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ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

Figurative Language in Pre-Classical Piyyut: Between Biblical Models and Poetic Innovations

Ophir Münz-Manor

The article is devoted to an investigation of the figurative language in pre-classical Piyyut (ca. fourth-fifth centuries CE) in the light of its extensive use of biblical imagery. Generally speaking, the role of metaphors and similes in liturgical poetry is marginal, especially in comparison with the biblical corpus. Yet, one can find numerous examples of the poets' innovative use of biblical figurative language which is constantly expanded and developed in the piyyutim.

The poets use several techniques in incorporating biblical imagery into their poems. Sometimes they simply take a biblical metaphor or simile and insert it in order to create a metaphorical periphrasis (in Hebrew, *kinuy*), a popular poetic device of the period. In most cases, however, the payytan will combine two or more biblical verses into one figurative phrase. This technique frequently results in figurative developments that are both creative and impressive. Finally, the article examines some examples where the poets draw on figurative language from rabbinic literature and some rare cases where the figurative language in the piyyut is not based on an earlier text and hence can be regarded as an 'original' creation of the payytan.

Literary Event and Historical Narrative: Between Rabbinic and Patristic Literature

Tali Artman-Partock

In this paper, I wish to explore the boundaries of history and literature in late antiquity and especially in rabbinic literature by looking at an exegetical story from *Genesis Rabbah* and an historical myth (the conflict between Theodosius and Ambrose of Milan) with a similar narrative pattern. I wish to show how the conventional relationship between literature and

history, especially as formulated by Hayden V. White, is inverted when set in the cultural framework of rabbinic literature. I demonstrate how the adaptation of the emplotment structure of an ecclesiastical event serves not only as a literary pattern, but also as a key to historical understanding of a group different from the one which has experienced the event, and creates the narrative that binds them together.

Poets' Language and Hints of Piyyutim in 'Midrash Chadash Al-Hatorah'

Gila Vachman

Investigation of the connection between Midrash and Piyyut has generally dealt with only one aspect: the allusions to Aggadah and midrashic traditions in the liturgical poetry. Very few attempts have been made to discover the influence of the language and ideas of Piyyut on the writings of the Sages in what is known as the classic period of Midrash (i.e. the Ammoraic period) and in the late period, which in some ways is parallel to that of the major poets such as Yannai and R. Elazar Hakalir.

This paper reveals the connections between 'Midrash Chadash Al-Hatorah', a Tanhuma-related midrashic work, and the language and content of the piyyutim. It shows that some of the special words and unknown midrashic traditions that appear in 'Midrash Chadash Al-Hatorah' are found only in piyyutim. I suggest that the writer of this Midrash was influenced by the language and content of the liturgical texts, and was perhaps a poet himself.

Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer and *Seder Eliyahu*: Preliminary Notes on Poetics and Imaginary Landscapes

Dina Stein

Late Midrash has received comparatively little scholarly attention. Except in a few significant studies, its poetics have been judged in relation to earlier models of classical rabbinic texts or alternatively have been set against later medieval narratives. This anachronistic misconception has inevitably resulted in a failure to appreciate the novelty of the works belonging to this varied corpus.

One of the characteristics of works belonging to late Midrash has been the difficulty of placing them, either geographically or in time. This difficulty, I argue in this article, should not be understood as a sign of the texts' 'stagnation' or of their 'psuedepigraphic' or 'pseudo-arcane' pretension, but rather as a positive poetic feature which should be viewed in relation to other poetic characteristics they display and possible historical changes.

The article deals with two works, *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* and *Seder Eliyahu*. Although very different, the imaginary landscapes they invoke are almost a-territorial, as their thematic and structural elements suggest. I understand the exposition and the maxims in *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* and its minimal reference to institutions to be symptomatic components of the text that can, in turn, be understood with relatively little recourse to extra-textual details or a wider cultural lexicon. *Seder Eliyahu*'s use of a *wondering* narrator in the first person invokes an imaginary mobile landscape while the parables depend on their immediate textual context for their comprehension. Thus, both *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* and *Seder Eliyahu* combine an a-territorial or mobile imaginary landscape with a text that provides the keys to its own interpretation. Both are shown to be compositionally cohesive works (in relation to classical Midrash), and due to the above-mentioned poetic phenomena, represent a quasi-autonomous framework.

The a-territorial or mobile imaginary landscape, together with a poetics that suggests a greater independence and mobility of the work may be explained, I suggest, by the historical changes that occurred in the Jewish world with the conquests of Islam. The mobility that characterized the Jewish world – the commerce, the exchange of students between the centers of learning, the responsa and, to an equal degree, the struggle for hegemony between Palestine and Babylonia – all these inevitably found expression in the literary works of their time. Thus, the difficulty of locating *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* and *Seder Eliyahu* in a specific geographical and temporal setting may be part of the novelty of these works. It is a novelty that finds expression in a new geographical consciousness that constructs the text – the *ḥibur* – as a more self-contained and consequently mobile cultural product.

A Voyage between Voyages: Three Versions of *The Travels of Benjamin the Third* by Mendele Mokher Sforim

Gali Drucker Bar-Am

The Travels of Benjamin the Third is an illuminating example of the bilingual writing of Sholem Yankev Abramovitch (Mendele Mokher Sforim). This paper offers the first detailed study of the three versions of the novel, the earliest of which was written in Yiddish (1878) and the other two in Hebrew (1896, 1911). A close reading reveals Abramovitch's keen awareness of the different poetic possibilities of Yiddish and Hebrew and it demonstrates the indispensability of a bilingual reading of his work. Abramovitch is shown to be constantly re-adjusting a seemingly fixed narrative so as to capture successfully the shift in his own sentiment regarding the possibility of a national Jewish awakening.

Frishman's Translation of Byron's *Cain* and its Significance

David Fishelov

The purpose of the article is to discuss the significance of Frishman's translation (1900) of Byron's *Cain* (1820). David Frishman (1859–1922), a prominent Hebrew man of letters of the turn of the twentieth century, was a writer of fiction, a poet, translator, editor, essayist and an influential literary critic. As a translator, he introduced some major works of European Romanticism to modern Hebrew Literature. Frishman's fascination with Byron's adaptation of the story of Cain stems from his attraction to Byronic Romantic themes, as well as an ambition to bring Byron's version of the biblical story 'back home'. After presenting the Romantic themes in Byron's poetic drama, in which Cain is portrayed as a daring rebel who challenges religious and metaphysical authority in the name of truth, the article focuses on some interesting Zionist overtones in Frishman's project. These Zionist overtones are evident in an introductory essay Frishman wrote to his poetic translation. In his essay, Frishman describes the deep impression the biblical story of Cain made on him as a child and explains why he admires Byron's work. Whereas Abel is described by Frishman as a submissive, Diaspora-like Jew, he sees Cain as a heroic, rebellious person, reminiscent of Zionist ideals.

In my article I argue that major aspects of Cain's personality – a man of the land, a Romantic rebel, a tragic killer and an outcast – are associated by Frishman, at least on a symbolic level, with modern Jewish history and with central elements in the Zionist movement. It shows how Frishman's latent pro-Zionist sentiments are expressed in the translation and the accompanying essay, and discusses the apparent contradiction between these sentiments and his explicitly anti- and non-Zionist ideological statements.

Chaim Nahman Bialik's *The Pool* (Ha-Brekhah) – the Self as the World

Ariel Hirshfeld

The Idea of Nativism in the Poetry of Esther Raab

Aminadav Dykman

This article deals with the idea of nativism in the poetry of Esther Raab (1894–1981), one of the first Israeli-born writers in Hebrew. After a brief examination of some examples of the treatment of nativism in ancient poetry (e.g. Hesiod, Horace, and Propertius) the author provides an extensive survey of Raab's poems in which the idea of 'being native to Eretz-Israel' is present. The article concentrates on those texts in which Raab makes a statement in which she sees herself as an integral part of the Israeli landscape. The author demonstrates Raab's unique poetic technique of identifying herself with various native plants and making herself part of the local vegetation, which bestows upon her the status of a 'natural native'. The author claims that in this respect Raab's poetic legacy is very different from that of other Israeli poets of her generation.

The Continuing Enigmatic Quality in the Late Poetry of Dan Pagis

Tamar Yacobi

In his later collections of poetry, Dan Pagis evokes people, places and events from his personal history. This has led some scholars to believe that his late poems solve riddles posed by his earlier poetry. By contrast, I argue that the late poetry is equally enigmatic. Accordingly, this essay examines modes of continuity and change in Pagis's later figurative language. It evolves in two parallel lines; the recurrence of earlier figurative riddles and the emergence of new enigmatic figures. To begin with, Pagis creates new variations of his earlier paradoxes of mortality. As always, apparently conventional figures of mortality (e.g., dust) turn paradoxical: for instance, new life grows out of the remnants ('dust') of a previous generation (in early poems such as 'The Experiment' or 'The Cycle'). In *Last Poems*, the motif resurfaces in 'The Conversation', but in a condensed and simple-looking form, whereby the poem becomes a particularly difficult riddle. Instead of conversing, one of the participants 'struck a root, held out branches and rustled'. The analysis reveals (1) a surprising intertextual link with a group of poems in *Shade Dial*, Pagis's first book; (2) the emergence in the last book of the metaphoric sub-motif of the cycle of death and rebirth in the shape of a tree.

The second part of this essay closely traces the development of a new figurative riddle – empty surfaces – that first appears in the last three volumes of poetry. Scholars see these empty spaces as expressing the poet's autobiographical trauma, but their diversity argues against a psychological subtext. I claim, instead, that they illustrate the persistence of the enigmatic dimension in Pagis's poetics. The empty surfaces (mostly white, e.g., snow, walls, pages) prove to be related to some mysterious gaps, such as invisible writing or hidden past events. Thus the white ceiling in 'Movie', the empty page in 'A Little Poetics', or the white wall in 'Genealogy', with the protagonist either reading or writing an invisible tale that is not communicated to us. These recurrent examples show that the poet continued to play a game of hide-and-seek with his readers right to the end.

Not Being a Shark – On the Fate of What was Abandoned in 1948 according to *Yonim Betrafalgar* by Sami Michael

Doli Benhabib

This article explores the way the novel *Yonim Betrafalgar* (Pigeons at Trafalgar Square) by Sami Michael constructs options of co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians and also of conflict between them in the microcosmos of the life of the protagonist, Ze'ev. The plot woven around Ze'ev constitutes a variation on the theme of Arab–Jewish contacts that can be encountered in Michael's oeuvre. Ze'ev appears in the fictional world of the novel as a Palestinian baby who ends up on his own, an infant in a way abandoned by his parents who were cruelly torn away from him during the turmoil of 1948, the year of the Palestinian 'Nakba'. This baby is later adopted and raised by a Jewish lady, a Holocaust survivor. However, the trauma at the heart of *Yonim Betrafalgar* is the trauma of 1948, the abandonment of the baby in Haifa, an act which obviously took place much against the will of the Palestinian parents. In the same way, echoing this crucial experience of rupture and loss, Kanafani, a Palestinian writer, gave a novella he wrote the title *Returning to Haifa,* and later urged Michael to travel his ground in writing, and to explore new fictional possibilities for Ze'ev, who had been abandoned when he was a baby.

Ze'ev's life and identity, however, did not evolve in a hybridized form. I argue that his identity is rather structured around the Israeli-Jewish-Ashkenazi nucleus of his life. Ze'ev is an Arab as far as his biological origin is concerned, but his education and social conditioning make him an Israeli-Ashkenazi Jew who ultimately chooses the identity he acquired and not the one he was born into.

These issues – biology versus social conditioning, for example – were already explored by Kanafani in *Returning to Haifa*, which serves as an intertext for Michael's *Yonim Betrafalgar*. In *Yonim Betrafalgar*, which was written much later than *Returning to Haifa*, Michael, in some way, echoes Kanafani and corresponds with him. One of the major foci of analysis in this article is this one-directional dialogue conducted by these two writers, one of them a Palestinian of Israeli origin and the other an Israeli Jew from the Arab countries.