

***The metaphors in Song of Songs and adolescents: a reception-
theoretical investigation and proposed translation***

by

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Hear, O Israel:
The Lord our God,
The Lord is one! (Deuteronomy 6:4).

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The existence of the Bible as a
book for the people, is the greatest
benefit which the human race has experienced.
Every attempt to belittle it is a crime
against humanity
(Emmanuel Kant).

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die metafore van **Hooglied** vir tieners te vertaal aan die hand van vertaalteoretiese en resepsieteoretiese beginsels. Die twee vereistes wat gepostuleer word vir 'n suksesvolle vertaling, is die behoud van die oorspronklike beeld, en 'n kennis van die tienerleser.

Hoofstuk twee handel oor die prominensie van vertaling en drie raamwerke te wete, die aard van vertaling, 'n situasieanalise en vertalingsriglyne.

Die eerste raamwerk omskryf die essensiële kenmerke van vertaling, naamlik dubbelsinnigheid, veelvoudigheid, vertaalbaarheid, kwalitatiewe, betekenis en die onderskeid tussen vertaling as *proses* en *produk*.

Die tweede raamwerk verteenwoordig die agt sosiolinguistiese faktore binne 'n vertalingsituasie waarvan die tekstipe die belangrikste is. Die tekstipe wat bepaal word na aanleiding van die dominante taalfunksie, bepaal watter vertaalteipe gebruik word. Drie universele tekstipes word geïdentifiseer naamlik informatiewe, vokatiewe en ekspressiewe.

Die derde raamwerk verteenwoordig die beginsels en norme van vertaling. Twee tipes kom na vore as die mees aanvaarbare, naamlik die semantiese (adekwate, gewysig-letterlike, organies-kommunikatiewe, duidelike¹) vir ekspressiewe tekste, en die kommunikatiewe (aanvaarbare, idiomatiese, dinamies-ekwivalente, verskuilde²) vir informatiewe en vokatiewe tekste.

Hoofstuk drie handel oor metafore en hul vertaling. Vyf aspekte van die metafoor is ontsluit:

- 1 Enige definisie van metafoor moet oorvereenvoudiging vermy en as eienskappe suggestiwiteit, dubbelsinnigheid en ortwykendheid insluit.

1 Overt translation
2 Covert translation

- 2 Drie funksionele teorieë van metafore is geïdentifiseer: substitusie, affektiewe en inkrementale.
- 3 Die uiteindelijke doel van die metafoor is die kulminering van genoemde funksies
- 4 Die metafoor bestaan uit drie elemente: voorwerp (tenor), beeld (vehicle) en betekenis.
- 5 Vyf tipes metafore word onderskei: dooie, cliché, standaard, neologisme en oorspronklike.

Die vertaling van metafore word gekompliseer deur hul taal- en kultuurgebondenheid en verweefdheid in unieke literêre tradisies.

Die belangrikste fout wat gemaak word in metafoorvertaling is die weglaat van die oorspronklike beeld. Teenstanders van die letterlike oordra van beelde laat buite rekening dat tale, metafore en tekstipes verskil.

Daar is gevind dat dooie metafore byna in alle gevalle geparafraseer of met 'n kulturele ekwivalent vervang word; dat oorspronklike metafore letterlik vertaal word, veral as dit in 'n estetiese teks voorkom; en dat standaardmetafore na aanleiding van een van sewe voorgestelde ekwivalente vertaal word.

Hoofstuk vier handel oor die meriete van 'n resepsie-teoretiese benadering by die vertaling van Bybelse metafore. Daar is 'n groeiende tendens in 'n letterkundige benadering tot die Bybel ten spyte van die kontroversialiteit van die idee. Desnieteenstaande word die Bybel beskou as Woord van God wat verskeie voorbeelde van letterkundige genres bevat. Die gevare van 'n letterkundige benadering lê in kontemporêre literêre teorieë se teenstrydighede, foutiewe toepassing van konsepte op antieke Hebreeuse literatuur en die versoeking om die referensiële funksie van die Bybel te relegier tot fiksie.

Vyf voordele van die benadering is dat dit 'n bydrae lewer tot eksegetiese, vertaling, persoonlike Bybelstudie, die voorkoming van wanopvattinge, en 'n waardering van die estetiese van die Skrif.

Daar is ook gevind dat resepsieteorie van "reader-response criticism" onderskei moet word, twee hoofstrome het (resepsie-estetika en

werkingsestetika), en konsentreer op die rol van die leser in sy interaksie met die teks.

Die resepsie-estetika lewer die konsep "verwagtingshorison" op wat die leser se sosiokulturele en literêr-intellektuele raamwerk verteenwoordig en wat sy interaksie met 'n teks beïnvloed. Die werkingsestetika lewer die konsepte "*Leerstellen* (oop plekke)" en "geïmpliseerde leser" op. Hierdie konsepte veronderstel 'n ingeligte leser wat optimaal met die teks "saamwerk" om suksesvolle "ontvangs" te verseker.

Hierdie studie onderskei twee lesers, naamlik die vertaler as ingeligte leser (wat kennis van die teks en Geesvervuldheid veronderstel), en die tieners as teikenlesers met 'n unieke kollektiewe verwagtingshorison.

Tieners is onwillig om te lees, maar besit tog die potensiele kognitiewe vermoë om ingewikkelde metafore te verstaan. Alhoewel hulle nie ingeligte lesers is nie, reageer hulle gunstig wanneer hulle met 'n uitdagende letterkundige werk gekonfronteer word en verskil hulle van volwassenes in metaforiese verstaanbaarheid slegs ten opsigte van uitgebreide woordbetekenisse.

Hoofstuk 5 bevat 'n agtergrondstudie van **Hooglied**, 'n vertaling van die metafore en 'n evaluasie van ses geraadpleegde Bybelvertalings. Die hoofstrome van interpretasie is: die drama/kultiese-mite, die allegorie/tipologie, en die liefdespoësie/liedere.

Die metafore toon sterk interne verbindings aan wat op eenheid dui. Die meeste metafore kom in die sewe lofliedere voor, is ontleen aan die natuur en argitektuur, is deurspek van *hapax legomena*, en kan as oorspronklik beskou word.

Daar is twaalf dubbelsinnige beelde wat beide letterlike en figuurlike interpretasie regverdig en letterlik vertaal word. Die enigste metafore wat nie oorspronklik is nie, *yônâtî* (my duif) - standaard; en ^{ja}*hotî kalla* (my lieftingsbruid) - dooie.

Die twee hoofbeginsels en -kriteria toegepas in die persoonlike vertaling sentreer om die behoud van die beeld, en die gebruik van verstaanbare terme.

By problematiese Hebreeuse terme is 'n kontekstuele benadering van interpretasie gevolg om uitsluitel te verkry. Alle bekende plant-, dier-, kruie- en plekname is vervang met beskrywings om bekendheid van assosiasie te verseker.

'n Evaluasie van die Bybelvertalings (OV, NV, RSV, JB, TEV en NIV) het getoon dat die NIV (onder die Engelse vertalings) en die NV (onder die Afrikaanse vertalings) die suksesvolste is in die vertaling van metafore vir tieners.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to translate the metaphors of **Song of Songs** for teenagers according to translation-theoretical and reception-theoretical principles. The two prerequisites proposed for a successful translation are the retention of the original image and a knowledge of the reader.

Chapter 2 deals with the importance of translation society and three frameworks, namely the nature of translation, situational analysis and principles and criteria for translation.

The first framework describes the essential characteristics of translation, namely ambiguity, multifaceted nature, translatability, equivalence quality, meaning, and the distinction between translation as *process* and *product*.

The second framework represents the eight sociolinguistic factors within the translation situation of which the text type is the most important. The text type which is determined by the dominant language function, determines the translation type which ought to be used. Three universal text types are identified, namely informative, vocative and expressive.

The third framework represents the principles and norms of translation. Two translation types emerge as the most suitable, namely semantic (adequate, modified-literal, organic-communicative, overt) for expressive texts, and communicative (acceptable, idiomatic, dynamic-equivalent, covert) for informative and vocative texts.

Chapter three deals with metaphors and their translation. Five aspects of metaphor are recognised:

- 1 Any definition of metaphor should avoid oversimplification and mention the characteristics of suggestiveness, ambiguity, and elusiveness.
- 2 Three functional theories of metaphors are identified: substitution, affective and incremental.
- 3 The ultimate goal of metaphor is the culmination of these mentioned functions.

- 4 Metaphor consists of three elements: object (tenor), image (vehicle) and meaning.
- 5 Five types of metaphors are distinguished: dead, cliché, standard, neologism and original.

The translation of metaphors is complicated by their language and culture specificity, and their interwovenness into unique literary traditions.

The most important error made in metaphor translation is the omission of the original image. Opponents of the literal transfer of the image usually fail to recognise that languages, metaphors and text types differ.

It is concluded that dead metaphors are to be paraphrased or replaced with a cultural equivalent; original metaphors are to be translated literally, particularly if it occurs in an aesthetic text, and standard metaphors are to be translated by means of any one of seven suggested equivalents.

Chapter four deals with the merits of a reception-theoretical approach to the translation of Biblical metaphors. There is a growing tendency to a literary approach to the Bible despite the controversy of the notion. Notwithstanding the Bible is viewed as the Word of God which contains various examples of literary genres. The hazards of a literary approach lie in contemporary literary theories' contradictions, esoteric terms, erroneous application of concepts to antique Hebrew literature, and the temptation to relegate the referential function of the Bible to fiction.

Five advantages to this approach are that it contributes to exegesis, translation, personal Bible study, the prevention of misconceptions, and an appreciation of the aesthetics of Scripture.

It is also concluded that reception theory must be distinguished from reader-response criticism, and has two main streams (*Rezeptionästhetik* and *Wirkungsästhetik*) and concentrates on the role of the reader and his interaction with the text.

Rezeptionästhetik produces the concept of "horizon of expectation" which represents the reader's socio-cultural and literary-intellectual framework and influences his interaction with the text. *Wirkungsästhetik* produces the

concepts "*Leerstellen* (gaps)" and "implied reader". These concepts signify an informed reader who "co-operates" optimally with the text in order to ensure successful "reception".

This study distinguishes two readers, namely the translator as informed reader (which implies a knowledge of the text and being Spirit-filled), and teenagers as the target readers with a unique collective horizon of expectations.

Teenagers are generally unwilling to read yet possess the potential cognitive ability to comprehend complicated metaphors. Although they are not informed readers they respond favourably when confronted with a challenging literary work and differ from adults in metaphoric comprehensibility in terms of elaborateness of word meanings only.

Chapter 5 contains a background study of **Song of Songs**, a translation of its metaphors and an evaluation of six consulted Bible translations. The main streams of interpretation are: drama/cult-mythological, allegorical/typological, and love poetry/songs.

The metaphors reveal definite internal connections that reflect a unity. Most of the metaphors occur in the seven praise songs, originate from nature and architecture, are riddled with *hapax legomena* and can be regarded as original.

There are twelve double entendres which justify both a literal and figurative interpretation and are to be translated literally. The only metaphors that are not original, namely *yônâtî* (my dove) - standard, and ^a*hoî kallâ(h)* (my darling bride) - dead.

The two main principles and criteria applied in the personal translation are the retention of the image, and the use of comprehensible terms.

The contextual approach to interpretation is followed to resolve issues with problematic Hebrew terms. All unknown plant, animal, spice and place names are replaced with descriptions to ensure resonance.

An evaluation of the Bible translations (OV, NV, RSV, JB, TEV and NIV) indicates that the NIV (of the English translations) and the NV (of the Afrikaans translations) are the most successful translations of metaphors for teenagers.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation

1.2 Problem defined

1.3 Aim and objectives

1.4 Hypotheses

1.5 Motivation and benefits

1.6 Scope of the study

1.7 Method and programme of research

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation

Song of Songs was originally written in classical Hebrew, and as a love poem - the only work of its kind in the Bible¹ - it is rich in metaphor. It has been translated into a number of English and Afrikaans versions which all differ at one point or another, yet all have one aim in common, which is to communicate God's truth to a specific target group.

Song of Songs is both a complex and a challenging book. Its complexity is reflected in the lack of unanimity on the rightful place given to it in the Canon. The effect of the difficulties that early exegetes had in understanding the nature of the text can be seen in the different designations given to the book in the Masoretic text, the Talmud and the Septuagint. The dispute among scholars who have for several centuries been engaged in trying to determine whether **Song of Songs** is a unified work or a collection of poems, reaffirms its intricacy (Grober, 1980:vi). Its challenge, however, lies in the fact that although no suitable analogy can wholly be drawn between it and any other Biblical book, and references to other relevant Biblical texts can be made selectively only, it is still part of the Canon and for purposes of contemporary relevance it demands a translation for not only the contemporary reader but also selected target groups within contemporary society.

The importance of the metaphors in **Song of Songs** is stressed by Grober in this way: "It is felt that a stylistic analysis of the workings of certain figures of rhetoric ... namely metaphor and simile provide a deeper understanding of the structure of the text" (1980:112). She elaborates on the significance of these tropes in **Song of Songs** by arguing that the density of the semantic associations they evoke, give a greater degree of coherence to the text and analysing the imagery might reveal "poetic intentionality" too (1980:112).

1 Meek (1991:92) writes that **Song of Songs** "is unique in Hebrew literature; there is nothing even remotely like it anywhere else in the Bible" and continues to give a list of no less than eleven peculiarities and idiosyncrasies as proof of its being one of a kind in the Bible.

To conduct a successful translation of particularly the metaphors of **Song of Songs** then, is to recognise the central place they occupy within this unique book.

1.2 Problem defined

The question arises as to whether the metaphors in **Song of Songs** in the most prominent and widely read English and Afrikaans Bible translations in South Africa are, in terms of contemporary theories of translation and literary theory, **successful** (adequate and acceptable) for the communication of the full intention of the Author as expressed in classical Hebrew, for specifically adolescents.

1.3 Aim and objectives

Since there is no translation of the metaphors in **Song of Songs** that is specifically aimed at adolescents a proposed translation will be provided in an attempt to fill this need. The final translation will be the culmination of integrated information gained from these objectives:

- 1 An investigation of the extent to which the following fields of study, and their theoretical frameworks **facilitate** the translation of Biblical metaphors and **address** the role of the reader in the reception of literary texts and metaphors:
 - * Translation
 - * Metaphor
 - * Literature.
- 2 A study of **Song of Songs** in general and an investigation of its metaphors as they appear in the original classical Hebrew and in the most prominent English and Afrikaans translations in South Africa as well as an assessment of the suitability of the translated metaphors in terms of adolescents.

- 3 Translation has always been regarded as very much a linguistic endeavour. Only recently, and then still not really consistently and unanimously, has Literary Theory pertinently been involved to cope with the translation of literary texts.
- 4 Some translation theorists (particularly exponents of dynamic equivalence) and some literary theorists (particularly supporters of reception theory) have dealt with the issue of the role of the reader and have emphasised its importance in establishing meaning. Evidence that the insights of these two groups have been integrated, however, appears to be either absent, or incidental. Nord (1991:52) also adds that although the importance of the reader is commonly acknowledged in translation theory, "there is no other factor which is neglected so frequently in translation practice".
- 5 **Song of Songs** deals with a topic that rates among the adolescent's major interests and concerns: love and sexuality. This can probably be attributed to the fact that the developmental stage at which a human being's interest in sexuality is awakened, is during adolescence and the teenage years.

Here are some contributions that can be attributed to this study:

- 1 Adolescents can enjoy a translation of the metaphors of **Song of Songs** that has specifically been effected to suit them as target group, thus making an important contribution to their understanding of an avowedly "problematic" biblical book, and dealing in sensitive responsible fashion with an aspect of adolescent development.
- 2 Literary theoretical concerns relevant to the translation of literary/Biblical texts and the translation of metaphors specifically will be explored in detail and some solutions proposed to difficult issues.

1.6 Scope of the study

"Although we live in an age of intense specialization we should not lose sight of the fact that many scholars in different fields are interested in related problems" (Uitti, 1969:xi). This statement is an apt reflection of the rationale underlying the present study because it is a topic that requires analysis within an interdisciplinary framework which usually proves to be a highly complex

undertaking, and which has in recent years become an increasingly acceptable and challenging form of scholarly endeavour.

Since the study is concerned with the translation of not only a literary but also a Biblical text, it encompasses the fields of both Linguistics and General Literary Studies and touches upon Theology. As the final translation is intended to communicate purposefully with a specific subculture, and the preliminary research addresses the role of the reader, it is essential to consider adolescents (as the target group in question) in terms of their basic world view and reading habits. This involves the fields of Education and Psychology. Amit-Kochavi (1993:6) confirms the fact that translation traverses many fields of study. Libova (1992:93) supports this view fully: "Translation has linguistic, literary, aesthetic, psychological and other characteristic features. They should all be taken into consideration in **any** study of translation" (my emphasis). It would not be unacceptable, then, if this study appeared to be sprawled over a too wide spectrum, as all the fields that are brought into consideration would seem to have an essential contribution to make to what is an interdisciplinary, comparative enterprise. In terms of the scope and range of this study, Theology, Psychology and Education are essentially related disciplines and according to Uitti, Linguistics and Literary Theory are "hybrid subjects in spite of enjoying separate status as two independent branches of learning;" (1969:xi-xii).

1.7 Method and programme of research

- 1 This is a theoretical and investigative excursion into various intertwined and related disciplines to find possible guidelines that will be of assistance in the translation of the metaphors of **Song of Songs**. The final proposed translation is meant to be challenging and provocative rather than definitive.
- 2 Initially a survey and critical evaluation are provided (from chapters 2 to 4) of the following issues:
 - * Translation in general.
 - * Translation of metaphor.
 - * Reception Theory and the Bible.
- 3 Chapter 5 then follows in which the metaphors found in the most prominent modern translations available in South Africa will be

assessed against a background study of **Song of Songs** and its metaphors in the classical Hebrew. This is followed by a discussion, and finally a translation of the metaphors in **Song of Songs** will be attempted which will render them accessible to adolescents at all levels of understanding.

- 4 Chapter 6 contains a few concluding remarks and recommendations followed by appendices and a bibliography.

2 TRANSLATION IN GENERAL

2.1 Background and importance

2.2 The nature of translation

2.2.1 Terminology

2.2.2 The state of translation

2.2.3 Translatability

2.2.4 Equivalence and quality

2.2.5 Meaning/text vs message/content

2.2.6 Models and constraints

2.3 Towards a theoretical framework

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