

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 poetical 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-šiloah*.

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 whole 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 poetics and thematics, 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 thematics and poetics 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 during this 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 thematics 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 ambivalent.

(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 Čerņiņovski. This poetry,

however, usually states the tension without actually describing its effects. Epigonic poets also tend to copy the new poetics (of Bialik and Čerņiņovski) 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 *Hibat Ziyon* period, however, succeed much better at imitating the new thematics of the *Ha-tĥiya* period than in adopting its new poetics.