CHANGES IN POETIC NORMS DURING A TRANSITION PERIOD IN POETRY

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The intention of this article is to analyze the changes in poetic norms, during the Hibat Ziyon period, according to the poems published in the annual periodical Luah Ahiasaf. In analyzing the publishing policy of Luah Ahiasaf, we found that writings were published for several reasons. Works were published (1) which won the aesthetic approval of the editors; (2) which although not highly valued from a literary point of view by the editors, were included in order to supply the need for literary material. This need for literary material influenced the frequent inclusion of translated works in Luah Ahiasaf. Of special importance in this respect was Ben-Avigdor's—one of the editors—encouraging attitude towards translated works in general. And finally (3), works were published in Luah Ahiasaf which, for ideological reasons, couldn’t be published in Ha-ilioah.

In Luah Ahiasaf we find poems from various literary periods; because of the periodical's editorial open mindedness, its Intentions to cater to a popular audience and to be free from strict ideological demands of literature, we find poems from the Haskala, Hibat Ziyon and Ha-thiya periods as well as poems considered to be epigonic or marginal. This unselective publishing policy allows us to view the poems published in Luah Ahiasaf as a paradigm of poetical norms prevalent during the publishing span of Luah Ahiasaf, i.e., the literary period of Hibat Ziyon.

An examination of the poems published in Luah Ahiasaf during the Hibat Ziyon period proves that not only were there two sets of poetical norms—one belonging to the Haskala period, the other to the Ha-thiya—but that these sets exchanged standing; the norms of the Haskala were forced to the periphery and the norms of the Ha-thiya were moved to the center. At about the same time, if not slightly earlier, literary criticism also began to demand the adoption of new literary norms. Apart from the two major sets of norms, a third set, peripheral yet present during the entire period, can be pointed out—those norms characterizing the post-Ha-thiya period. This set grew to be central in a matter of ten years.

Critics have usually assumed that the changes in the poetic norms of the Hibat Ziyon period could be analyzed through their nationalistic aspects. It is argued here that the changes should rather be examined in terms of poetic and thematic, since the significant changes in the poetry were made in these areas, not in the sphere of ideology. While analyzing the poems of the Hibat Ziyon period, the author notes that no new subjects are introduced; instead, a change occurs in the arrangement of the subject hierarchy: certain subjects are brought closer to the center and others are directed to the periphery in the same manner as changes occurred in the norms of the period. The author chooses one type of poetry—Nature poetry—in order to make certain that all aspects of themes and poetic content will be examined in the same context. Nature poems were chosen because of their frequent appearance in the Haskala and Ha-thiya periods. Translated as well as original poems are included since it is described in the period translation was considered an original creation and the norms prevalent in original poetry were applied to translated works as well.

As a result of this analysis, Hibat Ziyon can be viewed as a transitory and connective period, in which the norms of Haskala are transformed into the norms of Ha-thiya. The following changes can be observed:

(a) In Haskalah Nature Poetry, the themes is presented finally and directly. In Ha-thiya Nature poems the reader must find the meaning for himself; it is manifested in the relationship between descriptions of Nature and the narrator's reflections on nature. Descriptions are never one dimensional, but have many aspects, and are amiable.

(b) In Haskala poetry various details of Nature are depicted in a way which enables them to fit into a much larger framework. Indeed, the poet's artistic talent lies in his ability to portray various and differing objects as belonging to the same framework. In Ha-thiya poetry, the poet's strength lies in his ability to portray the single detail and distinguish its uniqueness. Ha-thiya poetry also strives to create tension between each individual detail as an independent entity and as part of a larger network of details and meanings.

(c) In Haskala poetry each linguistic, syntactic or figurative aspect stands independently. In Ha-thiya poetry there is an attempt to make the maximum connection between various details, and to make the poem unique.

(d) The persona in Haskala poetry describes Nature subjectively in an attempt to state his own emotions and moods. In Ha-thiya poetry, on the other hand, Nature is described in and for itself, while the persona aims to discover its secrets and its immortality.

(e) In Haskala poetry Nature and the persona's emotions are described in hyperbolic terms, in Ha-thiya there is a preference for understatement. These transitions are recognized in both the major...
and the epigonic poets of the time, but can be traced especially in epigonic poets. Epigonic poets can be characterized by the following: by their attempt to copy new thematics; to render Nature ambivalently; to portray Nature as secretive, and not, as was formerly the case, as an expression of the observer’s mood. An attempt is also made among epigonic poets to describe the tension between the detail and the framework, a tendency which especially characterizes the poetry of Bialik and Černihovskij. This poetry, however, usually states the tension without actually describing its effects. Epigonic poets also tend to copy the new poetics (of Bialik and Černihovskij) which attaches great importance to context and makes use of figurative language both as a devious means of description and as a means of increasing the general significance of the poem. The epigonic poets of the Ḥibat Ziyon period, however, succeed much better at imitating the new thematics of the Ha-shivah period than in adopting its new poetics.