

A Hebrew Echo of Catullus' *Passer* circa 1400? The Question of Humanism in Late Medieval Hispano-Jewish Communities

Eleazar Gutwirth
(University of Tel Aviv, Israel)

Abstract Against the background of a long standing tradition which sees the Hispano-Jewish culture of the late Middle Ages in terms of decline and isolationism, the article attempts to analyse – and argue for an echo of Catullus' *Carmina* in – a Hebrew poem of the Catalano-Aragonese “guild of the poets”. It tries to contrast the unverified attributions of translations from the Latin or the putative existence of romance texts which have not been found with the close analogy of themes and motifs between the Hebrew and the Latin poem. It contextualises it in the frame of other cultural manifestations of close contacts between Jews and Christians as well as the rich evidence of the archival documents of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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
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1 Catullus in Fifteenth Century Spain

It is generally agreed that the *fortuna* of Catullus in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is more than a detail in the history of reading ancient texts. The attention it commands confirms that it is viewed as an index or touchstone of the return to the sources. And yet it is not simply an example of the abyss between ancient, medieval and Renaissance, as there was, in the fourteenth century, a manuscript of Catullus in the Cathedral Library of Verona. Around 1290-1310, it was used by various humanists, poets, mainly Paduan such as Benzo of Alessandria; Geremia of Montagnone; Albertino Mussato; Lovato Lovatis and Guglielmo da Pastrengo, a friend of Petrarch. This to such an extent that it is possible to speak of a *resurrectio catulli* in this area and period. This resurrection or renaissance is linked to modernity. If Petrarch at Verona copies a Catullus MS, it is believed that research on Catullus was the first application of the genealogical method of textual criticism (Billanovich 1958).

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It is also linked to cultural identity. Early on, in the fourteenth century, the Catullus MS is spoken of in terms of 'patria', 'exile', 'France', 'country', 'compatriots'.¹ In Spain, on the other hand, the picture was somewhat different. As Juan Luis Arcaz Pozo clearly remarked: "La obra de Catulo, en la vertiente de la tradición clásica en España no ha sido objeto de ningún estudio específico que determine de manera plena los márgenes de su repercusión en las letras hispanas [...] puede cundir la idea de que los versos de Catulo han pasado sin pena ni gloria por nuestras letras [...] modesto eco que dejaron sus versos [...] La fama de Catulo, (fue) silenciada [...] durante el periodo medieval" (1989, 249). What has not been realized by the large corpus of studies on Catullus is that the extremely faint echo of Catullus in Spain, such as it is, occurs around the time, place and social circles which constitute the background to the circle of poets from which there arises the composition we discuss here.

To claim a cultural-historical context for a significant Hebrew echo of Catullus' poem,² of c. 60 BCE, in Spain, c. 1400 is therefore something which needs a preamble. A long tradition perceived the late Middle Ages – the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – as an age where dialogue between Christians (readers and writers of Latin) and Jews (who did not compose poetry in Latin) was impossible. For the same (supposedly his-

1 "An exile I come to my country from distant lands a fellow countryman was the cause of my return clearly France assigned him his name from the reeds, and the one who marks the journey of the passing crowd with all your ability celebrate your Catullus, whose light has been hidden under a bushel" (Haig Gaisser 1993, 18).

2 See Harrison 1980:
II. "Lesbia's Pet"

O, my Lady's little linnet, with which she loves to sport,
And to carry in her bosom's snowy folds,
To which she gives her finger – tip, a quarry to be caught,
Inviting you to peck the lure she holds.

You're joy beyond the telling to my darling in her grief,
And would that I could sport with you as well,
Could my passion first be lessened, that would be, in my belief
As great a joy as hers, who lately fell
To the lure of golden apples, when her girdle, long tied fast,
Slipped idly to the floor, because the knot was loose at last

Passer, deliciae meae puellae,
quicum ludere, quem in sinu tenere,
cui primum digitum dare appetenti
et acris solet incitare morsus,
cum desiderio meo nitenti
carum nescio quid lubet iocari
et solaciolum sui doloris,
credo ut tum grauis acquiescat ardor:
tecum ludere sicut ipsa possem
et tristis animi leuare curas!

torical) reasons, the Hebrew compositions of the period were devalued as 'decadent'. The traditional syllabus concentrated on authors of the eleventh-twelfth centuries (on Ha-Levi, Ibn Gabirol, Ibn Ezra, etc) an age where dialogues and contacts with other cultures were assumed to have been more intense. Ideology may have played a part, as the earlier poets were consecrated in the popular mind by a series of legendary anecdotes which ensured a lively nachleben. Romanticism and its critical theories were similarly a factor. No modern critic of medieval Hebrew Poetry from Spain ever attained the lasting fame and influence of the romantic Heinrich Heine. Heine did not – could not – publish on late medieval poets, such as Bonafed for example.³ He did, however, contribute significantly to make the earlier poetry of the Jews in Spain – sc. Ha-Levi – familiar outside the confines of his community. Religion also played a part, as the *Orders of Prayers* generally disseminated – and their rubrics or acrostics identified the authors of – the poetic prayers of the 'early' poets.⁴

2 The Poets' Guild and the Latin Question

Bonafed's correspondent, Vidal Benveniste/ (later, after his conversion) Gonzalo de la Caballeria is the recipient of a Hebrew poem authored by Yosef ben Lavi (Bernstein 1937; cf. Vardi 1986). Both were in contact with, and part of, the circle of the Catalano-Aragonese poet, Shelomo ben Meshulam de Piera who was in contact with Shlomo ben Reuven Bonafed. Bonafed addressed a poem to Gonzalo. Bernstein includes our poem in his collection of poems by don Vidal Yosef ben Lavi. Schirmann appreciated the poem. Fleischer also sees it as the fruit of Yosef's labours.⁵ They are undoubtedly exponents of the culture of late medieval (roughly c. 1400) Hispano-Jewish communities and can be treated as witnesses to it and sources for its reconstruction.

Vidal/Gonzalo as the recipient of the poem, determines its character to some extent. Before observing the poem, therefore, one has to deal with the question of Vidal/Gonzalo's relation to these modern trends: Italianate

3 On the question of difference in critical approaches to poetry of different periods see Gutwirth 1998.

4 Of course the situation is changing. The project of studying the attitudes and culture of Jews who knew Latin has gained wide acceptance and followers. See Gutwirth 1985a.

5 There is no basis for the analogy to *Vivamus mea Lesbia*. See Hayyim Schirmann and Ezra Fleisher (1997, 603 fn. 11). Amongst others there is the problem that the *mille bacia* topos is not in evidence in the Hebrew poem.

Renaissance humanism in the Crown of Aragon.⁶ Indeed, a short poem pales in comparison with the translation of two whole books of Roman prose. If the translation of these Latin books into a modern language were proven to be the work of Bonafed's and De Piera's friend, attention to them and the neglect of the briefer poetic composition might be more comprehensible.⁷ The assertion that Gonzalo translated Cicero's *De Officiis* and *De Amicitia* has been repeated so frequently that it has become almost an orthodoxy of fifteenth century Hispano-Jewish and Judeo-converso studies. Nevertheless it should be noted that, occasionally, one finds formulations which evince some minimal degree of caution. Thus C.J. Classen writes recently: "Menéndez y Pelayo erwähnt eine anonyme Übersetzung von *De officiis* und *De amicitia*" (2002, 62 fn. 33) attributing to the Santander polymath – rather than asserting *tout court* – the notion of Vidal's authorship. Rodríguez Pantoja formulates it thus: "de Gonzalo de la Caballeria pueden ser las traducciones anónimas en MS" (1990, 91 ff., 100 fn. 45). Rafael Lapesa, trying to identify the MS, writes: "Don Iñigo poseyó más tarde, siendo ya Marqués, un códice con versión italiana de los dos tratados y del *De amicitia*; otro con traducción aragonesa – acaso la de Gonzalo de la Caballería – del *De officiis* y *De amicitia*" (1971, 107).

There is usually little concrete, technical or scholarly discussion – by authors who claim Gonzalo's authorship – of the specific features of the MS containing the work of Gonzalo de la Caballeria; concrete examples of the *aragonesismo* or *castellanismo* of Gonzalo's language; concrete features of his method of translation or the peculiarities of his MS vorlage.

The belief relies on tradition and anecdote. In the seventeenth century, the bibliographer Nicolás Antonio says that he went to the house of his nephew D. Joseph de Bernuy y Mendoza, Mariscal de Alcalá, and he claims to have seen there a MS containing these translations. The prologue or Dedication was addressed to the *jurados* of the town council of Saragossa.

6 The question whether Latin was an "obligatory" language for medicine – as practiced by the Jews in Spain – is too complex to be dismissed by a brief generalization. In any case there is nothing medical about this poem. The question contrasts with the case of a specific discipline, such as pharmacology, and its influence upon Hispano-Jewish culture. On this see Gutwirth 2011a.

7 Any attempts to minimize the significance of a Catullus echo by reference to the translations of Boethius' *De Consolatione* into Hebrew are less than serious. To begin with, Azaria's translation (1423) was not achieved in Spain. Similarly, it does not require a great deal of insight to understand that there is a difference between Boethius and Catullus. Amongst numerous other aspects, this is clear in the sharp difference in *fortuna*. Boethius was widely read centuries before 'humanism'. Catullus was not. For translations of Boethius in Spain cf. Keightley 1987; Briesemeister 1990; Zino 2003; Riera i Sans 1984. The Hebrew translations despite appearances are not entirely new discoveries or subjects of research. Apparently one still has to draw attention to for example, Steinschneider 1893, *Die Hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher*. On Azaria, for example, see Renan, Neubauer 1893, 759; see also Neubauer 1882; Sierra 1967; Rabello 1969. Amongst numerous more recent publications: Gorchach, J.H. Taylor, L.A. Taylor 2006; Hamilton 2014, 95 ff.

A fragment which does not mention Gonzalo's name at all was transcribed by Nicolás Antonio (1783, 553). There can be little doubt that Menéndez y Pelayo's relaying of the text explains its extraordinary success. Baer, Schirmann, Fleischer and their followers all make assertions of authorship without having examined or seen the works.

The problematics of the image of isolation; that of the translations from Latin; the ambiguities of the converso's cultural identity; all of these justify a focus on transmissions and cross cultural phenomena. In the specific case of the particular poetic text which is the subject of these lines, such an argument is buttressed by the evidence of the rubric of this poem, which asserts that it was modeled on a previous poem *bi-leshon ha-nosrim*. A modern translation: "in the language of the Christians" might seem almost simple (although it does not distinguish between vernaculars, such as *romance*, and Latin). Indeed, it could be dismissed without any attempt to provide further evidence, as did Bernstein (1937). However, it might miss the point that in these circles, and particularly amongst poets, terminology is resonant. The phrase contrasts with - the possibly more rooted - *leshon 'edom* "the language of Edom" which we find as early as the eleventh century in ibn Gabirol. To be sure, one could find analogues of the usage to mean Latin in contemporary fifteenth century texts. The more immediate cases that come to mind could be Yom Tov Mullhausen (believed to have died later than 1420) in Germany or, more closely relevant, Meir Alguadex in the kingdom of Castile, circa 1400. Don Meir's case is significant: he uses the phrase to denote the title of one of Aristotle's works on Ethics. If we were to think of medieval philosophy in general, and outside context, as a purely Latin affair, related only to Robert Grosseteste (probably the more commonly known translator of the *Ethics* in medieval Europe), we would be surprised by the empirical data. Indeed, don Meir uses (in) "the language of the Christians" followed by a clearly non-Latin, *romance* term for the title: *Eticas* (Gutwirth 1985a). A historical approach would emphasize the rising prestige of the *romance* in intellectual creativity, including philosophical texts, in this period. It might be worth bearing in mind that - like other Hebrew works of the period - it is inspired by Benveniste ben Lavi, who is an important figure in these socio-cultural networks (Gutwirth 2005). In these same circles, Profayt Duran refers, in a work written in Hebrew, to a medical term, *morbia alba* as being - not in the "language of the Christians" but - in "the language of Rome" or "of the Romans". Simeon b. Zemah Duran, born and raised in Mallorca, refers to the spoken language of the women of Mallorca. More precisely he attends to their way of referring to an ingredient used in the washing of hair. He cites a book he has seen. He uses the term "the language of Rome" as would Alfonso de Zamora later on. Neubauer, when describing the famous MS codex (no. 1984 in Neubauer 1886, vol. 1) containing Bonafed's *Diwan*, selected for publication a brief piece which referred to a correspondent's studies "*bi-leshon latin*"

(in the Latin language). One could add further examples, but it should be evident by now that a certain ambiguity exists in the term [language of the Christians-*leshon ha-nosrim*]; that a number of other traditional options were available at that time and place and that a choice was made.

3 The Echoes

In any case, the rubric makes it abundantly clear that there is a prior text, a model text, which is not in Hebrew and which is not Jewish. Without awareness of or familiarity with its poetic model the reader cannot fully understand the Hebrew poem whose working translation follows:

Every day I am jealous of the bird in your house
 Would that I were your bird/freedom
 I shall not desire freedom from you because with all my heart
 I love you and how could I leave you for another
 Your sayings have seeds of intelligence
 They pour (grains of⁸) understanding on your pouch (of myrrh?)⁹
 Your fragrance is dearer and sweeter than agathe
 Your soil (*regavekha*) is as sweet as your nectar and honey
 and your forest contains a tree of knowledge and in it
 there is abundance for all who flock¹⁰ to your city
 In your city are all the sons of knowledge and understanding
 Therefore they took the road to you
 I shall see you but only with my heart's eye and in my heart
 I have planted you, in my heart I shall not uproot you
 I am your servant and a prisoner of distance
 But my heart desires the light of your light
 Reading Echoes

The protagonism of the bird – not necessarily a sparrow – is apparent in both poems. In Catullus the word bird/sparrow/ passer is the first of the poem; it constitutes its opening: *Passer, deliciae meae puellae*. Catullus' poem addresses the bird. The Hebrew poem addresses the learned recipient from the Crown of Aragon. The Hebrew poem also begins with the word "bird" (*le-tsippor*). In Catullus, the poet's desire to play with the bird as a paliative for absence and longing is at the end (ll. 9-10); it is a culmination

8 Gen. 42.

9 "My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh which lies all night between my breasts" (Song of Songs I:13).

10 Bernstein annotates a reference to Ps 61:18.

of the poem. In the Hebrew, this longing opens the poem. The envy, the bird/pet, the affirmation of love and the sadness at separation/distance, pervade both. In the Hebrew poem, jealousy (of the bird) is in the first line (*'aqane*). In Catullus "If only I were able to play with you" is placed at the end. In Catullus, the first 10 lines open with a scene of playing with the bird; they conclude with the first person longing to play with it. If we accept that the poet suggests that she (Lesbia) plays intensely with the bird because she is missing him, then the component of longing is even more pronouncedly similar in both poems.

In Catullus the finger and the beak are components of the play scene. In the Hebrew text, *meriqim* (in the vicinity of "pouch") would recall the "emptying"/"pouring" of sacks of grain in verses of Genesis 42:35: "As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver. When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened" but also the pouches of *tzror*, the "bundle of myrrh" in Song of Songs. So that the underlying text resonates with grains and myrrh associated with love and affection. The Hebrew poet turns the large and rough pouring of grain from sacks (in the story of Joseph's brothers) into a miniature where the gesture of pouring concerns minute, exquisite grains from a delicate pouch, reminiscent of fragrance, of myrrh and where the muscle and hands are replaced, in the reader's mind, by fingers.

The pouring of seeds in the Hebrew poem is evidently linked to the bird and its feeding by pouring seeds - *gargarim* - over its head, *rosh*. The feeding naturally implies the beak as the biting of the bird does in Catullus' line 4. The Hebrew poet's gaze is directed towards the subtlety of the minute: it focuses on the finger's manipulation of seeds and its movement towards the head of the bird. In Catullus, the finger of the beloved and the beak in the bird's head and the nibbling are all objects of the poet's gaze; components included in the poem. This focus on the minute and slow is consonant with the melancholy or minor key of the verse. The transition from the large to the small is also present in the clod/honey comparison. It alludes to Job¹¹ but seems to resonate also with Ha-Levi's verse in his poem about Jerusalem, *Yefe nof*: "Beautiful heights joy of the world | Your earth will be sweeter than honey to my taste". As in Ha-Levi, so here too, we find the association of earth (meaning terrain, place, location of the beloved) and honey/tongue-taste. The dominant themes of longing, possession, the minute images and slow action are present in both, Catullus and Yosef, quite apart from the basic conceit of the bird of the beloved and the poet's desire and jealousy.

An added resonance is possible if we recall the guild-like character of the Hebrew poets of the late medieval Crown of Aragon. This means paying attention to De Piera. De Piera's admonitory poem (Brody, Wiener 1922,

11 "[...] the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him" (Job 21:33).

322) (*nefesh yeqarah* – *dear soul*) seems to play on /r/ sounds (rhyming, in ll. 2-5, *lahaqor-ya'aqor-meqor*) and consonantal clusters containing /r/ as in *ytsro/tsror/dror*. The phoneme – sound clusters are paralleled by conceptual clusters: bird/pouch/bundle. The same clusters reappear, as has been seen above, in our Hebrew “bird poem” composed in the same poets’ guild (*hevrat ha-nognim*) of the “1391 generation” in the Crown of Aragon.

The themes of distance and longing – well known in Catullus – are not surprising in the Hispano-Hebraic poetic tradition. Poems of welcome and departure constitute a genre which is well represented in the culture of Hispano-Jewish communities. Indeed it might be found at the very beginning of the Hispano-Hebraic type of poetic practice, in the mid tenth century (Deyermond 1991). But in this case there is not much sense in looking for “firsts” or “beginnings”. “Parting” as a theme could indeed be traced back to the very origins of the lyric, in Sappho.¹² And yet the activity of composing such poems in Hebrew seems to intensify in the late fourteenth early fifteenth century. It is particularly visible in the circles of the Hebrew poets of the Crown of Aragon at that date.

4 The Guild and its Frame

Such poems’ *sitz im leben* is not always transparent, as the conventions of the genre are far clearer than the subtle departures from them. It has been argued that there may be a historical, material background in the late Middle Ages to such poetry of distance, parting, returning, welcome. The period’s investment in bridges, in road building and repair, propitiated travel. The postal system also saw some improvement in communications at this time. Hebrew texts of that time and place engage the topic of bridges. The model provided by royal and noble behavior may have been an additional factor. *Entradas*, accompanied by elaborate ceremonial become more frequent and better evidenced, indeed institutionalized, at this period, the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, in Spain. These poems have been seen as part of this trend towards managing and dealing effectively with travel. It is one of the resulting effects, alongside the contemporary flourishing of Hebrew letters of recommendation of individual travelers to

12 This is clear in Mary Barnard’s translation. See her Sappho: “she said to me, “*This parting must be/endured*, Sappho. I go unwillingly.” | I said, “*Go, and be happy* | but remember (you know well) whom you leave shackled by love || If you forget me, | *think/ of our gifts* to Aphrodite | and all the loveliness that we shared || all the violet tiaras, | braided rosebuds, dill and | crocus twined around your young neck || myrrh poured on your head” (Barnard 1958, 42). See also Gangutia Elicegui Pérez (1991, 121), who speaks of: “curiosas coincidencias entre poemas a lo largo de toda la literatura griega y canciones de amigo hispanicas muy especialmente las contenidas en las jarchas”. She also invokes, as precedents to this concept, the works of Bowra, Roncaglia, M.R. Lida de Malkiel, Marzullo. Dunash’s wife poem mentions parting, and lists the gifts.

other communities in epistolary formularies or that of the hospitals which provided lodging for travelers in Hispano-Jewish communities.¹³

Separation, distance, absence, departure and return/welcome are probably some of the most intensely cultivated themes in the poetry of this precise circle, that is, the late fourteenth-early fifteenth century circle which included poets such as Shlomo ben Reuven Bonafed, Shlomo ben Meshulam de Piera and the two disciples named Vidal¹⁴ amongst others. One can support this perspective by a corpus of editions of late medieval Hebrew poems which has been growing in recent decades (Vardi 1986). But given the *status questionis* today, it is important to point out that some texts were available early on. As early as the Brody-Wiener (1922) *Anthology* one could read – to give a random example – about the restless movement (wanderings?) of the soul in a “wisdom” admonitory poem by De Piera (Brody, Wiener 1922, 322) or the allusion to the welcome (i.e. the return or end of separation) of a teacher (328) in a poem about the number of verses or Bonafed’s allusion to “the clouds of wandering” in his famous Tortosa poem dedicated to Vidal ben Lavi (329) or, more obviously, his poem with the rubric: “to a friend who departed and the pining is great” (320). Indeed, the pain of being absent, distant is the main thematic concern of our Hebrew poem. The effect is the recreation of yearning, a deep emotional state of longing for something or someone that one loves and who is apart.

5 Crossings

The thesis of an echo of Roman, Latin poetry in the Hebrew poetry of members of the “1391 generation” goes against the once prevalent, nineteenth century ideas of complete decline, isolationism and also against the radical opposition between Jewish attitudes towards Christian cultures on the one hand and their attitudes to Muslim/Arabic cultures on the other.¹⁵ To ease the way into such a necessary recontextualization,

¹³ For the historical background to “parting” and travel see Gutwirth 2014.

¹⁴ The question of the two Vidals has been frequently debated and speculated upon since at least Serrano y Sanz and probably earlier. Thus, in the thirties it could be said that: “Da nicht 2 Söhne Don Salomos den Vornamen Benveniste führen konnten, so war er wohl der Sohn eines Vettters von Don Benveniste b. Salomo ibn Labi. Der junge Verwandte studierte mit unserm Don Vidal” (Solomon 1937).

¹⁵ The question is of further relevance if we try to reconstruct this poetic network because the Vidals are the recipients of a brief essay/commentary on a poem by Ibn Ezra authored by Ephodi. They are friends. Ephodi, it has been recently argued, shows some affinities with Villena. Both Ephodi and Villena seem to be linked to the royal court of the Crown of Aragon in the early fifteenth century. Furthermore, Villena seems to be the earliest or only peninsular author to be aware of Catullus at the time of the composition of the poem addressed to Vidal/Gonzalo. To be sure, Villena’s contacts with Catullus-as expressed in his *Tratado de la Con-*

one may focus on a salient feature of the poem: anadiplosis. Our Hebrew poem adheres to this device throughout. The first line ends in *drorkha*, the second line begins *drorkha*; the second line ends in *amirkha*, the third line begins *amirkha*; the third line ends in *tsrorkha*, the fourth line begins *tsrorkha* and so on to the end of the poem. The specificity, the ‘Hebraism’ of the device which depends on Hebrew words and homonyms/sounds is too obvious to need discussion. An added element of density here is that the homonyms have different meanings. Anadiplosis could be seen as analogous to the links in a chain and to the components of the dance. The figure produces an effect of unity which dissolves the contradictions of the laborious *musivstill* and the attendant elements of fragmentation in any mosaic art. It also blurs any opposition between Greco-Roman and Biblical thematic components.

The practice of anadiplosis – although certainly present in the Middle Ages – could find precedents within the poem’s own linguistic and literary tradition, reaching as far back as the masoretic text of the Bible. In Genesis, the poets would read “In the beginning God made the heavens and *the earth*. *The earth* was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen. 1:1,2). In Psalms they would find: “I lift up my eyes to the hills-from where will come *my help*? *My help* comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1,2);¹⁶ “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and *sing praises*! *Sing praises* to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody” (Ps. 98:4,5). Of course, anadiplosis is also evident in the Greco-Roman tradition which is at the root of medieval and modern languages’ rhetoric. Demetrius’ *On Style* asserts that elevation is favoured by figures such as anadiplosis.¹⁷ But in the case of this particular circle/guild in late medieval Spain, there are certain suggestive and unnoticed

solación (1424) – may be indirect as has been argued partly because he refers to a *papagayo* rather than a sparrow: “Antes parece que las más queridas cosas e más fermosas se lleva (la muerte) primero, e con las tinieblas suyas escurece e devora la duración deaquéllas. Desto se quexando Catulo, en el planto del papagayo de su amiga Lesbia, dezia... E a vos mal puestas malas tinieblas por quanto todas las caras hermosas vos tragades”. It should also be noted that Villena conflates Job and Catullus, i.e. the Bible and pagan poetry as in the Hebrew poem. He also (as in the Hebrew) “moralizes” or “spiritualizes” the eroticism of the Roman. On Ephodi and Villena see Gutwirth 2011. On Villena and Catullus see in addition Arcaz Pozo 1994.

¹⁶ See also Exodus 12:4,5: “(4) [...] your count *for the lamb*. (5) *Your lamb* shall be without blemish...”. Gen. 7:18,19: “(18) The waters prevailed and increased greatly [...] on the face of *the waters*. (19) *And the waters* prevailed so mightily [...]”.

¹⁷ “The elegant type has charm and vivacity. The subject-matter may be charming in itself. But expression can make it still more so. The means employed are such as [...] the figures anadiplosis, anaphora, and the like [...] Mordant wit contributes to force, and the same may be said of such figures as prosopopoeia, anadiplosis, anaphora, asyndeton, climax. [...] The vicious extreme of the forcible type is the graceless style, which is closely allied to frigidity” (Roberts 1902, §§ 240-304).

features which may provide a closer historical and cultural context for such a pronounced use of anadiplosis in the poem.

Indeed, Anthony J. Cascardi (1982) devotes a study to the galaico-Portuguese form *leixa-pren*. It appears in the *Proemio e carta* of the Marqués de Santillana (c. 1449), when he refers to Portuguese and Galician literature. He comments: “E aun destes es cierto rescebimos los nombres del Arte, asi como Maestría mayor é menor: encadenados, lexapren e mansobre” (Cascardi 1982, 98). Before Santillana, it appears in the *Cancionero de Baena*. This shows that the technique and the term for it were well known by the literati of the period. *Coblas capfinidas* appears also in the relevant, Catalano-Provençal region in 1348, in the *Leys d’amor* (1348-56). There Cascardi finds a definition and an example of the technique. His own article analyses the appearance of the technique in the *Libro de buen amor* (1330-1343). It is of interest to note that an apparent member of the network we are analysing here, Joshua Ha-Lorqi, is believed to be the ancestor of the poet Pedro de Santa Fe. Pedro would then be one of a group of Jews and *conversos* from the Crown of Aragon at the court of Alfonso V. One of his poems provides us with an added example of anadiplosis.¹⁸ The parallels between his epistolarity; his attraction to the treatment of departure and other features of his work on the one hand and the dominant themes of Hebrew poetry of the period on the other are worth bearing in mind. This is especially the case because of the recent publication of Regesta from the Arxiu Parroquial de Verdú, where “Pere de Sta. Fe” seems to be mentioned as a translator from Hebrew (Josep Xavier Muntané i Santiveri 2015, doc. 4864).

That there are differences between a poem from antiquity and the Middle Ages is not surprising. And yet, observing and noting these helps to provide some sharper contours. The ancient classical Latin is not the Hebrew of medieval Spain; the cultural identity is thus obvious without noting that the Hebrew is not an hendecasyllabic; it is obvious long before reading the poem – as soon as the alphabets have been seen and the languages have been identified – as most Christians did not write or read poetry in Hebrew in medieval Spain. There are yet other differences. Catullus’ poem is addressed by a poet to a non-poet. The Hebrew poem, in contrast, is part of a corpus of poetry written within the confines of a circle/guild of poets for whom writing poetry is itself a form of sociability. They have been seen within the contexts of social trends in the late Middle Ages, perhaps particularly in the Crown of Aragon, trends which are most visibly expressed in the institution of the *jochs florals* (Gutwirth 1998).

The question of gender is also one of the differences. Catullus’ poem is marked by this: not only is it a love poem by a man to a woman, but the

18 “En la cort de amor puyé | y puyando he caído, | y caí como perdido | perdiendo seso cobré | cobrando quiseme alcanzar” (Alvar 1976, 30). See also Andrés Gutiérrez 1977; Tato 1994; 1996; 1999; Ciceri 1995, 178.

affection of Catullus' lover for her pet bird, a sparrow, is central. Also related is the Roman custom of giving birds as love gifts. This might contrast with the function of pets in an Hispano-Jewish context. Fowl (peacocks) and other pets as status symbols in households of late medieval Hispano-Jewish communities of the late Middle Ages have been discussed and documented. Jews as keepers of royal pets [e.g. lions,] are also documented.¹⁹

Even the critics who do not accept the tradition of the *passer's* equivalence with male/female genitalia and breasts will admit a certain aura of sensuality and eroticism in *Carmina* II. All would certainly agree that in the *Carmina* there is no hint of the aura of the academic, of the class room or of teaching/learning. It is not in the Wisdom genre. The Hebrew poem, in an oedipal gesture, subverts the sensual quality of the Latin source which provides its depth and resonance. On the other hand, birds *per se* are not dissonant in poetry from Hispano-Jewish communities. On the contrary, they are extremely common and early, (Cano Pérez 1988) not only in love poetry, (where bird images are applied to the beloved, e.g. "raven hair"). They stand for poetry itself, as is so commonplace in the Classics, but they are also present in Hebrew poetry of satire and invective of the fifteenth century where we find, for example, the intense use of the raven/dove opposition (Gutwirth, 1985b). Similarly, the all pervasive, hyperbolic language of intense love as used here and in medieval Hebrew poetry between men is certainly not restricted to the Hebrew poetry from late medieval Aragon. The challenge before this late medieval poet is to oppose the sensuality of the source by transforming it, without violent turnings and retaining basic memories and motifs/ keywords of the source, into a poem of wisdom, intellect and spirituality. Needless to say, key here -as in medieval Hebrew poetry in general - is the art of transition.

Overall, it is the general direction or - more relevant for the historian - the value system or axiology which constitutes the main difference. The Hebrew poem values the intellect (*de'ah, haskel, 'amirkha, sekhel, tevunah*). Readers of medieval poetry - or prose, for that matter - emanating from Hispano-Jewish communities encounter such categories so often that they become inured to their significance. Frequently they stand not for any precise disciplinary designation or moral quality but for a more flexible and fluid reference to the mind, intellect and intellectual life. The primacy of teaching and learning is very clear in the poem. The direction

19 Serrano and Baer understood the significance of the documents on Jews and royal menageries in Iberia when selecting them, from amongst many others, for publication. They did not refer to Portugal, on which see Faingold 1989; Viterbo 1904. To be sure, neither in our Hebrew poem nor in Catullus is there any mention of royal menageries. They refer to pets in private spaces. For the relevant evidence see Gutwirth 1994; 2003. It might be of some use to contrast the poem to other exponents of the topic such as Ovid's elegy on the death of his mistress Corinna's parrot (*Am.* 2.6.); or Martial's epigram (Book I, no. CIX) on a lap dog.

then, despite the undeniable presence of terms and concerns of affect, is towards the life of the mind. The contrast with *Carmina* II could not be starker precisely because the latter constitutes its metatext.

This has certain repercussions for our comprehension of the history and culture of Hispano-Jewish communities of the period. Indeed, the poem could be seen not as a curiosity or anecdote but as following procedures analogous to other specific, concrete and evidenced cultural features current in Hispano-Jewish communities. Two close analogues may be mentioned here: those of contrafacta *a lo divino* and those of tune-markers.

In general, in these Hispano-Jewish communities one observes a movement, a crossing of borders between the religious, legal, and amorous/secular fields. A particularly clear case would be the phenomenon of the Hebrew religious strophic poems, *muwashahat*, i.e. the use of a prosodic frame associated with the amorous (famous for its role in weddings) for religious/liturgical or paraliturgical purposes. The fields of Hebrew satire and parody are equally telling. Passages from sacred texts are used in a humorous, occasionally erotic or obscene and decidedly secular manner. The context in *romance* literature of late medieval Iberia is not lacking. When reading works of this circle, such as Bonafed's erotic poem to his paramour, Sol/Shemesh, saturated with Scriptural allusions and formally reminiscent of the prosody of liturgical pieces or his analogy of the *shofar* to the phallus, one is reminded of the parody of the canonical hours in the *Libro de buen amor*; the erotic *double entendres* of the *Cancioneros* in the first half of the fifteenth century or the *misas de amor* in its second half.²⁰

Our case is the obverse of *a lo humano* (Tillier 1985) procedures and closer to turning *a lo divino* which is equally well represented in the cultures of medieval Iberia. To be sure, Christian *a lo divino* lyric poetry in the *romance* seems to be problematic and late in medieval Spain, but, once it is adopted, it becomes very strongly entrenched and is sometimes seen as a sign of identity. The main feature for us is the elevation of the secular and erotic to what is perceived in those communities as higher levels, appertaining to intellectual or religious life.

The case of tune markers is also relevant because it also represents the movements between different, indeed, opposed fields: Christian, popular music of songs in the *romance* accompany Jewish, liturgical, sacral poetic Hebrew compositions. From a historical perspective, the importance of the phenomenon consists in the basic underlying cultural commonality, a sharing of the same music and song which is familiar and beloved in all three communities. It is a phenomenon which becomes distinct and

²⁰ Green (1963; 1958) sums up the previous findings and explains Juan Ruiz's sources. Needless to say there are also precedents within the Hebrew poetic tradition but its readers do not seem to be aware of the context in the *imaginaire* of the majority population.

intensifies in the fifteenth century, the age when a member of Yosef and Vidal's circle, Shlomo Bonafed, composes his Jewish, Hebrew liturgical poem (the *reshut*) to a tune from a song in the *romance*.²¹

6 History and Context

The evidence for cultural contacts between Jews and Christians in real life is not restricted to the texts of poetry. Graetz' theories of complete decline and isolation in the fifteenth century are problematic in various ways, but here attention may be drawn to this question of evidence and access to documents. The very simple point of departure is that, however innovative and influential at the date of writing, Graetz could not take into account documents discovered and edited *after* he wrote his work. This means not only the immense corpus of documents discovered and edited by Baer (1929-36) and since, but also those which preceded Baer. That is to say that the documentary evidence is independent of speculations on Baer's tendencies. A few examples from the Crown of Aragon - area of this "Poets' Guild" - may suffice.

The protection of Jewish books is part of the tenor of a letter published by Rubio i Lluch (1908, XLII). From it we learn that in Barcelona, on 2 November 1310, Jaume II grants Jahuda Bonsenyor amongs other things the privilege that the *aljama de Barcelona* should not be deprived of its books ("ni penyorat en els llibres o altres béns seus"). Document CXIX, given at Tàrraga, 6 February 1344, is a permit to Romeo de Pal, *mestre en Sagrades Escripures*, to explain to the Jews and dispute with them. This is not a positive attitude by any means, but it does not support an image of "turning inwards" and cutting contacts with the Christians. Document CXXXVIII, given at València, 3 February 1349: the king orders *maestre Salamo*, Jew of Mallorca to finish translating ("arromançar") an Arabic book ("el llibre sarrasenesc que li deixara Francesch Roys"). The letter says that the king informs him that he wrote to Francesch Roys to lend the Jew the book which he had begun to translate into the vernacular.

Document CLXXXV was given at Barcelona, 8 October, 1358. It is a permission to "Mosse Daniel, jueu de Barcelona" to explain the truth of the holy prophets and the books of the ancient law". Daniel seems to be one of the many converts who preached at synagogues. Again, the document

²¹ The question of tune markers and contrafacta have, of course, been studied continuously since the late nineteenth century, the age of Danon, from textual or musicological angles. The relevant point here is rather different: their significance for the conventional opposition between Jewish attitudes to Muslims and to Christians. For further clarifications on contrafacta, tune markers, secular/religious crossings, see for example Gutwirth 2003. For the question of attitudes to "Ishmael", the Muslims, see Gutwirth 1989.

is by no means a support of an image of idyllic tolerance, but it is evidence of Jewish contacts with Christian religion, both through converts and missionaries. Document CCXCIV is from Barcelona, 22 abril 1378: Pere III charges the Governador de Mallorca with the task of sending him the books which had belonged to *Mestre Leo Grech, jueu*, and to recuperate those which had been sold, given or loaned: “And since the said master Leo had many books which we need we order you to send them” (e com lo dit maestre Leo hagués molts llibres los quals nos havem mester, manam vos).

Document CCXCV, Saragoça, 11 May, 1378: the infante Joan orders maestre Jucef Avernarduc to come over, bringing the astrolab and the books of astrology which are in his possession. Again, we observe a surprising urgency, closeness and familiarity at the Christian court with the Jewish intellectuals, their books and scientific instruments. CCCXII: Sant Feliu de Llobregat, 31 October 1380, the *infant* Joan writes to the Governador de Mallorca to send him an astrolab which is made by some Jews of Mallorca with the book of Alfragani in the *romance* (“llibre d’Alfragani en romanç”). He writes that he heard that there are two Jews, Bellshom and Yçach Niffoci, who are good masters of astrolabs. CCCXXII: Tarragona, 5 November, 1381, the *infant* Joan shows his keen interest in the mapamundi composed by *Cresques lo juheu* and wants it at his court. CCCXXXVIII, Tortosa, 14 March, 1383, Pere I orders the “Aljama dels jueus de Barcelona” to translate from Hebrew into Catalan (“que faci arromançar de l’hebraich al català”) the work of *Maestre Mossé d’Egipte* on Jewish Law.

7 In fine

Numerous speculations, theorizations and serious analyses are possible concerning analogies between late medieval Christian and Jewish cultures in fields such as art, scholasticism, food, humour, music, language, poetry. But in our case, that of a poem whose rubric announces explicitly that it was written based on the model of a poem “in the language of the Christians” (*bi-leshon ha-nosrim*) and whose analysis shows close similarities to Catullus, we are on a different plane. Equally relevant is the fact that, for this period and place, it is possible to research and reconstruct a history and a background to these analogues in the rich evidence provided by the archival records. They show what the real contacts between Jews and Christians were at the time of the education and formation of these Jews from the “guild of the poets”, the *havurat ha-nognim*.

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