic one. These cultural phenomena all testify to the fact that literary contacts may not necessarily be exhibited, as one would typically expect, in visible, readily recognizable "concrete" items, such as "themes," "motives," or even "ideas." They may in effect pull the strings invisibly, behind the scenes, like stage directors (or possibly authors) rather than actors.

Let me demonstrate this by way of two medieval Jewish literary products that evolved as a direct result of the association between Jewish literature and Arabic culture. Moses ibn Ezra's *Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara*, written in Judeo-Arabic, and Judah al-Harizi's Hebrew *Maqamat* were both produced during the final phase of Jewish cultural contact with Arabic, in twelfth- and thirteenth-century northern Spain

and Provence. Both are famous examples of Jewish works inspired by Arabic models, yet it seems that their significance as products of Arabic interference has been poorly understood and even misjudged, as too little attention has been paid to the actual cultural circumstances under which they were produced.

### 1. *Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara* of Moses ibn Ezra

Moses ibn Ezra (c. 1055–c. 1140) wrote *Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara* (The book of discussion and conversation) (see Ibn Ezra 1975, in Appendix) in his old age (probably not before 1138 [Schirmann 1961: 2, 365]) in northern Spain. He was born, reared, and educated in Muslim Granada and had to emigrate north to Christian Spain, following the Almoravid persecutions, sometime after 1090, about twenty years before writing this book. As is well known, this book elaborates on the theory of Hebrew poetry. It intends to teach “the best way to go about composing Hebrew poetry according to Arabic views” (ibid.: 2) and to explain certain principles and historical matters pertaining to this poetic theory, which the author explicitly declares is modeled on Arabic poetics. These matters are covered in eight chapters, each of which addresses a particular issue or question, as follows:

1. Defending the legitimacy of the art of rhetoric (including prose writing) and the art of poetry composition (chapters one and two).
2. “How is it that poetry is a natural aptitude of the Arabs but an affectation among the other nations?”<sup>1</sup> (chapter three).
3. “Did the Israelites have rhymed, metrical poetry during their monarchic period, and when did they begin to compose poetry?” (chapter four).
4. “Why are the Andalusian Jews more diligent and successful at composing poetry than any other Jewish community?” (chapter five).
5. A selection of opinions on this subject (chapter six [this chapter in fact consists of a complaint against the local Jews, who, in their lack of proper culture, do not understand Ibn Ezra’s poetry and consequently fail to respect him as they should]).
6. “Is there any truth to the claim made by some people that poetry can be composed in a dream?” (chapter seven).
7. Practical advice for those wishing to compose Hebrew poetry in accordance with Arabic taste, including a reference to dealing with the audience and a survey of rhetorical figures (chapter eight).

1. Here, as in several other places in this discussion of *Kitab al-muhadara*, I quote Raymond Scheindlin’s excellent translations of the original Arabic phrasings from his article on this book (Scheindlin 1976: 101–2).

The first five chapters are logically arranged to form a single argument, complete in itself: Eloquence in general and poetry in particular are legitimate practices; the gift of poetry was bestowed upon those best qualified to receive it, namely, the Arabs, who surpass other nations in the practice of poetry, while such nations as the Indians, Persians, and Greeks were granted faculties conducive to the study and preservation of the sciences. The Arabs' superb gift of eloquence, due in part to their geographical location in the middle *iqlim*, is best expressed in their poetry.<sup>2</sup> As descendants of the Jerusalemite expatriates of the first exile, Andalusian Jews were inherently eloquent; thus, after mastering Arabic and perceiving the beauty of Arabic poetry, they naturally adopted Arabic poetic practices, developed the Hebrew language, and gained pride of place among the Jews where eloquence was concerned, particularly in the composition of poetry. Next follows a survey of Andalusian Jewish poets, which in fact comprises a list of their merits (*fada'il*) rather than a mere historical account, of the kind also found in Arabic literature (e.g., *Fada'il 'ulama' al-andalus* of Ibn Hazm, cited in *Nafh al-tib*).<sup>3</sup> This survey is clearly intended to support the claim that the true and correct knowledge of poetry reposes in the Andalusian Jews.

Hebrew poetry is thus openly acknowledged in this treatise as having an Arabic model. Explaining Arabic poetics to Hebrew poets is the very *raison d'être* of this treatise, so it seems only natural, if not self-evident, to view it as a typical product of the Hebrew-Arabic cultural context. But is the Hebrew-Arabic culture its only context?

Scholarly interest in this book during recent decades (see, for instance, Pagis 1970) may have created an impression that the first six chapters of *Kitab al-muhadara* (which actually comprise its core) are but a collection of preliminary remarks on matters related to poetry, intended to pave the way for its main subject, namely, the survey of Arabic rhetorical figures. A careful reading of the argument developed throughout these chapters proves this impression to be misleading. It contains a series of ideological claims which, over and above their comprising a defense of poetry (Scheindlin 1976), seek primarily to convince the reader that the Arabic method of composing poetry is the right one and that Jewish-Andalusian poets are its best practitioners. A vital question to be posed here is: What public was this ideology actually intended to address? If this book was indeed written

2. Ibn Ezra does mention the Muslim idea that the eloquent style of the Koran is proof of its divine nature and truth, but he does so with great reserve (see Ibn Ezra 1975: 36–38, in Appendix).

3. See al-Maqarri (1968: 4, 150–212, particularly 156–79, in Appendix). Lists of *fada'il* concerning poets and written in rhymed prose are to be found in the maqamat literature; see, for instance, the first of al-Hamadani's (1962: 10–17, in Appendix) maqamat (*Al-Qaridiyya*); see also al-Qayrawani (1983, in Appendix).

in a Hebrew-Arabic context, that is, for an audience already familiar with and appreciative of Arabic poetics, and the Hebrew poetry written accordingly, and for whom this was to be no more than a handbook of poetry composition, why go to so much trouble to preach to the converted, explaining basic ideas in such great detail? Wouldn't these ideological tenets be self-evident to such an audience? They would most likely have already formed part of what Clifford Geertz (1983) calls "the local knowledge" of the community, that is, the ideas and opinions shared by all members of the community, held to be commonplace and taken for granted, and would not need to be committed to writing unless they were for some reason undergoing a change in status.

If Ibn Ezra felt the need to formulate these ideas in writing, one might rightly wonder whether there had been such a change in their status. The fact that the book was written in northern Spain rather than in al-Andalus is highly significant in this respect. This book was written not for the benefit of a Jewish audience living in the midst of Arabic culture, but for a Jewish audience that lived outside its domain, in a different cultural atmosphere. There are indications pointing to the fact that, unlike the Andalusian Jews, this audience probably did not hold poetry in high regard, nor were its members perceived by Ibn Ezra as connoisseurs of good (i.e., Arabic-style) poetry; this is apparent from the sixth chapter of the book as well as from several of Ibn Ezra's Hebrew poems in which he refers to the local Jews as ignorant and barbaric (see, e.g., Ibn Ezra 1935: I, 19, 20, 101, 102; 1975: 104, in Appendix). The poet often complains of a sense of cultural isolation and detachment from his civilized homeland, al-Andalus. It is apparent that Ibn Ezra regards himself as the representative of a high culture among "savages" (*peraim*, which also means "wild asses") who do not acknowledge his superior position as an agent of the "correct" culture. He wrote his book out of a conviction that the Jewish-Andalusian culture was in danger of oblivion in the foreign regions of *Edom* and that he must do his best to preserve it, while at the same time enlightening the local "savages" on the "right way" to compose poetry.

Ibn Ezra's sense of isolation from his native culture and familiar milieu can also be noted in the introduction to his other well-known composition in Judeo-Arabic, *Maqalat al-hadiqa fi ma'na al-magaz wa al-haqiqa* (or *Arugat ha-bosem*, as he himself entitled it in Hebrew), which is a philosophical *adab* (letters) compilation.<sup>4</sup> Here, Ibn Ezra addresses

4. Hebrew National Library, MS No. 5701 (formerly Sassoon MS No. 412), p. 12. I would like to sincerely thank Professor Joseph Fenton, who first drew my attention to this introduction.

an audience with whom he obviously identifies, whose members he regards as his cultural peers and who share his fate of being Jewish-Andalusian emigrants in Christian Spain. He addresses them as “the remaining noble men and the last of the faithful connoisseurs of adab, even if your numbers are scarce and your status unrecognized, and you are foreigners among ignorants.” He urges them, in the name of the “affection created by the common origin and the affinity caused by the shared cultural bias,” to take an interest in his book. From these words, as well as from similar phrasing in the introduction to *Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara* (Ibn Ezra 1975: 2–7, in Appendix), it is clear that Ibn Ezra saw himself as a true representative of a heritage whose status was declining.

Confronting in Christian Spain a Jewish cultural atmosphere so different from that of Andalusia was what prompted Ibn Ezra to write this book. It caused him to examine his own cultural identity and formulate it in a way as to define it in opposition to the local Jewish one. Regarding his own cultural identity as Andalusian meant viewing it as composed of two components—a Jewish component and an Arabic one. Had he written a document of this nature back in Granada, Ibn Ezra would most probably have dwelt solely on the Jewish component, the Arabic one being self-evident and virtually unmarked. Representing “the Andalusian cause” within the Jewish community of northern Spain made the Arabic component a marked part of Ibn Ezra’s Jewish identity, defining it as distinctly different from the northern-Spanish Jewish identity. This accounts for his openly (more so than any other Jewish-Andalusian author) declared acceptance of the exemplary status of the Arabic model: following an Arabic model was no problem for him, as it was for the later Jewish authors of northern Spain and Provence; as an heir of the Andalusian legacy, Ibn Ezra had absorbed that model as an integral part of his cultural world.

In order to create a text so Arabic-Hebrew in spirit, another, non-Arabic cultural context was needed. It was the emergence of a new Jewish literature in northern Spain and Provence, which would ultimately be built upon a different paradigm than that of Muslim Spain, that paved the way for the only formulation now extant of a theory of Hebrew poetry inspired by Arabic poetics.

Regarding the reception of *Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara* by the Jewish community in Christian Spain, it should be noted that the book was not translated into Hebrew at the time, despite a massive wave of contemporary interest in Arabic-Hebrew translations. The book’s translation occurred only with the renewed interest in Judeo-Arabic literature that arose in the modern period (see Ibn Ezra 1924, in Appendix). By contrast, Ibn Ezra’s philosophical treatise, *Maqalat al-hadiqa*, was translated at the time into Hebrew by Judah al-Harizi

(Idel 1975–76; Abramson 1975–76) and is known to have influenced the Kabbalah in its initial stages. Ibn Ezra's liturgical poems were also well received and widely distributed. This means that Ibn Ezra was far from being a controversial literary figure and suggests that the literary ideology promoted by this particular treatise may have been losing its appeal for the Jewish community in Christian Spain. The very act of summoning up this Arabic-biased literary ideology in writing indicates that its cultural status had changed and that it had begun to be marked as a "museum piece" in need of preservation, maybe even restoration, rather than as a viable way of perceiving one's own poetry.

## 2. Al-Harizi's *Maqamat*

A similar case, in a way, is that of the famous Hebrew *Maqamat* by the Jewish author Judah al-Harizi (1170–1235), composed on the model of the Arabic *Maqamat* by al-Qasim b. 'Ali al-Hariri (1054–1122). This work is traditionally regarded by scholars as a highly typical (perhaps the most typical) example of Arabic influence over Hebrew literature: the Arabic *maqamat* were first translated by al-Harizi into Hebrew, and his own *maqamat* were later composed on the same model. Moreover, he openly declared that he had been inspired by al-Hariri's *Maqamat*, discussing this in his preface. Yet an examination of the cultural circumstances within which this work was composed reveals that it cannot be understood solely in light of the Arabic-Hebrew context. Again, one must consider contacts with another cultural context, albeit one introduced into the *Maqamat* in a far from simple way, but without which the very act of composing this work cannot be explained.

Al-Harizi, who was born in Toledo, was living in northern Spain during the second half of the twelfth century when an interest in Arabic texts began to flourish in Jewish as well as Christian circles. He became an Arabic-Hebrew translator and translated several Arabic and Judeo-Arabic works, usually at the invitation of distinguished patrons or scholars of the Jewish communities of northern Spain and Provence, although he sometimes produced such translations on his own initiative. Among his known translations are Moses ibn Ezra's abovementioned *Maqalat al-hadiqa fi ma'na al-magaz wa al-haqiqa* (The treatise of the garden on figurative and literal expressions), entitled 'Arugat ha-bosem in Hebrew (Idel 1975–76; Abramson 1975–76); Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* (*Moreh nebukhim* [Maimonides 1904 {1851}, in Appendix]), his *Introduction to the Mishnah* (*Hakdamot le-perush ha-mishna* [Maimonides 1960, in Appendix]), his commentary on the first five tractates of the *Mishnah* order *Zera'im*,<sup>5</sup> and his *Epistle on Resurrection* (*Ma'amar tehiyat ha-metim* [Maimonides 1989, in Appendix]);

5. According to al-Harizi's own testimony (see al-Harizi 1952: 406, in Appendix).

‘Ali ibn Rudhwan’s *Epistle on Morals* (*Igeret ‘ali ha-ishmeeli* [Ibn Rudhwan 1900, in Appendix]); Hunayn ibn Ishaq’s *Adab al-falasifa* (Dicta of the philosophers), entitled *Musre ha-philosophim* in Hebrew (Ibn Ishaq 1896, in Appendix); and Galen’s *Dialogue on the Soul* (Galenus 1852, in Appendix).

Between 1205 and 1215 (Schirmann 1961: III, 98) or between 1213 and 1216 (Habermann 1952: 113), while still in northern Spain or in Provence, al-Harizi translated al-Hariri’s *Maqamat*.<sup>6</sup> He then traveled to the East, where, sometime after 1216, he composed his own Hebrew *Maqamat*, entitled *Sefer tahkemoni* and modeled on al-Hariri’s Arabic *Maqamat*.<sup>7</sup> There he also composed a Judeo-Arabic *Maqama*, describing his journey to the East (Hirschfeld 1903; Stern 1964a, 1964b, 1969; Ratzaby 1980, 1988, in Appendix).

As mentioned earlier, this work is considered by any standard of the comparative literature approach to represent the most salient example of “Arabic influence” over Hebrew literature in its Andalusian “golden age.”<sup>8</sup> Its Arabic-Hebrew context has generally been regarded as so self-evident that it has been taken as plain fact, obvious enough to be passed by as common knowledge. The focus of literary research has thus been concentrated on the specific ways in which al-Hariri’s *Maqamat* inspired *Sefer tahkemoni*<sup>9</sup> rather than on the cultural circumstances of its production. Yet it seems that a reexamination of those overlooked, or sometimes taken for granted, particular circumstances may reveal that viewing this work exclusively from a general, unspecified “Arabic-Hebrew” perspective (cf. Halkin 1963: 234–35) misses important evidence for the reconstruction of Hebrew literature in northern Spain and Provence by means of a new paradigm, quite different from the Arabic-Hebrew one of al-Andalus mentioned above.

The particular circumstances that led to the composition of *Sefer tahkemoni* will be clarified if we try to reconstruct al-Harizi’s literary awareness and his attitude toward cultural trends in Jewish society at the time. It is al-Harizi himself who gives us the key to this reconstruction, as he tends to present quite lengthy explanations of his motives for writing in the several introductions, or rather the dedications of this work to different patrons, and in the introductions to some of his Hebrew translations from the Arabic.

Following the contemporary custom among scholars to seek the

6. The work, only part of which has survived, is called *Mahberot itiel* (see al-Hariri 1872, 1951; cf. Stern 1964b: 186, in Appendix).

7. For modern editions, see al-Harizi (1845, 1924 [1883], 1899, 1952, in Appendix); for an English translation, see al-Harizi (1965–73, in Appendix).

8. This thesis is most prominently exemplified in Goitein (1951).

9. See, for example, Schirmann (1930, 1979), Percikowitsch (1932), Stern (1946), Lavi (1984), Dishon (1979), Dana (1975, 1984), and Ratzaby (1957).

patronage of distinguished figures in the community and support themselves by dedicating their written works to these figures (the same composition would often be dedicated to different patrons with only the dedication changed), al-Harizi dedicated his compilation of Hebrew maqamat to several different Jewish figures during the course of his travels in the Orient.<sup>10</sup> We can thus draw on more than one dedication of *Sefer tahkemoni* in which al-Harizi takes great pains to explain—this too according to contemporary writing norms—how and why he decided to compose this work.

Al-Harizi addresses this subject in the work's two Hebrew dedications: one, to Shemuel ben al-Barquli, forms the introduction to the printed edition of *Sefer tahkemoni* (al-Harizi 1952: 4–18, in Appendix); the other, to Yoshiyahu ben Yishai, forms the first maqama in the edition (*ibid.*: 19–30). The same issue is also addressed in the Arabic dedication to Sadid al-Dawla 'Abd al-Qadir of Aleppo and his son Abu Nasr (Drory 1991: 18–20). The Hebrew dedications are extended and written in a highly stylized rhymed prose that closely resembles the literary style of allegory (the first one in particular) or of the maqamat genre (the second one). The Arabic dedication is far more concise, and although it employs a rhetorical style reminiscent of Arabic rhymed prose, it is still far clearer and more concrete than the rhetoric used in the Hebrew dedications.

#### *The First Hebrew Dedication*

In the first dedication (al-Harizi 1952: 4–18; 1965–73: 23–43, in Appendix), al-Harizi describes his state when he was prompted to compose the Hebrew *Maqamat* as a state of ordination. Intellect woke him from his sleep of folly and assigned him the task of reviving the Hebrew language. The holy tongue, he was informed, was fast deteriorating, having been abandoned by its people, who now favored Arabic:

They have enslaved the tongue of the Israelites to the tongue of Kedar [i.e., Arabic] and they said: "Come and let us sell her to the Ishmaelites." And they said to her: "Bow down, that we may go over." And they took her and cast her into the pit until she perished among them. And the tongue of Kedar blackened her, and like a lion, tore her. An evil beast devoured her. All of them spurned the Hebrew tongue and made love to the tongue of Hagar [i.e., Arabic]. They embraced the bosom of an alien. They desired the wife of a stranger. They kissed her bosom, for stolen waters were

10. In the Hebrew dedications of *Sefer tahkemoni* the following names are mentioned: Shemuel ben al-Barquli and his brothers, Yosef and Ezra, of Wasit, Yoshiyahu ben Yishai of Damascus, Shemuel ben Nissim of Aleppo, and Shemaryah ben David of Yemen. In the Arabic dedication Sadid al-Dawla 'Abd al-Qadir of Aleppo and his son Abu Nasr are named (see Habermann 1952: 114; 1953).

sweet to them. Their hearts were seduced when they saw how excellent was the poetry that Hagar, Sarai's Egyptian handmaiden, had borne. And Sarai was barren! (Al-Harizi 1965–73: 32 [Hebrew: al-Harizi 1952: 9–10], in Appendix).

Bestirring himself, al-Harizi went to the fount of the Hebrew language to draw water from its sources of wisdom and awaited a sign of inspiration and instruction from God in the form of a young maiden who was to appear before him, rinsing him with drinking water from the flow of her sweet speech. A young maiden then indeed came forth, refreshed him with the honey of her lips, and identified herself as “your mistress, the Holy Tongue.” He then “betroth[ed] her unto him in righteousness and reverence without a [marriage] contract or intercourse” (al-Harizi 1965–73: 34, in Appendix), and she later conceived and gave birth to their offspring, a literary composition. Al-Harizi then goes on to explain that the urge to compose his work had indeed come from al-Hariri's Arabic *Maqamat*, which was, to his mind, a fine illustration of the fact that there do exist other peoples who cherish their language and preserve it with care, unlike the people of Israel, who abandoned their native tongue and neglected it, at times even to the point of despising it. (This, by the way, does not prevent al-Harizi from boasting that everything of real value and quality in this Arabic book is borrowed from the Hebrew.) In composing the Hebrew *Maqamat*, he wishes to show the people of Israel the beauty and resourcefulness of the Hebrew language and to convince them that it is appropriate for all types of literary expression, which he then lists. He stresses that many before him had tried to translate this work into Hebrew, but none had done so with much success. He himself had translated it at the request of “some generous men [nobles] of Spain (Sefarad)”; but after traveling to the East he had realized that it was inappropriate, or even sinful, “to translate a book of another people's goodly words as though the words of the living God were not among us” and that one would do best to write in one's native tongue.

#### *The Second Hebrew Dedication*

The second Hebrew dedication (al-Harizi 1952: 19–30; 1965–73: 44–58, in Appendix) is actually the first maqama in the collection, which means that it draws on the narrative rather than the methodological discourse. Yet it serves the same purpose of elaborating on al-Harizi's reasons for composing the Hebrew *Maqamat*. In it the author, or rather his protagonist, finds himself in a literary encounter of Jewish literati (literally, “of the children of the Hebrews,” which Reichert translates as “of Jewish lineage”). Among them is a “Hebrew lad,” who advances the argument that Arabic is the most beautiful of all languages and that it would be virtually impossible to write a book such as al-Hariri's

in a language other than Arabic. At this, the author rises to the defense of the Hebrew language, stating that Arabic is indeed superior to all languages—except for Hebrew; unfortunately, since the Jews were exiled and began adopting the languages of their host nations, Hebrew has been gradually deteriorating; forsaken and forgotten, it has slowly wasted away.

Yet, he continues, even the little Hebrew that has survived is adequately equipped to ensure the composition of some splendid literary works; this, in its own right, attests to the language's superiority. Why then, asks the young lad, have none of the children of Israel written any praiseworthy literary works in Hebrew that equal those written in Arabic, thereby highlighting the qualities of the Hebrew language? The author replies that, as for himself, he would find no difficulty in writing a praiseworthy book in Hebrew, but the real problem is that, with the lack of demand by the eastern Jewish public for books of this nature, there is little point in producing them.

But the author, for whom shall he compose, and to the ears of whom shall he speak, while the ears are deaf and the hands are tight, and the times have shut up the eyes of creatures who are imprisoned in the house of passion, and have smitten the men that were at the door of the house with blindness? And there is not among them one who sees or who hears and no one takes it to heart and no one cares. And if you should search the communities of the world, from Egypt unto Babylon—you will not find one who loves wisdom or who honors its possessor or who requites it with good reward. And you know that as for precious books, their pearls are not composed except for those who understand them or for those who requite them with good reward. For they are not made for fools who deride them and scoff at them.

Now the secret of all delightful wisdom is laid bare through three conditions: when she finds a patron, or a sage, or a nobleman who longs for her. Then wisdom sells herself to him as a hand-maid and her light shines and is not withdrawn. And if one of these circumstances does not happen to her, then she goes out for nothing, without money.

Therefore, in our generation the hallowed stones are poured out and the most fine gold is changed, and poetry and rhetoric sell themselves for bondmen and for bondwomen and there is none to buy them. And the generosity of patrons is like a staff of reed—upon tongues there is response to it, but in hearts there is no shelter for it. And in every place where I encamp, I call out: "Ho! For a man of intellect!" But there is none who answers. And behold, the place is a place for cattle. And in city after city we see every one of them asleep in the bosom of ignorance. And behold, there is no man there, neither voice of man, but a tied horse and a tied ass, tied and bound by the yoke of lust. And in this circumstance, how can the spirit be stirred up or the intellect soul long to compose any word of wisdom, or to speak of any theme of edification, or to set forth a lovely letter? Lo! Wisdom in the eyes of the children of our people is as one who puts a precious

stone in a sling or as one who casts pearls at the feet of cattle. (Al-Harizi 1965–73: 49–50 [Hebrew: al-Harizi 1952: 22–23], in Appendix)

The young man agrees, but, swayed by the author's valorization of the Hebrew language, he nevertheless urges him to ignore the folly of this generation and to write a book which will convince everyone (including other nations) of Hebrew's superiority. Promising to attend in every maqama and instruct the author as to what he should say, the "Hebrew lad" also suggests that the book be dedicated to Yoshiyahu ben Yishai and to his two sons, David and Shelomo. The author accepts this suggestion and promptly composes fifty Hebrew maqamat which stylistically embody the beauty of the Hebrew language, yet are not too academic and are intended for a wide readership. The young man blesses the author, identifies himself as Heber the Kenite—the hero common to all the maqamat—and promises to join the author in all his future maqamat.

#### *The Arabic Dedication*

Apart from the two Hebrew dedications, an Arabic one also appears in some of the manuscripts of *Sefer tahkemoni*.<sup>11</sup> As it was not included in the printed editions of the book, it seems to have escaped scholarly attention altogether. I think it would be worthwhile, therefore, to present the dedication in its entirety and in translation here.

[And so] I have noticed that most of the Israelite community in these lands of the East are devoid of the Hebrew language and denuded of its beautiful garments. If one of them were asked about a Hebrew word, it would seem as if he were being addressed in a foreign language. They are like those of whom it is said: "For with stammering lips and with a strange tongue shall it be spoken to this people" (Isaiah 28:11).<sup>12</sup> I consider this to be one of the most terrible misfortunes to come upon our nation during our exile. This disease continues to spread among them, to the extent that most of them are never capable of putting the (Hebrew) letters together, and when they are, they are unable to understand or recognize what they have done, like those of whom it is said: "And their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language" (Nehemiah 13:24).

When I saw that virtue was held in the hand of contempt, and that the Holy Speech had been exchanged for ignorance and had come to be de-

11. This dedication was first published by Blau (1953: 47–49) as an appendix to Habermann (1953) from Bodley MS Poc. 192 (Neubauer 1886: no. 1977), with a Hebrew translation. For a revised publication and Hebrew translation, see Drory (1991: 18–20). Part of it is also to be found in Bodley MS Opp. Add. 4° 156 (Neubauer 1886: no. 2517), where it is preceded by a Hebrew dedication to "our master the Nagid Shemaryah" from "the land of Yemen," and in Bodley Heb. MS d. 57 (Neubauer and Cowley 1896–1906: no. 2745).

12. All of the English translations of biblical verses are quoted from the *Jewish Publication Society of America* (JPS) edition of the English Bible.

spised, I drew the swords of my determination (though their thoughts were notched) and begged the clouds of my creative imagination for rain (though they were empty of water). I then composed fifty Hebrew maqamat. I embellished them with pearls of the Prophets' words and studded them with precious stones of biblical phrases so that they turned out like embroidered gowns or well-ordered necklaces. Their pages shine with beauty, and their perfume is so strongly diffused that if the gardens once breathe it, they cannot but try to sniff it again. When the narrator tells his graceful stories, [even] the motionless mountains shake their shoulders (in astonishment). That is because I have included [in this collection] every amusing story and piquant tale; every enjoyable witticism and good joke(?) [*lamha*]; every exhortation that moves to tears and every entertaining anecdote; and every brilliant epistle and skillful writing such as would turn the grieving lover to consolation, and the indifferent to the folly of passion. I have embellished it with a variety of light and serious words and with panegyrics, both those of good and bad effect; and I have followed the theme of obscenity to the limit. I have expressed the virtues and nobility of every generous man, and smitten the vile with the sword of mockery, now with the flat side of its blade, and now with its point.

And so this book became one of the most useful of all written books of its kind because its amusing anecdotes and charming stories are an incentive to ignorant souls and an encouragement to distracted hearts to study the Hebrew language and penetrate its wonderful secrets and extraordinary subtleties. For I have collected in it many words that are obscure and difficult to understand so that if the reader is able to understand those opaque expressions, he will have acquired a good deal of knowledge about the Hebrew language, understood many of its meanings, and erected a massive column of its structures. If he persists in reading these maqamat, Hebrew will run smoothly off the tip of his tongue, and the bridle of his eloquence and clear expression will be slackened. And with God's will we shall explain every phrase that seems difficult or opaque in this collection. [These are the titles of the maqamat, their number, and the subject matter of each and every one of them.<sup>13</sup>]

When the honorable head [of the community] Sadid al-Dawla 'Abd al-Qadir, son of the heads of the Academy and the glory of the community of Aleppo, bestowed his generosity, charity, goodness, and grace upon my tongue—even if my ink flowed from the oceans and if my pen were made out of trees, I would never have been able to express my thanks for his kindness—I thought it right to adorn this compilation with his name, unique as he is in his generation, and with the name of his honorable and precious son, Abu Nasr. May the attention of God dwell with all its intensity upon their pure house, with its distinguished virtues. These are the titles of the maqamat according to their order.<sup>14</sup> (For the Arabic, see Drory 1991: 18–19)

13. This sentence clearly belongs at the end of the introduction, and indeed it is repeated there.

14. This translation, like all others in this paper, unless otherwise credited, is my own. I am most grateful to Professor Raymond Scheindlin, who was kind enough

The arguments of this dedication, which are advanced here in a rather straightforward way, can be summed up as follows: the majority of eastern Jews have such a poor command of the Hebrew language that they can hardly join the letters together to form words, let alone understand the meaning of the words. In order to combat this ignorance, says the author, he has decided to compose fifty maqamat in Hebrew, the language of the Prophets, in a variety of enchanting literary forms (Arabic, by their description) that will attract readers and encourage them to learn the Hebrew language through reading the book. There are many awkward words and difficult expressions in it, which, when studied, will contribute to a good command of the structure and eloquence of Hebrew. The author also promises to provide a glossary of the difficult words in the maqamat.

What is so striking about these dedications is the fact that no admiration for Arabic literature, the peak of Arabic eloquence (to be expected in a work inspired by Arabic as much as this one), is expressed here, but rather discontent and unhappiness at the declining condition of the Hebrew language. Admiration for Arabic eloquence is mentioned as a seemingly popular, but nevertheless incorrect, sentiment. Al-Harizi is intrigued not so much by the idea of Arabic literary or linguistic superiority as by the Jewish cultural situation in the East, of which he became aware while visiting there and which he considered to be worrisome. In the East he discovered a Jewish public who were not as familiar with Hebrew as he expected them to be, who were uninterested in Hebrew writing and probably highly taken with Arabic culture.<sup>15</sup> Irritated by this situation, he raised his voice in protest; he wished to redirect the eastern Jewish public back to their forsaken language by proving that Hebrew was no less suitable for literary and eloquent writing than Arabic and was perhaps even more suitable.

Why should al-Harizi have been so irritated and disturbed by this situation? Was it not common among Jews living within the Muslim culture (in the East as well as in Muslim Spain) to write more in Arabic than in Hebrew? In fact, it was customary to write in both languages while maintaining a very clear-cut division of functions between the two. Arabic served for all informative purposes, that is, the referential function of communication (to use Roman Jakobson's well-known scheme<sup>16</sup>), while Hebrew was reserved for mainly literary-aesthetic

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to read the draft translations of both the Arabic and the Hebrew texts and was extremely helpful in finding appropriate English equivalents for many phrases which were ambiguous and difficult in the original.

15. Testimony to the fact that eastern Jews also read Arabic maqamat is provided by a Geniza fragment of Ibn Butlan's *Risalat da'wat al-attiba'*, found in the Taylor-Schechter collection in Cambridge (see Baker 1990).

16. See Jakobson (1981: 21–28). Jakobson addresses the basic functions of ver-

and ceremonial functions (functions which were traditionally associated in Jewish literature). Thus we find Jews writing (Judeo-)Arabic biblical and talmudic exegesis, law, theology, philosophy, linguistics, poetics, letters (official and private), but rarely poetry.<sup>17</sup> Poetic texts, be they liturgical or secular, in poetry or prose, were written in Hebrew, their poetic-aesthetic intention clearly marked by their highly ornamented rhetorical style and by their intensive play among semantic and nonsemantic linguistic features. This division of functions was already established in Jewish writing by the first half of the tenth century, when Arabic models of writing first found their way into Jewish literature,<sup>18</sup> and was maintained practically throughout the entire Muslim period. The impact of this division on Jewish culture was so strong and at the same time so “naturalized” that one could find in the same book poems written in Hebrew with introductory passages giving details of the circumstances under which each poem had been composed, written in Arabic. It was therefore quite natural for Jews not to take much interest in the business of writing in Hebrew, which provided poetic registers only, when a full range of registers and literary forms was readily available in Arabic, comprising a tradition that had been viable for over two hundred years.

What was so irritating to al-Harizi, then, about such a well-established, venerable tradition of Jewish use of Arabic as the main written language? The reason for his attitude will become clear only if we consider al-Harizi’s cultural background and the ideological framework within which he worked during his earlier years in northern Spain and Provence. In the dedications cited above, al-Harizi addressed the poor command of Hebrew by Jews in the East. But, as already mentioned, he himself was not a native of the East, but had traveled there from northern Spain, where Jewish writing was undergoing a complete revolution at the time. In northern Spain the traditional division of functions described above was in the process of breaking down, and Hebrew had begun to take over more and more functions which had traditionally been fulfilled by Arabic, gradually replacing Arabic as the major written language of Jewish literature. As a result, new literary genres were developing in Hebrew, either through translations from Arabic or in original forms of Hebrew writing.

The struggle between Hebrew and Arabic over written-language

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bal communication in general; his definitions of the referential and the poetic functions are applied in my discussion to written texts only.

17. Poetry written by Jews in Arabic (using Arabic, not Hebrew, characters) was considered to be Muslim, not Jewish, literature. It thus survived mainly in Arabic literary anthologies, not in Jewish compilations (see Drory 1988: 52–53; 1992).

18. Not without Hebrew competing with Arabic over the referential function; for a full discussion of this matter, see Drory (1988: 41–54; 1992).

functions is clearly reflected in the prefaces added by contemporary northern-Spanish Jewish authors to their Hebrew works, in which they argue that the Hebrew language is suitable for *all literary purposes*. In the preface to his maqamat collection, for example, Jacob ben El'azar (late twelfth to early thirteenth century) places the argument for writing in Arabic in the mouths of "Ishmaelite sages" who mock the Jews, asking, "Is there a language more suitable for praising or cursing, or for rousing love than the language of the Arabs? / And for recounting wars and chronicles—are any words sweeter than our words?" To which the author responds, addressing his own people,

You speak to me in beautiful words and say: "Does not the Holy  
Tongue lag behind?"  
[Not at all!]  
—it puts song in the mouth of the dumb, so that he can  
sing fluently and not stumble,  
[You can] praise or curse in it, speak in rhyme<sup>19</sup> or tell a tale!

And again, in the following lines:

My people, what is it that you lack?  
You can use my words to say whatever you want  
and be sure that I will supply all your [literary] needs.  
Speak with ease and do not fail,  
"put forth a riddle, and speak a parable" (Ezekiel 17:2),  
read the book of tales [lit., parables] which I have composed,  
"know therefore and discern" (Daniel 9:25).  
(Schirmann 1939: 216–17 [Hebrew])

Al-Harizi himself supplies, in the first dedication to *Sefer tahkemoni*, a long list of literary forms which he included in his *Maqamat*:

And I gathered together in this book many parables and sweet themes. Among them various poems and striking riddles, words of instruction, songs of friendship, proverbs of right things; words of admonition, events of the time and tidings of the years. The remembrance of death and the place of the shadow of death; words of repentance, and pardoning of guilt. The delights of love and songs of love. The betrothing of women, bridal canopy and marriage, and matters of divorce; the drunkenness of drunkards; the asceticism of ascetics; wars of heroes and events of kings; the adventures of the road; songs of praise, and supplications of prayers; ethics of the sages, and associations of the upright. The passion of lovers; gardens and hamlets; words of princes; the patter of children; the hunt of hunters; the treachery of deceivers, and the folly of fools; the slandering of scorners, the blaspheming of revilers. And wonderful songs and epistles written in a

19. Literally, "ask a riddle"; but judging by the medieval use of such phrases as *mashal ve-hidda* and *mashal u-melitza*, and by contemporary biblical exegesis of such phrases, it seems that medieval Hebrew writers held the phrase to designate "a (fictional) narrative, instructive or amusing," and used it in the sense of "a tale," "an anecdote," and, quite often, "a rhymed piece of prose."

marvelous way: in order that this book may be as a garden in which are all manner of dainties and pleasant plantations. And in it each seeker will find his heart's desire and will attain of his longing sufficient for his need of that which he lacks. (Al-Harizi 1965–73: 36–37 [Hebrew: al-Harizi 1952: 13], in Appendix)

There is, of course, an element of conventionality in this list of literary materials and forms, as it was customary among Arabic authors of the *adab* genre (and the *maqamat* authors followed suit<sup>20</sup>) to present such lists in the prefaces to their writings. Yet, put in this particular ideological setting, it is also meant to declare Hebrew an adequately literary language in which one could, and should, address in writing any literary subject, using any literary form available. Declarations of this sort typically appeared at the time when Arabic was being displaced from its position as the main language for referential (informative) writing and Hebrew was taking over. In this particular case, the declaration prefaces a belletristic Hebrew text which actually signifies both the referential and the aesthetic functions of language. Such declarations, or even debates regarding Hebrew's adequacy as a scientific and informative language, are also found within texts actually written in Hebrew throughout the entire period.

But the most prominent sign of the breakdown of the traditional division of functions between Arabic and Hebrew is the abundance of translations into Hebrew that were produced in northern Spain and Provence during this period (Steinschneider 1956 [1893]; Halkin 1971). Once again, it is the introductions to the translations, especially the earlier ones, which reflect a particular awareness of “a new state” as regards the use of Hebrew for writing—an awareness different from the traditional one. The previous situation, whereby it had been customary to write virtually everything in Arabic, now seemed somewhat incomprehensible, even strange, with the result that some of the translators now felt the need to explain why previous generations of Jews had written in Arabic rather than in Hebrew. The main explanation given was that people in earlier times had failed to master Hebrew, so, if they wished to be understood, writers had no choice but to write in Arabic.

Moses ben Gikatilla (mid-eleventh century) says in the introduction to his translation of Judah Hayyug's *Kitab huruf al-lin*:

Forasmuch as a strange people bears rule over us, and we are swallowed up among nations of a deep speech and of a hard language, . . . for these reasons therefore Jewish grammarians were obliged to compose their works in Arabic, this being current in the mouth of a powerful people and easy of comprehension, while Hebrew was obscure; the former clear and intelli-

20. Cf. the introduction to al-Hariri's *Maqamat* (al-Hariri 1929: 6, in Appendix).

gible, the latter of doubtful meaning; as it was proper to explain the obscure by the clear, the difficult by the intelligible. The men of Zarephath, however, that dwell in the dominions of our brethren, the children of Esau [i.e., the Christians], do not for the most part understand Arabic, while they dearly love and are accustomed to speak the holy tongue. (Hayyug 1985 [1870]: 1–2 [English section]; *ibid.*: 1 [Hebrew section], in Appendix)

Judah ibn Tibbon (Granada 1120–Lunel 1190), in the introduction to his translation of *Faraid al-qulub* (Duties of the heart) by Bahya ibn Paquda, says more bluntly:

And after them [i.e., the sages of the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods, of the Mishnah and Talmud] most of the Geonim were in exile in the Ishmaelite kingdom [i.e., the Muslim kingdom] in Iraq, Palestine, and Persia, and they spoke the Arabic language. All the Israelite communities in those places spoke that language. They composed all their commentaries on the biblical books, the orders of the Mishnah and the Talmud, in Arabic, as they did with most of their other works and with the responses to the queries that were asked of them. This is because all the people understood that language, and also because Arabic is an ample language that is adequate to every subject and every speaker's and author's needs. Its idiom is straightforward, clear, and capable of speaking to the point better on any subject than is possible in Hebrew. For all we have of the Hebrew language is that which is found in the books of the Bible, and this does not suffice for all of a speaker's needs. Furthermore, they intended their compositions to benefit the simple people, who did not have a good command of the Holy Tongue. Therefore most of their compositions, on whatever subject they wrote, be it biblical or other studies, were in Arabic. (Ibn Paquda 1949 [1928]: 56–57 [Hebrew], in Appendix)

And in the introduction to his translation of *Sefer ha-riqma* by Ibn Ganah, he says:

He [Ibn Ganah] wrote these books in Arabic, the language of the people amongst whom he was living, because so were most of the compositions of the Geonim and the sages in the Ishmaelite kingdom. This is because Arabic is ample and eloquent, and its speaker finds nothing lacking in it. But of the Holy Tongue we only have what is found in the Bible, and that would not provide for all of a speaker's needs. Also, most of the people do not understand Hebrew, but only a few, and the rest of their contemporaries are familiar with Arabic, and so they chose it for their writings. But the people of this exile of the land of the Franks, and those of the Christian territories, do not know Arabic; those works would be like a sealed book to them, and would be inaccessible unless they were translated into Hebrew.<sup>21</sup> (Ibn Ganah 1964 [1929]: 4 [Hebrew], in Appendix)

21. Cf. on the same topic Joseph Qimhi (c. 1105–c. 1170), who also explains that it was from their Muslim neighbors that the Jews learned the importance of being aware of one's own language and taking measures to preserve and cultivate it (J. Kimhi 1887: 3; cf. D. Kimhi 1952 [1862]: 1, in Appendix).

In his translation of Maimonides' *Introduction to the Mishnah*, al-Harizi voices, in an elegantly rhymed prose style, a more radical opinion:

When I understood what they [i.e., the Jews of Marseilles, who ordered the translation from him] said, I hurried without waiting, fulfilled their word, and translated the commentary of this master [i.e., Maimonides] from Arabic into the Holy Tongue. I turned its lights from the west (the direction of the setting sun) towards the east (the direction of the rising sun). . . . I have translated it from the dark language of Kedar [i.e., Arabic] into the language of gold and glory. This is because I was jealous for the commentaries which the Torah carried, which deserve the rights of the firstborn, and yet were born on the knees of Hagar, Sarah's slave, while Sarah remained barren. In wonderment, I asked: "Can holiness and worldliness be joined? How can light and darkness be united?" But the sage's [i.e., Maimonides'] intention was to give wisdom to the simple, so he wrote it in Arabic for the sake of those who do not know the Holy Tongue but only Hagarite [Arabic], and their language is "half in the speech of Ashdod and [they] could not speak in the Jews' language" (Nehemiah 13:24). So I made an effort, took courage and removed foreign expressions from this holy treatise, so it left a prison to become a king; it washed in pure water, took off its [old] clothes and put on [new] ones. I translated its words into eloquent phrases and sweetened it with the sweetness of the Holy Tongue. (Maimonides 1960: 4 [Hebrew], in Appendix)

Al-Harizi no longer wishes to be understanding, or sympathetic, toward a practice so natural to Jewish literature in the East and in Muslim Spain, that is, using Arabic to write texts which bear upon the sacred scriptures or the Jewish codes of law. For him, this practice is unacceptable, impossible, and obsolete and must be modified and corrected. By translating into Hebrew Jewish works originally written in Arabic, al-Harizi feels that he is enabling these works to revert to their "true" language, thus restoring the nation's lost treasures.

Judah al-Harizi as well as Judah ibn Tibbon and his son Samuel (Provence, c. 1160–c. 1230) were among the first translators into Hebrew, as were also Abraham bar Hiyya, Moses ben Gikatilla, Joseph Qimhi, Jacob ben El'azar, almost all of whom were emigrants to northern Spain and Provence. They translated mainly Jewish-Arabic works, and sometimes the same work would be translated by more than one translator, as in the case of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, which was translated by both al-Harizi and Samuel ibn Tibbon. It may be typical of the vanguard to feel an (almost compulsive) need to comment frequently on their profession, thereby legitimizing it over and over again. Both al-Harizi and Judah ibn Tibbon did so, as did Judah ibn Tibbon's son Samuel, while at the same time they contested

and criticized each other's work. We are thus afforded a fairly well-rounded view of how the translators themselves perceived the task of translating from Arabic into Hebrew at the time. These comments reveal that al-Harizi and the Tibbons each viewed their mission quite differently: al-Harizi's overall attitude was one of unequivocal acceptance of the Hebrew-for-writing ideology, and he was in full accord with his mission. He seemed happy to convert into Hebrew any text he may have been asked to, convinced that by so doing he was simply reclaiming what had originally been there to begin with, but which had, over the ages, been lost or even "stolen." He sought to prove that the Hebrew language could be appropriately used in a wide range of written forms, so, over and above translating, he also wrote his own *maqamat*, comprising a handbook of Hebrew styles intended to encourage eastern Jews to use Hebrew as a written language. This is why he declares his intention to provide the reader of the *Maqamat* with a glossary.

The Tibbons, on the other hand, regarded their work very differently. Judah ibn Tibbon, for instance, expresses explicit doubts about the very possibility of translating into Hebrew and is skeptical about the quality of such translations (Ibn Paquda 1949 [1928]: 58, in Appendix). He addresses the difficulties facing the translator, discussing the fact that Arabic is an "ample" language, while Hebrew is "short" [i.e., limited] and sparse. His attitude movingly attests to the harsh difficulties facing an Andalusian newcomer to northern Spain who was accustomed to writing in Arabic and was forced to switch to Hebrew, undertaking to transform it into a language capable of accommodating topics for which, in fact, it had no working registers (cf. Halkin 1963: 239–41).

Debates and discussions concerning the functions of Hebrew, its ability to supply a full range of literary modes of expression, and specific modes for translation were all part of a single overall process: the creation of a new Jewish literature. Since Arabic literature still retained its high status in northern Spain and Provence, the construction of this new Jewish literature was accomplished mainly by borrowing from the Arabic literature. This is why northern-Spanish Jewish literature resembles Andalusian literature up to a point and is usually regarded as a direct extension of it. But in fact the paradigm on which the new Jewish literature in Christian Spain was based was quite different from the dominant paradigm of Jewish literature during the Muslim period. The foremost innovation was the production of the new literature mainly (indeed, almost exclusively) in Hebrew. Writing in Hebrew was accompanied by ideological declarations which assigned

to Hebrew writing the role of marking a particular collective or ethnic identity that could be called “national.”

What were the reasons for imposing this new role on Hebrew at this specific point in time and place? To what extent did the local environment motivate the use of vernacular languages (such as Castilian and the Romance languages) in writing or the renaissance in Arabic-Latin translations, introducing new literary practices into Jewish society, practices to be performed in Hebrew? These questions are still open and remain to be answered. Yet one thing does seem clear: if not for the prevailing cultural climate in northern Spain and Provence at the time, al-Harizi would most probably never have written his Hebrew *maqamat*. For although they seem so Arabic in character, as products of the Jewish-Arabic culture they would have been most unlikely, particularly in the East.<sup>22</sup> There would have been no reason to upset the traditional Arabic-Hebrew division of functions prevalent during the Muslim period, thereby bringing about new forms of writing in Hebrew.<sup>23</sup> In other words, it took a non-Muslim and non-Arabic cultural atmosphere, that of Christian Spain, to produce a literary work so notably Arabic-Hebrew in nature.

22. The different attitudes toward Hebrew writing found in northern Spain and the East are best illustrated by al-Harizi himself, who, in the preface to *Sefer tahkemoni*, describes how he was asked while still in Spain to translate al-Hariri's work into Hebrew: “For the nobles of Spain, when they heard the words of the Arab's book [al-Hariri's *Maqamat*], marveled at them. And they sought of me while I was still among them to translate this book for them and I was not able to turn them away” (al-Harizi 1965–73: 39, in Appendix). But when he composed his own Hebrew *Maqamat* in the East, he had to “seek of the patrons of the world, from Egypt to Babylon, [for] one with whose name I might adorn the book and it would be sealed with his seal. I searched him among the leaders of the time, and sought for him but found him not, and no one answered me when I called” (ibid.: 41), until at last a patron was found.

23. The fact that while still in the East, but apparently after he had composed *Sefer tahkemoni* (Stern 1964b: 199, in Appendix), al-Harizi also wrote a Judeo-Arabic *maqama* seems to indicate that he himself realized that there was no great public for Hebrew writing there and that he would have to write in Arabic in order to make his voice heard. Explaining why he wrote in Arabic, he notes, “When I visited Baghdad the Jewish community there turned its back on me and treated me rudely. I have therefore decided to compose a *maqama* in Arabic about them, in which I will expose some of their hidden vices; . . . let me quote here from this *maqama* so that it will serve to commemorate what they have done” (Stern 1964a: 150–51, in Appendix). His explanation clearly echoes the argument used about two hundred years earlier, when Arabic first began competing with Hebrew for the referential function of Jewish writing, namely, that one should write in Arabic if one wants the message to be clearly conveyed and understood by all (cf. Drory 1988: 46–48; 1992). Such an argument would accompany, needless to say, a refutation or a piece of satirical writing.

## Appendix

### Primary Texts/Translations

#### Galenus

1852 *Dialog über die Seele*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by A. Jellinek (Leipzig: C. L. Fritzsche).

#### al-Hamadhani, Badi' al-Zaman

1962 *Maqamat*, edited by M. 'Abd al-Hamid (Cairo).

#### al-Hariri, al-Qasim b. 'Ali

1872 *Mahberot itiel*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by Thomas Chenery (London).

1929 *Maqamat* (Cairo).

1951 *Mahberot itiel*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by Y. Peretz (Tel Aviv: Mahbarot le-Sifrut).

#### al-Harizi, Judah

1845 *Die ersten Makamen aus dem Tahkemoni oder Divan des Charisi nebst dessen Vorrede*, edited by S. I. Kaempf (Berlin).

1899 *Tahkemoni*, edited by A. Kaminka (Warsaw: Schuldberg).

1924 [1883] *Tahkemoni*, edited by P. de Lagarde (Hanover [Göttingen 1883]).

1952 *Tahkemoni*, edited by Y. Toporowsky (Tel Aviv: Mahbarot le-Sifrut).

1965–73 *The Tahkemoni of Judah al-Harizi*, translated by V. E. Reichert (Jerusalem: R. H. Cohen's Press Publishers).

#### Hayyug, Judah

1985 [1870] *Two Treatises on Verbs Containing Feeble and Double Letters by R. Jehuda Hayug of Fez, translated into Hebrew from the Original Arabic by R. Moses Gikatilia of Cordova; to which is added the Treatise on Punctuation by the same author, translated by Aben Ezra*, edited by J. W. Nutt (Jerusalem [London and Berlin 1870]).

#### Hirschfeld, Hartwig

1903 "Fragment of an Unknown Work by Judah al-Harizi," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 16: 683–88, 693–97.

#### Ibn Ezra, Moses

1924 *Sefer shirat israel (Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara)*, translated by B.-Z. Halper (Leipzig: A. Y. Schtibel).

1935 *Shire ha-hol*, edited by H. Brody (Berlin: Schocken).

1975 *Kitab al-muhadara wa al-mudhakara*, edited by A. S. Halkin (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim).

#### Ibn Ganah, Jonah

1964 [1929] *Sefer ha-riqma*, translated by Judah ibn Tibbon, edited by M. Vilenski (Jerusalem: ha-Akademya la-Lashon ha-'Ibrit [Berlin 1929]).

#### Ibn Ishaq, Hunayn

1896 *Sefer musre ha-philosophim (Sinnssprüche der Philosophen)*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by A. Loewenthal (Frankfurt a.M.: J. Kauffmann).

#### Ibn Paquda, Bahya

1949 [1928] *Sefer hobot ha-lebabot (Fara'id al-qulub)*, translated by Judah ibn Tibbon, edited by A. Zifroni (Tel Aviv: Mahbarot le-Sifrut [Jerusalem: J. Junovitch]).

#### Ibn Rudhwan, 'Ali

1900 *Igeret 'ali ha-ishmeeli*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by M. Grossberg (London).

#### Kimhi, David

1952 [1862] *Sefer mikhlol*, edited by Y. Rittenberg (Jerusalem [Lyck 1862]). *David Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar "Mikhlol"*, translated and annotated by W. Chomsky (New York: Bloch).

- Kimhi (Kimchi), Joseph  
1887 *Sefer ha-galuj*, edited by H. J. Mathews (Berlin: Mekize Nirdamim).
- Maimonides, Moses  
1904 [1851] *Moreh nebukhim*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by L. Schlossberg and S. Scheyero (Warsaw [London 1851]).  
1960 *Hakdamot le-perush ha-mishna*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by M. D. Rabinovitz (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rab Kuk).  
1989 "Ma'amar tehiyat ha-metim," translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by A. S. Halkin, *Kobez Al Yad (Minora Manuscripta Hebraica)* 9: 129–50.
- al-Maqqarri, Ahmad b. Muhammad  
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