From the Margins to Prime Time: Israeli Arabs on Israeli Television

The case of Sayed Kashua's "Arab Labour"

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Abstract

Over recent decades, with the growing debate over multiculturalism in Israel, the representation of minorities in mass media has received new attention. The current research discusses the place of Israeli Arabs on Israeli television through the case-study of **Arab Labour (**In Hebrew, **Avoda Aravit**)**,** a satirical sitcom written by Sayed Kashua (Channel 2, Keshet, 2007, 2010, 2012), which focuses on the shattered identity of Arab Israelis

Our research shows that **Arab Labour** has triggered off changes in the way Arab Israelis are represented on Israeli television, in terms of their visibility on television, the quality of that visibility, and their interaction with the majority group. We examine a corpus of episodes dealing with three central themes: the Israeli identity card; attitudes to Jewish holidays and Jewish history; and the memory of the 1948 War versus the Nakba.

Keywords: Sayed Kashua, Israeli television, 1948 War, the Nakba, Israeli identity, Arab-Israeli identity, Sitcom.

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The politics of recognition and the medium of television

Israel, among other countries, has been transformed, in the past two decades, from a 'melting-pot' policy and ideology towards a multicultural perception. This change raises a range of questions about the identity, rights, and representation of different groups and sectors (Yona, 2005; Yona and Shenhav, 2005; Margalit and Halbertal, 1998). Television, alongside other forms of mass media, is a major player in the field of culture, having an important role in the politics of recognition, and in shaping the identity of individuals and groups (Lewis et al., 2005). Yet if we accept the Bourdieuan picture in which actors in the cultural field struggle for recognition, legitimacy, dominance, and prestige, and that possessors of prestige will strive to boost and preserve their legitimacy and dominance, we can assume that since television is owned and managed by power groups in society, it will try to bulwark its hegemony and immobilize the margins (Bourdieu, 1983, 1984; Katz, 1995). Indeed, we see such a tendency in the Israeli context, where television (and particularly the three chief channels – 1, 10, and 22) attempts to conserve, even in this multicultural era, a sort of tribal campfire that helps shore up the sense of national pride and endorses Jewish and Zionist values. It is particularly noticeable in televised broadcasts at times of crisis and during Jewish and national holidays (Yuran, 2001).

However, it would be untrue to consider television only as a power-driven, hegemonic entity. Fiske (1987) believes it is incorrect to assume that television is an agent for preserving the status quo, and that it is not involved in social and cultural changes. Popular televised texts are not flat and one-dimensional. In most cases they are open and have multiple and polysemic meanings. They are likely to be decoded diversely: through the dominant hegemonic reading; in an oppositionary reading that subverts the hegemonic codes; and also as part of a polysemic reading characterized by combined hegemonic and subversive positions. Surprisingly, oppositionary and polysemic readings come with capitalist motivations – they help to connect different groups to the televised text and thus increase the number of viewers.

Television's status as a guardian of the hegemony on one hand and as a presenter of certain subversive content on the other, becomes more complex when sitcoms are concerned. On the one hand, situation comedy is generally perceived as a tool for

representing superficial, reproduced stereotypes (Brook, 2001). Repeating the predictable traits of sitcoms' protagonists perpetuates gendered, ethnic, and class-based social representations, and strengthens hegemonic groups' control over minority groups (Bhabha 1994; Hall, 1997; Lubin, 2006; Parkins, 1979). Yet on the other hand, the comic dimension may give room for criticism either by creating a carnivalesque situation – which enables a temporary release from inflexible hierarchies (Bakhtin, 1984); by building antithetical frameworks of context between the possible and the unfeasible (Palmer, 1988); generating conflict between different meanings (Shifman, 2008); or by the exaggeration and vulgarization of stereotypes to the point where they are diminished or shattered (Lubin, 2006). Sitcoms are able to offer a subversive look.

Representations of Arabs in Israeli television

Research of Israeli media elicits that a society intent on preserving its solidarity identifies members of the minority as potential threats to the social order. To a great extent, this holds true when describing representations of Arabs in Israeli television. There is a tendency to describe them negatively, hinting at their ties with undesirable phenomena such as violence, riots, social disquiet, and instability. This representation is of course biased and gives the wrong impression, yet since the Arabs, like any minority, are located far from the centre of social power, they fail to penetrate into the media and change the social discourse, which is chiefly focused on the interests of those possessing power, and thus cannot unravel the negative stereotypes ascribed to them, (First and Avraham, 2004).

In the cinematic context, until the 1980s Arabs appeared in Israeli film as threats to the Israeli hegemony. They were portrayed as a featureless mass, violent and aggressive, whose aim was to dismantle the Jewish hegemony. Those representations changed after the political turnover of 1977. Israeli filmmakers, many of whom held left-wing political views, began engaging with the tribulations of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. In the majority of cases, they presented the harshness of Israel's oppressive rule (Shohat, 1991). Humane and relatively complex representations of Arabs are discernible in those later films.

In television, however, Arab Israelis were until recently one of the most inferior groups. A research report issued in 2006 by the Second Authority for Television and Radio reveals that Israeli Arabs are the most underrepresented group in Israeli television. Although they have a minimal presence in news and current events programmes (usually in a negative context), they are almost totally absent from talk-shows and entertainment programmes (Laor et al., 2006). Thus, as Amal Jamal contends, Israeli-Arabs suffer from dual discrimination on television: first, exclusion, and second, visibility twinned with negative stereotypes (Jamal, 2006).

Comedy TV programmes offer slightly different representations. Until recent years, only a few television programmes, mostly humorous ones, featured Arab Israelis. In the early 1970s, Israel Television broadcast an Arabic-speaking series, **Adal and Samira,** starring Jacques Cohen and Lilit Nagar and focusing on the life of an Arab couple. In 1984, an episode in the series **Krovim-Krovim (Near Ones, Dear Ones)** dealt with the character of an Arab who wants to work as a house-cleaner for a Jewish family, while in 1985 Channel 1 launched a series called **The Big Restaurant**, featuring relationships between Arabs and Jews in an Arab restaurant. Yair Nitzani played the role of an Arab, Hashem Tamid, in **Siba Le-Mesiba** (literally, **A Reason to Party**). Some humorous references were also made on Israeli television to Palestinians and Arabs outside Israel; in 1986 an episode of the **Zehu Zeh (This is It**) series - **The Arab Film** - a parody of Egyptian melodrama, was broadcast and achieved cult status. That year, the television broadcasted a sketch by Dudu Topaz in his programme **Plitat Peh** (**Slip of the Tongue**) dealing with an Arab handyman who is employed at the Ministry of Defence. During the Gulf War, the characters of Bassam Aziz, the fictitious ambassador of Iraq in Israel, as well as the character of Saddam Hussein featured in the programme **Ha-Olam Ha-erev** (**The World Tonight**).

The Arab characters in these comic programmes were usually 'good Arabs' – a student of computers, a young couple, or the staff of a restaurant. None of the characters took issue with the Jewish hegemony or planned to undermine it, but simply aspired to live a peaceful life and to improve their status (Shifman, 2008). Frequently, the characters of Arabs outside Israel were presented as comic caricatures of threatening leaders (for example, Saddam Hussein in **The World**

Tonight, and Yasser Arafat in the **Hartzufim** series [a political satire show with puppets, that ran from 1996 to 2000]). There, the exaggeration created a comic effect, rendering the menacing characters ridiculous and helping to minimize their inherent threat.

In Ella Shohat's book **Israeli Film - East/West and the Politics of Representation** (1991), she analyzes representations of Mizrahim and Palestinians in Israeli cinema and points out that until the 1980s many works withheld from Arabs the right to self-representation: instead of casting Arab actors to play the characters of Arabs, Jewish actors played Arab characters.   In television too, many Arab characters were played by Jewish actors: in **The Big Restaurant**, the Jewish actor Jacques Cohen played an Israeli Arab, the Jewish actor Yair Nitzani took on the roles of Hashem Tamid and Bassam Azizi, and the Jewish actor Matti Seri acted as Saddam Hussein.

Case-study: Sayed Kashua's 'Arab Labour'

Sayed Kashua was born in 1975 in the Arab village of Tira, and at the age of 15 was admitted to the School of Arts and Sciences in Jerusalem, where most of the time he was the only Arab student in his class. Kashua studied sociology and philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and later became a journalist with the newspaper **Kol Ha'Ir** and **Haaretz**. He has published three books: his first book **Dancing Arabs** (2004) is an anthology of stories with an autobiographical dimension, describing the childhood and adolescence of the protagonist who is conflicted between his Arab surroundings and the Jewish surroundings that he aspires to belong to; his second book **Let it be Morning** (2006) is an apocalyptic novel describing the identity crisis of an Israeli Arab, in which events lead towards catastrophe. The third book **Second Person** (2012) returns to the identity crisis of Israeli Arabs from a different direction, through two protagonists. One is an attorney from East Jerusalem, and the other is a young social worker from Tira who has recently graduated, starts working as the caregiver of a Jewish young man in a vegetative state, and eventually decides to take on his identity. In 2007 the first season of the series **Arab Labour,** written by Sayed Kashua, was screened. The second season was shown in 2010, and the third in 2012

(for a further research into Kashua's works in prose, the press, and television, see: Mendelson-Maoz and Steir-Livny, 2011a and 2011b).

Arab Labour is a humorous, sarcastic portrayal of the lives of an Arab family in Israel, ridiculing the stereotypes of Jews and Arabs in Israel and the ways in which each group perceives the other. Amjad, the protagonist, recalls Kashua's own biography. He is an Israeli Arab journalist of 35, afflicted by a problem of identity: he tries to enter the Jewish-Israeli elite but is torn between his two worlds – the Arab and Jewish ones. He downplays his Arab identity and does everything possible to join the left-wing Ashkenazi elite that he admires. To achieve his aim, he's ready to lie, ingratiate himself, and to erase any traits of his Arab identity. His exaggerated, ridiculous behaviour propels Amjad into far-fetched situations. Amjad is married to Bushra, who is proud of her identity and contented with her world; Amal, a friend of the family, is an attorney who studied in Boston, defines herself as a Palestinian, and devotes her professional skills to the legal defence of Palestinians. Amjad's parents, who are also at peace with their identity (the village, local customs and educational methods), are embarrassed by Amjad's 'Jewish' behaviour.

The **Arab Labour** series heralded a change in the place of Israeli Arabs in Israeli television. **Arab Labour** is written and acted by members of the Arab-Israeli minority; it focuses on the lives of the Arab-Israeli minority in Israel, and Arabic is its dominant language (80% of the dialogues were in Arabic). Yet, it targets a wide audience, including the Jewish-Israeli majority. In this context, entering prime time with such a programme is a success, even if, as Kashua phrases it, 'padding the screen' (Kashua, in Zoabi, 2007) is necessary. Adopting the 'language' of the majority, be it through certain cultural gestures or a Hebrew context, in order to attract the Israeli-Jewish audience to the series, could damage Kashua's Arab cultural authenticity (Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1990, 1999; Hall, 1994, 1996). Such a step could well adversely affect the cultural group he belongs to and imply disloyalty to its basic values (Zoabi, 2007; Kupfer, 2008; Halabi, 2010; Hlehel, 2008). At the same time, however, it is only by donning a 'white mask' (to use Fanon's phrase [1952]) that an Arab screenwriter can show Jewish-Israeli viewers scenes from his life and liberate his characters from perceptions enforced on them by the hegemony (Brenner, 2001). **Arab Labour**

received very high ratings: for example, an average of 19.1% per episode and 24.9% for the final episode of the first season; these are highly impressive statistics for a sitcom, especially for a non-Hebrew-speaking one. The programme also received extremely good reviews from Jewish TV critics.

But – paradoxically against the backdrop of this major commercial success – the question must be asked whether **Arab Labour** has in fact changed the way that Israeli-Arabs are represented on Israeli television. First and Avraham (2004) suggest examining representations of minority groups on television by checking three factors: first, how does the group appear on the screen? Is it absent, is it represented stereotypically? Is the stereotype negative or positive? Second, what is the social, cultural and economical status of the group's members? And third, what is the nature of the interaction between members of the majority group and the minority group?

Analyzing **Arab Labour** shows that the series successfully brought Israeli Arabs to centre-screen and depicted them in an unorthodox way. To validate this argument, we present a qualitative-narrative research with a discussion focusing on three pivotal themes: the role of the Israeli identity card; attitudes towards Jewish history and Jewish holidays; and the memory of the 1948 War versus the Nakba.

Between identity and the Identity Card – the hybridity of Israeli Arabs

The Israeli identity card is among the objects that symbolize for Kashua the fissured identity of Israeli Arabs. Analyzing episodes and situations that feature the ID card, its presence and absence, highlights its ambivalent significance for Israeli Arabs. On the one hand, the blue ID card implies the inclusion of Arabs within Israeli society as citizens; but on the other, Israeli Arabs are constantly required to present their ID cards, a recurring event emphasizing that the 'burden of proof' still devolves on them. In the first episode of the series, Amjad tries to fathom out why, despite his 'Israeli appearance', he is asked to show his ID card every morning at the checkpoint. He attempts to conceal his identity as best he can – by listening to Galei Tzahal, the IDF radio-station, dressing in western outfits and, naturally, refraining from speaking Arabic – but the soldier still stops him every day. Ultimately his Jewish co-worker comes up with the solution – he must change his car, because "only Arabs drive

Subarus". Amjad complies, and in his new car he crosses through the checkpoint without let or hindrance: the soldier waves him through amiably, theatrically (but not totally convincingly), and his ID card stays in his pocket.

In the second episode of the first season, Amjad is dispatched to cover an incident with Abu Jalal's flock of sheep, following an item about a particularly intelligent sheep that is able to remove the ID card from its owner's pocket and present it to a soldier, when he is asked to show his ID ("*jib al-hawiya"*). With little enthusiasm and some scepticism, Amjad addresses the sheep but gets no response. Abu Jalal comments that he must ask aggressively, the way the soldiers do. Amjad tries again but with no success. Like the viewers who can't identify the specific sheep in the entire flock – he is positive that there's no story. Yet, in the final shot of the episode, as the titles roll, soldiers arrive to Abu Jalal's flock, ask for the card aggressively, and the sheep hands it over. The story of the sheep has a symbolic meaning, reflecting the absurdity of Israeli society that mandates obedience from the Israeli Arabs.

In the second episode of the second season, Amjad's ID card ends up with a handyman (who promises to change the Place of Residence section in Amjad's card, at the Interior Ministry in East Jerusalem). After an apparent attempt to run someone over, his card is picked up by the police. As a result of this comedy of errors, his Israeli ID transforms Amjad into a potential terrorist.

The identity card also has an important role in its deliberate absence. The first episode of the third season brings Amjad to the "Big Brother" house, where all identity attributes of all the participants are concealed. Amjad is assigned a task (by the production team) to disguise his Arab identity and impersonate a Jew. Amjad plays a patriotic Israeli Jew successfully, and the Jewish participants are sure he's 'one of them', until the moment the production reveals the truth, through a dramatic encounter between Amjad and his father.

The Judaization of the Israeli Arabs

Israel defines itself as a Jewish democratic state. The Jewish component of that definition creates conflict for Israel's non-Jewish citizens. It is hard for them to identify with the state's Jewish symbols, like the flag and the national anthem, and

they must accept as an indisputable fact their status as a marginal group, in terms of religion. The Alian family, the focus of **Arab Labour,** lives among both Muslims and Jews. But Amjad's efforts to join the sociocultural Jewish-Israeli elite obliges him to deal with the historical and contemporary Jewish context. Bushra, Amal, and Amjad's parents, all have a clear Muslim and secular identity. Amjad, as the typical anti-hero of the series, tries mightily to resemble an Israeli Jew and finds himself in a Judaization process or, as Kashua phrases it, an 'assimilation' process (Kashua, 2002, 77).

Attitudes to Judaism, Jewish history, and Jewish religious holidays are recurring themes in many episodes. Amjad is attracted to the Jewish holidays, which symbolize for him a combination of traditional life and western enlightenment-culture, an ideal expression of tolerance, friendship, and hospitality. Participating in Jewish holidays ostensibly offers Amjad an opportunity to assimilate into Israeli society.

The fifth episode of the first season of **Arab Labour** focuses on Passover Eve. Kashua presents two parallel situations: the first scene shows a meeting between Amal, the Palestinian feminist nationalistic lawyer, and Meyer, Amjad's Jewish photographer friend; the second one focuses on Amjad's family who are invited to celebrate the *Seder* (the Jewish family gathering on Passover Eve) at the home of their Jewish friends. Meyer works all day to make Amal Arab food, but she accuses him of Orientalism ["Just because I'm Arab, does that mean I can't eat schnitzel and mashed potatoes? Only stuffed vine leaves and *maqloobeh*?" (Arab dishes)]. When he speaks to her in the second person plural ("**You** are not OK, **you** carried out a suicide bombing on Passover"), she leaves his flat furiously. At the same time, Amjad is attempting to celebrate the Seder properly with his Jewish friend's family. He wears a skullcap, sings the holiday songs, tastes the 'strange' food and almost chokes from the pungent horseradish and *haroset* (Jewish dishes) that are piled on his plate.

Amjad's assimilation campaign reaches an undeniable peak with the sixth episode in the second season, when he decides to take part in a Purim holiday celebration. A carnivalesque play (Bakhtin, 1984) leads this episode and enables an examination of Arab Israelis' hybrid identity. Meir, Amjad's Jewish friend, invites him to a fancy-dress party. When Amjad says that he has no costume, Meir promises "to handle it" and he

does so: Amjad arrives at the party dressed as an IDF soldier. The Purim party lets him invert the hierarchy; he's proud of his uniform and preens himself in it. Walking out of the club to catch some fresh air, he encounters two Palestinian terrorists planning on kidnapping an Israeli soldier. Seeing Amjad with his soldier-costume, they conclude that he's an Israeli soldier and kidnap him. Meir's ID card in his uniform pocket convinces them that they really have kidnapped a soldier. A long time passes until they realize that the panic-stricken kidnapped soldier is an Arab whose fate interests no one – including his family who are furious over his 'self-Judaizing' efforts and tell his captors that they're welcome to keep him.

In the fourth episode of the third season Amjad receives an opportunity to visit a synagogue. In series of comic errors, he meets a Hassidic Jew who believes Amjad is a Jew who is married to an Arab woman and tries to 'bring him back' to Judaism. In this surrealist scene, Amjad's dream comes true: he becomes not only a Jew, but an Orthodox Jew. When the mistake is discovered Amjad is thrown out of the synagogue in disgrace. Again, his absurd efforts 'to be Jewish' have failed.

The memory of the Nakba and the 1948 War in the series

Israel's 1948 War of Independence is equivalent to the Palestinians' Nakba - disaster. That event is in fact the watershed which creates the strongest contrast between the two national and historical narratives – the Israeli narrative and the Palestinian one. A few episodes in the **Arab Labour** series engage with this theme. The final episode of the first season takes place on Independence Day, the eighth episode of the second series deals with the 1948 War and the Nakba, and the final episode of the third season creates a situation of war that embodies other wars and sharpens this conflict. In the final episode of the first season, Bushra is about to give birth, exactly on Israel's Independence Day. Amjad's father wants the boy to be named Ismail (a name reflecting the biblical story of Ishmael, Isaac's brother). The parents want to call the boy Adam – a name that is neutral in nationalist terms. Matters become complicated when it turns out that a donor has promised to give a million shekels to the parents of the first baby born in Israel on Independence Day. Amjad and Bushra officially win the prize, but the alarmed donor who had not envisaged awarding the money to an Arab

baby, hurriedly adds an extra condition – the baby must be called 'Israel'. The donor assumes that the Arab family will refuse to name their baby 'Israel'. The episode ends with a comical resolution – the prize is divided between Amjad's family, who officially were the first to give birth, and a Jewish family whose baby was born almost simultaneously. The Jews call their son 'Israel', Amjad and Bushra name their son 'Ismail', and the equal distribution of the donation represents an utopian equality. There is a catch, however, since it is the Jewish family which appears in the media as a shining example of Israeli Jewish society. Though the Israeli Arab family receives half of the donation, they remain behind a curtain. This is how Kashua uses the symbolic event to show his sarcastic opinion of the place of Israeli Arabs in Israeli society, which claims to grant them equal rights.

Episode eight in the second season takes a different approach to the Nakba, and describes the vortex of identities to which the three characters – Amjad, his wife Bushra, and their daughter Maya – are subjected. It opens with Maya doing her homework, in which she must list 'the reasons for the outbreak of the War of Independence'. Bushra is appalled by the very question, but Amjad dictates the Zionist narrative to his daughter. A quarrel erupts between Amjad and Bushra, that drives the whole episode. Bushra wants "the girl to learn in a school where she won't forget who she is, and where she comes from", while Amjad replies that "tomorrow every lousy cop in the Border Police will remind her who she is and where she comes from". Bushra wants her daughter to be proud of her Palestinian identity, while Maya answers the question "What happened in 1948?" by writing "the Jewish state was founded in the Land of Israel, and it was named the State of Israel." The argument around Maya's identity is further complicated by the forthcoming Memorial Day ceremony for the IDF fallen. Maya sings in the school choir, but the teacher in charge of the choir believes it is inappropriate for her to participate in the ceremony. Maya is hurt: "Am I not like everyone else?" she asks. Amjad consents for his daughter to take part in the school's Memorial Day ceremony, but the fact must be kept secret from Bushra, and so Maya is brought to her grandmother's house, to spend the night before the ceremony there. This evening Maya discovered the family history. She asks her grandmother "What was the Nakba?" and the grandmother opens an old album

and sits with Maya, telling her the historical chronicles of the Nakba. At the end of the episode, the camera cross-cuts between Maya and her grandmother sitting with the album, and Maya's active participation in the Memorial Day ceremony where she sings "*Shir Ha'Reut*" (The Song of Friendship), a definitively Zionist text dealing with Jewish heroes who fell for the sake of the nascent state. The parallel scenes create a comparison between the Zionist text, that Maya sings, and the Palestinian memory of the Nakba. Maya sings about the heroism of the Jewish fighters in the 1948 war, while the pages of the photo album look back at the tragedy of the Nakba and the Palestinians who died during it. A link is thus created between the powerfully loaded text in the context of Israeli memory, and the memory of the fallen Palestinians – imbuing it with sensitivity, understanding, and identification that undermine the Zionist context and create a new dimension of criticism.

In the tenth and final episode of the third season, Kashua targets this conflict in a different manner. He creates a situation of war that forces the Jewish and Arab neighbours to lock themselves in the communal shelter. This tense situation stimulates different traumas of war from both sides: Holocaust, Nakba, other Israeli wars against the Arab world, and a fear of the unknown enemy. In the episode, the characters move between the desire to understand each other's sorrow and traumas and to forgive, and the mutual fear that creates hate and distance.

At a certain point the neighbours try to leave the shelter, and discover that they are locked in. They are imprisoned with each other in the shelter just as they are in the world outside, in a conflict they cannot escape. As in the Nakba episode of the second season, the children, the younger generation, are the one who can break the spell. In the second season it was Maya, Amjad's daughter who created the link between the traumatic pain of both sides. In this episode it is Nadav, the Jewish boy, who watches the grownups bickering, refuses to take part in it, and easily opens the shelter's door and leaves.

Conclusion

Exploring representations of the minority group of Arab Israelis in the series through a discussion of the central issues (the identity card, attitudes to Jewish history and

Jewish holidays, and the 1948 War versus the Nakba) elicits surprising conclusions, obtained by addressing the three indices that First and Avraham (2004) propose.

In terms of visibility, Kashua brings Arab Israelis to the mainstream screen. The chief protagonists are Arab Israelis, and the language spoken in the series is almost totally Arabic. Complying with the nature of the television sitcom, the characters are ostensibly stereotypical. Yet the series enables a presentation of various faces of Israeli Arabs, since different characters represent discrete stereotypes. Kashua also uses various strategies to extricate Arabs from their stereotypical setting: he reveals the superficiality of the stereotypes; he converts stereotypes into a carnivalesque portrayal; he projects Israeli and Jewish stereotypes onto his Arab protagonists, reducing them ad absurdum; and he pushes stereotypes to a state of unreasonableness, inflates, deflates, and then shatters them.

The second aspect that First and Avraham cite is linked to the cultural, economical and social status. Here too, Kashua makes a change in the representation of Arabs on television. Most of his characters are middle-class: Amjad is a respected journalist, whose psychologist wife is studying for a graduate degree. She later opens her own clinic, and gets a job in a hospital. Her good friend, Amal, is a female lawyer. The parent's generation are described as less educated, and less integrated into Israeliness, but they are certainly not drawn as primitive. They use their home computers, send their children to after-school activities, surf the Internet, discuss national issues, and criticize Israeli politics.

The third aspect relates to the interaction between minority and majority groups. It is clearly shown in the series that, despite professional ties between the Alian family and the Jewish Israeli majority, interactions between Arabs and the Jewish majority whom they encounter daily are not straightforward. They are reported in the series not through the eyes of the majority but through those of Arab Israelis dealing with the insoluble clash between their Israeliness and their familial and national identity, between their Arabness and the Jewishness of the majority surrounding them.

The topics presented in this article show that Kashua's work provides a riveting and unique case-study for examining representations of Arabs on Israeli television. **Arab Labour** constitutes a shift in the modes of representation of Arab Israelis on

television, and successfully twins commercial success with stringent social criticism that reveals and undermines the sociocultural reality in which Arab Israelis live.

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