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by Ladislav Matjeka

[Hebrew article: 1-12; bibliography: 11-12]


CARMINA FIGURATA IN PRE-MODERN HEBREW POETRY

by Dan Pagis

[Hebrew article: 13-27]

Pre-modern Hebrew poetry from various periods and geographical centers showed a tendency to manneristic patterns of many kinds: intricate aorists, ligatures, malapostomes, and other artificial devices of lettering, wording, and form, including those in which the graphic pattern of the text assumes primacy, as in carmina figurata — pictorial poems. While this tendency never surpassed the main trends in Hebrew poetry, at times it was quite popular. It has been considered by scholars as a cyclic symptom of literary decline, recurring in several pre-classical periods — notably in the East during the eleventh century after the flowering of the Palestinian and Eastern Byza period (fifth to tenth century), and again in Spain and Provence from the thirteenth century on, following the Golden Age (eleventh to twelfth century) of the Spanish Hebrew school. Apparently, epigones of those schools, unable to continue the great traditions of their predecessors or produce an essentially new style, tried to capture their readers by a display of sheer virtuosity of form. This view, however, raises problems concerning periodization and classification. Pre-modern Hebrew poetry from the early Middle Ages on never actually attained stylization. Its formal elements could easily freeze, as it were, into manneristic patterns which, though rare in the so-called Classical periods, were consistently present. The Spanish Hebrew Golden Age, for example, variously produced elaborate aoristics, artificial prosodic devices (e.g., "contractable" poems whose every line had two different meters and rhyme-schemes) and, among others, a great number of manneristic poems. But the historical and literary analysis of manneristic forms largely depends on their classification. When does a common and generally accepted formal device become esoteric and manneristic? There is, of course, a great difference between, say, incidental alliterations, recurrent phrases, or even "fourth intercalated" in the poetic texture, and between, respectively, autogrammatic poems (where each word starts with, or contains, a certain letter), "magic squared" poems (which can be read horizontally, vertically, and diagonally, the units being words or letters), and poems based on eguesys nomial (where all words are also proper names used in their etymological meanings). The main difference, then, lies in the rigid formalization of a given device. Boundaries, however, are often blurred. There are many intermediary stages, and even a partial formalization at times achieves a distinctly manneristic effect. A related problem concerns the sources of manneristic forms. The relevant external sources — Hellenistic, Byzantine, Arabic, and, later, those of the Italian and Spanish Baroque — do not easily yield to a cyclic periodization of decline. They gradually merge with the relevant and continuous Jewish, and specifically Hebrew, traditions used in theurgy, mysticism, law and legend: the numerical value of the Hebrew letters, their very forms, and their names (etymologically interpreted), or even Biblical devices — the "octave" or the peculiar graphic form given to certain passages. The study of manneristic forms in Hebrew poetry has scarcely progressed since the beginning of the century. A first important step was made by Israel Davidson in an English article "Ecclesiastic Forms of Hebrew Verse" (1914), also published in an enlarged Hebrew version (1915). Davidson attributed these forms mainly to Arabic influences, combined with a "native sense of playfulness." He mentioned some fifteen devices which he divided into three groups: those appealing to the eye (e.g., aoristics, "poetical epithets," etc.), those appealing to the ear (e.g., echo verses, macronyms, etc.), and those based on peculiar combinations of letters, words, or phrases (chains, palindromes, etc.). This classification, though essential, is not conclusive. Several important devices belong to two, or even all three, of these groups. For example, true "pictorial epithets" (as shown below) are based on combinations of letters or words. Davidson
Preliminary notions have to do with two main sets of considerations: (1) regarding the very existence of a definite translation policy along with its actual nature. We shall say that such a policy, i.e., a norm-generated choice of works, authors, literary schools, etc., to be translated, exists when the determining factors are found to be systematic or patterned. (2) regarding degrees of translation. These considerations involve the threshold of tolerance for translating from languages other than SL.

Operational norms, in turn, direct actual decisions made during the translating act itself. They affect the text’s matrix and its verbal formulation. Material norms have to do with the very existence of TL material intended as a substitute for the corresponding SL material (and thus the degree of fullness of translation), its location in the text (or: the mode of actual distribution) and the textual segmentation — both supra-sentential and textual (literary) proper. Textual norms determine the actual selection of TL material to replace the original textual and linguistic material. Textual norms may be either purely linguistic (including general stylistic-historical norms) or literary (determining, for instance, what is appropriate for literature in general, for a translated literary work, for a certain generational sourceperiod, for a certain literary technique, etc.) (C. V. Turek).

It might be said that operational norms serve as a model, in accordance with which translations subject to them are formulated. Whether it is the model for translation of ST (i.e., the norm of adequate translation) or the target-based model. Every model supplying performance-instructions may be said to act as a restricting factor in the selection of TL material and in its ways of organization: it opens up certain options while at the same time it closes others.

Since our modern concept of translation implies some equivalence postulate, we could also say that textual norms determine the choice of material and model of organization to serve as translational equivalence to SL material. This should mean that it is fully justified to base research work on the search for equivalence: (i) in the sense of equivalence i.e., to proceed from the assumption that every actual translation does in fact stand in some equivalence relation to the text served (or: regarded) as its source.

The apparent contradiction between this concept of translation equivalence and the limited model where the translation is modeled can only be remedied by postulating: (a) that the concept of equivalence is a broad, flexible, and expansive notion; (b) that norms determine the main factor determining the identification of certain relationships between ST and TT as those of equivalence. Thus, research work on the examination of the traditional concept of equivalence.

The term “translational equivalence” belongs to two different types of equivalence, which are (and should be even more so) mutually connected, but by no means identical. First, it belongs to the theory of translation. In its application as a theoretical term, it denotes an eliminate, ideal category of relationships between TT’s and ST’s, and as such it belongs to the metalinguage of this field at its highest level of abstraction. Secondly, “translational equivalence” is also a series of concrete objects — of the actual relationships obtaining between actual utterances in two different natural languages, regarded as TT and ST. These relationships are subject to direct, empirical study. The term “equivalence” in this context is a decontextualized one, and as such it belongs to a metalinguage of a lower degree of abstraction.

There should be, therefore, no logical contradiction in a sentence such as “the equivalence revealed by translation is no equivalence.” It should simply be interpreted to mean “equivalence is not equivalence,” or, in other words, the actual, concrete relationship obtaining between TT and ST is not covered by the theoretical, abstract term, i.e., it is not included in the category for which the theoretical term stands as an abstraction. But there is another type of fault here: a discrepancy between theory and its possibility of accounting for actual, existing phenomena. In other words, whereas the abstract, theoretical category of translational equivalence should be conceived of as a general representation of the whole series of concrete relationships between TT and ST regarded as cases of translational equivalence, as their concrete characteristics, we have today, for the most, definitions of translational equivalence which are maximal (or, at best optimal) normative ones. As such, they are in a position to serve as a prescription for translation, but not accept them, and for those traditional critics of translated works whose main concern is with their static evaluation, but by no means can they serve as a premise for the selection of TL material and in its ways of organization: it opens up certain options while at the same time it closes others.

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THE ART OF THE SERMON OF PALESTINIAN AMORAIM: ANALYSIS OF TWO PROEMS

by Joseph Heinemann

Even though we cannot always be certain to what extent the material preserved in the homiletic Midrashim represents the actual art of the preachers, it is clear that the church communities realized the importance of the divinity of the preacher, and the necessity to train him according to the methods and canons of the religious education of the time. The preacher delivered his sermon in a manner that was both impressive and instructive, such as the parables and analogies that he used. The preacher, in his role as an intercessor, sought to draw the congregation into a closer relationship with the divine, and to encourage them to reflect on their own lives and actions, as well as to invoke the aid of God in times of need.

The proem of Num. 7:1 (Pirkei d. R. Kahana 1) reflects the creation of the Tabernacle with Cain. Num. 7:3 “I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride” (on the basis of a play on words) and thus presents it as the consummation of the marriage between the divine and humanity. Therefore, the Tabernacle and the dwelling of the Shekinah on earth are, in some sense, co-existent. The preacher, in his role as an intercessor, sought to draw the congregation into a closer relationship with the divine, and to encourage them to reflect on their own lives and actions, as well as to invoke the aid of God in times of need.

DIALOGUE AND MONOLOGUE IN PERETZ SMOLINSKI'S NARRATIVE

by David Wempest

This article deals with the specific mode of expression employed by Peretz Smolinski's characters, the dialogue and the monologue. It focuses on their structural and stylistic uniqueness, rather than on their thematic values. The Haskalah authors, writing in a world where no living, spoken language with natural dynamics existed, had very specific problems in designing dialogue and monologue which, as is well known, are normally fascinated and fed by the tension between the spoken word and literary language. This anomaly restricted the author's possibilities of literary differentiation, such as dislocation of speech according to social stratum or local environment, or differentiation stemming from intellectual level or disposition. The same restriction hampers the author in differentiating dialectically between his own language and that of his characters. This leads to a certain stylistic uniformity in expression, common to all speakers. An additional problem in this context is Smolinski's preference for using parables in matters of language. These realizations all operate in the general area of what might be called "the verbal texture" of the work, limiting the lexical richness of the language and the linguistic stratification, and leading to an exaggerated use of idiomatic literary language. Smolinski's dialogues are not restricted, however, in my other respect: the theatrical design, length, interruption or non-interruption of the sentence and the manner in which the sentences are linked to each other. Indeed, Smolinski exploits these possibilities to the fullest extent.

Against the background of Smolinski's narrative, it becomes clear that the dialogue in Smolinski's works is not reduced to the mere use of conversational language, but is a complex interweaving of various stylistic devices. It is not simply a reflection of the characters' speech, but is also a means of expressing the author's own ideas and emotions. The dialogue, therefore, is not merely a means of communication, but also a tool for shaping the narrative and exploring the characters' inner worlds.

SUMMARY

At the time the literary center in Erez-Israel was just starting to take shape under tremendous material difficulties, translated literature was accorded a vital function. Contrary to what happened later, it was not then thought to be in competition with original works and Hebrew culture. In fact, it was considered a sine qua non for the creation of a literary center, in the absence of which there would be no public reading, no evolution of publishing, no expansion of the printing industry. It was the desire to see all these things that then induced the mass production of translated literature. Some of the translating was also designed to provide literary work for the writers who had settled in the country, and during the war years the activity of the Palestine Office in this field was focused first and foremost on the need to in some way provide those writers with a minimal standard of living. In 1914 this office set up a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Nisan Turco, J.B. Bremner and Yehoshua Wolkansky (the documents of which are in large measure the basis of this article). In the middle of the war, the committee planned a comprehensive project for the translation of classics, and gave out more than thirty assignments. Only a few of them were published during the war, by the "Baka-ku" publishing company, and the majority were issued after the war by various publishers, after the translators had released the manuscripts.

Translated literature had also induced some of the functions of original literature, either because original literature was unable to fulfill them due to the absence of literary ability, or because the literary scene of a book for prose was impossible. Thus translated literature fulfilled functions ordinarily reserved for original literature, and this was manifest in the fact that certain literary genres were available only in translation, as seen works in certain areas of culture.

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