

Pesados: Hospitality, Tedium and the Footsteps of Al-Andalus

Eleazar GUTWIRTH*
Tel-Aviv University

Ennui is a potent force for creation. Since –at least– the Renaissance, it has led to literary manifestations in modern languages in various forms. At the same time, tedium/*fastidium* in rhetoric could be a way of bringing the creative process to a halt. Curtius classifies it as a *topos* of the conclusion.¹

Although most of the recent critical corpus deals with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,² the literary elaborations on the concept of tedium are richly documented in the Greco-Roman tradition and in Patristic and Medieval Latin literatures. Modern languages receive and

* gutwirth@post.tau.ac.il.

¹ E. R. CURTIUS, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (tr. Willard R. TRASK) (Princeton, N.J. 1953); S. RENDALL, “Reading in the French Renaissance: Textual Communities, Boredom, Privacy,” in J. HART (ed.), *Reading the Renaissance: Culture, Poetics, and Drama* (New York 1996), pp. 35-43.

² S. NÚÑEZ-PUENTE, *Ellas se aburren: Ennui e imagen femenina* (Alicante 2001); ID., “El gran ennui o la monotonía de lo insignificante: Sexualidad, dispositivo femenino y aburrimiento,” *Espéculo: Revista de Estudios Literarios*, Año VI, no. 14 (marzo-junio 2000), np; J. BROOKER, “What Tedium: Boredom in Malone Dies,” *Journal of Beckett Studies* 10 (2000-2001), pp. 29-39; M. W. IRMSCHER, “On the Ambivalence of Boredom in the 1850s: J. E. Erdmann and Langeweile as Kennzeichen der Bildung,” in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 78:4 (2004), pp. 572-608; E. SHINKLE, “Boredom, Repetition, Inertia: Contemporary Photography and the Aesthetics of the Banal,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 37:4 (2004), pp. 165-184; H. HARTUNG, “Langeweile-die Ersatzmutter der Musen: Zweiter venezianischer Aufenthalt-1790,” *Neue Rundschau* 110:1 (1999), pp. 46-50. N. JONARD, *L'Ennui dans la littérature européenne: Des origines à l'aube du XXe siècle* (Paris 1998); P. MEYER SPACKS, *Boredom: The Literary History of a State of Mind* (Chicago 1995).

adapt this tradition. It appears at the end of the work in Macrobius, in Prudentius and still in the seventeenth century, in Milton: “Time is our tedious song should here have ending.”³ It is also a *topos* of the Prologue which comes under *humilitas*.⁴ Thus, under the modesty *topos*, the author assures his reader that he wishes to spare him boredom. Quintilian [*Institutions* V, 14, 30] warns against *fastidium*.

Boredom comes in many guises and recently Kuhn concentrated on an ennui which is independent from external circumstances.⁵ It is related to *acedia* in the Middle Ages and to melancholy in the Renaissance. It has a link to time and to death. Kuhn invokes Julien Green who writes, in his *Diary*: “With the years, any man who has given the matter some thought realizes that ennui quite simply is one of the faces of death and that it is death that people flee when they travel...”⁶

Our interest here differs somewhat from these approaches (as the *pesado* is linked to but not identical with ennui), but it retains the useful link of tedium to space, time and death. It is possible to attend to specificities –geographic, linguistic, cultural– of genres and modes of writing about tedium and *fastidium*. The focus here will therefore be on the Iberian Peninsula in the middle ages and on a relatively defined theme: that of the *pesado*.

I

In Ben Sira (*Ecclesiasticus*, 29:25) we read: “You receive the guests and hand the drinks without being thanked for it” and in 29:27: “Be off stranger, make way for a more important guest.” This tradition of *Ecclesiasticus* in Greek, then, is based on the belief in the aptness of wisdom genres as a framework for discussing hospitality. There is an intimation of time: “Be off” alludes to “overstaying” and to the undesirable guest. In the Hebrew and Aramaic texts there is a shared belief

³ Cited by CURTIUS, *European literature*.

⁴ CURTIUS, *European Literature*, p. 85.

⁵ R. C. KUHN, *The Demon of Noontide: Ennui in Western Literature* (Princeton 1977).

⁶ KUHN, *The Demon of Noontide*, p. 26.

in this classification of hospitality under wisdom. Similarly there is, sometimes, also an implied link to time and to grading the guests in a hierarchy. Thus, *Derekh Ereš Zuta* 8:

Worse [than those who eat before their guest] is a guest who invites a guest; worse than him is someone who eats before the scholar...; an annoying/tiresome [*matriah*] guest is worse than all three.

In Late Medieval Spain, the more widely diffused version was still alive. In the *Menorat Ha-Ma'or*⁷ of R. Israel al-Naqawa we read: “Three are the light [= worthless]; he who lives in the house of his father in law, a guest who invites a guest and bran.”

The *Mishnah* in *Baba Batra* (98b) had included, in a legal discussion of buildings, a building defined as “a wedding house for his son” that is, a father’s building destined to serve as the first family house of his son after the latter’s marriage. The *Gemarah* questions this gender specific building for a son. In reply, it explains the *Mishnah*’s intentions or implications by appeal to a non-legal area, that of the wisdom genre:

Why has it been stated “a wedding house for his son...” and not a wedding house for his son or daughter...? By this the *Mishnah* has taught us incidentally that it is not proper for a son in law to live at the house of his father in law...

That this idea is a legitimate concern of the wisdom genre is demonstrated by a quotation from one of the prominent texts of that literature. The implication of the *Gemarah* is not merely that Ben Sira circulated in Hebrew in these circles before c. 500 but that, although not part of the canon, it was an authoritative text:

... As it is written in Ben Sira: I have weighed all things in the scale of the balance and found nothing lighter than bran; lighter than bran is a son in law who lives in the house of his father in law; lighter than such a son is a guest who brings with him another guest and lighter than such a guest is he who replies before he hears the question.

⁷ Israel ben Yosef BEN ALNAKAVAH, *Sefer Menorat ha-Ma'or...* (New York 1929-1932) (ed. H. ENELOW) vol. 4, p. 450.

II

Questions of hospitality are thus related to legal texts, although this hospitality had not been closely codified. These texts were not recondite jewels accessible to the erudite only. *Baba Bathra*, unlike some other Talmudic treatises, was part of the basic education of the average Jewish reader in medieval Spain as elsewhere. The medieval survival of this particular case of a Ben Sira maxim—unlike other Judeo-Hellenistic texts—is documented. They concern hospitality and worthlessness or being *qal*—“light.” In eleventh century Al Andalus, there would be contacts with the Arabic *Adab* tradition of the *thaqil* “heavy.” One cannot rule out paronomasia [*qal-thaqil*] as a factor. These contacts, in our case, are not mere assumptions but are made explicit more than once. The Arabic *thaqil* would lead to the Hebrew *kaved*. This “heavy” would replace or add to the older (but equally undesirable), “light” guest. The *kaved*’s link to the *thaqil* was remembered centuries later. In fifteenth century Granada, Se’adyah ibn Danan’s *Book of Roots* [*Sefer ha-Shorashim*] would include, as one of the sixteen Arabic acceptations of *kaved*, that of *thaqil*.⁸

By the eleventh century there were in circulation *Adab* collections which considered the *thaqillpesado* a discrete theme with its own rubric and its own section, containing apothegms on the *pesado* only. *Adab* collections with wisdom sayings concerning the *pesado/thaqil* would include *‘Yunu l-Aqbar* [*Choice Stories*] by Ibn Quteiba of Baghdad (d. c. 884-889), *The Necklace of Pearls* by Al-Aqad al-Farid ibn Abd Rabah of Córdoba (940), and *The Lamp of the Kings* by Sarag al-Maluk Abu Bakr of Tortosa (d. 1126). They contain sayings such as the one concerning the king who would show some of his guests a ring⁹ with the following

⁸ Se’adyah IBN DANAN, *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (ed. M. JIMÉNEZ SÁNCHEZ) (Granada 1996), p. 163.

⁹ Razhavi (see *infra*) produces a series of literal parallels/sources in Arabic gathered from *Adab* collections. It may be added that the discussion of engravings or maxims engraved on jewells/rings seems to be a convention in collections of maxims of the wisdom genre being produced in thirteenth century Castile [even if there are echoes later e.g. in tales about Isabel la Católica]. Thus, we find entire sections of wisdom books in the romance of Castile wholly devoted to reporting on maxims engraved on rings. I have not yet found this particular maxim but here it may be relevant to recall another: “... en el sello de Tolomeus avie escrito: El pesar faze

engraving: “*Pesado*, get up!” [i.e. leave]. The question of authorship in these collections of sayings is not as appropriate as in other genres. There seems to be a movement between oral and textual. The explicit attributions in this literature point to Persian, Greek, Beduin and early Islamic sources, and also occasionally to Christian (New Testament), Jewish (e.g. King David) and Quranic sources.¹⁰ One of the main influences, nevertheless, seems to be the *‘Uyunu*, i.e. a work from Baghdad.

It may be no coincidence that it is in Spain that the contact seems to appear. The old *Adab* from Baghdad was not discarded despite attempts at autonomy. There was a propitious background for interest in such themes. In eleventh century Córdoba,¹¹ Ibn Hazm tells the story of a courtier in charge of building works, Abu-l-Barakat, who used to change his apparel as frequently as a chameleon; he claimed that he was bored even with his own name; he would frequently change friends and lovers. Ibn Hazm reacts by composing a poem on inconstancy. Ibn Hazm can be seen in the context of the aesthetes of eleventh century Córdoba whose attitudes are characterized by the thirst for novelty.¹² The reaction against what was considered routine is shown by the case of Ibn Suhayd.¹³ And yet, like constancy, monotony is also present as an aesthetic quality in poetry. The anthology known as *The Pennants of the Champions and the Standards of the Distinguished* is the product of the personal taste of the editor, Ibn Said, who compiled it in Alcalá la Real in 1243.¹⁴ This leads him to include (p. 134) Ibn al-Abbar (d. 1260) from Valencia who wrote a poem to the wheel: “The water wheel turns rises and sinks... to pour again...” An added example would be Ibn Saad al-Khair (fl. 12th century): “The wheel turns... the lamenting doves relate it to their loves... so the lovesick swain/turns and turns again...”

al omne seer aburrido...”, see H. KNUST, *Mitteilungen aus dem Eskurial* (Stuttgart 1879), p. 5.

¹⁰ See for all this Y. RAZHAVI, “Meqorotaw ha-‘araviyim shel Mivhar ha-peninim”, *Sinai* 102 (1988), pp. 97 ff. and *Sinai* 103 (1989), pp. 21 ff.

¹¹ IBN HAZM, *El collar de la paloma* (trad. E. GARCIA GÓMEZ) (Madrid 1979), p. 200.

¹² IBN HAZM, *El collar*, p. 32.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ A. J. ARBERRY, *Moorish Poetry: A Translation of The Pennants* (Cambridge 1953).

III

It is in this atmosphere of meditations on repetition, monotony, tedium, *fastidium*, time and leisure that we find a relevant Hebrew poem in the *Diwan* of Shemuel ha-Nagid.¹⁵ That is to say that the contact between Hebrew and Arabic occurs in a milieu of scribal, bureaucratic, courtly concerns in Southern Spain. The author [Joseph ibn Nagrella?] of the rubric to the poem of Shemuel ha-Nagid links the Hebrew poetic theme of the *kaved* to the Arabic *thaqil*. The rubric reads: “His [poem in which he] complains about a *thaqil* [heavy] who sticks to him.”

You are like the deep sea [*mešulah*] with no coast
 An angel and not a man
 You rise up to the Pleiades
 With no ladder and no pinion
 I am a prisoner and with me is a man
 He will not break away he will not depart
 Without a sword, he is the death of me
 Without plague, he will cause my death
 What am I to do? A Sisera has come
 But there is no Yael [to get rid of him]
 Hurry and come to my defense
 As did Abraham to Shemever
 [Whom he saved from the armies of Kedarlaomer].¹⁶

The first two verses bear affinity with the encomium which frequently opens panegyrics or prayers. The next two verses do address themselves to the theme of the *pesado*. They describe the character or type: Someone who is “with me” here [in his house?] and will not leave and causes him discomfort. Out of the two verses, then, one describes the *pesado* and the second describes the Nagid, albeit in his reaction to the *pesado*. The last two verses are a cry for help, which, again, do not tackle the work of description or characterization of the *pesado*. The effect is created by disproportion and asym-

¹⁵ Shemuel HA-NAGID, *Diwan* (ed. D. YARDEN) (Jerusalem 1966), Section 3, no. 80, p. 226.

¹⁶ Cf. Gen. 14:1-2

metry, the hyperbole of the panegyric opening verses is carried on in the description of the *kavedlthaqillpesado* whose annoyance is disproportionately associated with death by sword and by plague. The underlying notion seems to be that the central theme of the poem must be mentioned so briefly and subtly as to be almost unrecognizable. The task is to create a hyperbole so elevated that it produces a comic effect. And yet it has to be admitted that, with the possible exception of a preposition, the poem could apply to a number of other situations. It is the rubric which has the function of granting it significance and specificity. The link to time and death, however, is repeated and undeniable.

IV

It would be possible to miss the significance of the eleventh century text *Mivhar Ha-Peninim* [*Choice of Pearls*] as a link in the chain of surviving texts on this theme. Usually the treatments of the text tend to concentrate on problems of authorship and translation [still not completely resolved]. There is, in addition, the highly problematic quality of various mediations which approached the text of the *Choice of Pearls* from perspectives and points of view which have very little to do with medieval Spain.¹⁷ The whole question has been revived and taken to a new level recently thanks to the research on *Adab* collections and other sources by Razhavi.¹⁸

¹⁷ The Pietrkov edition of 1911 of the *Mivhar Ha-Peninim* contains the *Perush maspiq* which glosses “*kaved*” (ad. loc.) as “bi-l[eshon] a[shkenaz] grober man.” Similar is the case of the Victorian version by B. H. ASCHER, *A Choice of Pearls: Embracing a Collection of the Most Genuine Ethical Sentences, Maxims and Salutory Reflections ... English Translation, with Explanatory Notes and Illustrative Parallels by...* (London 1859), chapter LIX, p. 129, who misses the specificity of the chapter on the *pesado* by introducing the term “intrusiveness.” The tradition of Victorian translations with their stylistic ideals and moralistic aims has had a much stronger influence than might have been assumed. It has certainly had a very strong influence on Gonzalo Maeso’s translation into Castilian, *Selección de perlas = Mibhar ha-peninim: (máximas morales, sentencias e historietas) / Selomó IBN GABIROL; versión española, con introducción y notas por D. GONZALO MAESO* (Barcelona 1977).

¹⁸ RAZHAVI, “Meqorotaw ha ‘araviyim...”

The *pesado* has a whole chapter to himself in the Hebrew version (chapter LIX, on *pesadez*/"heaviness":

[632] The sage says: he who enters into a place where there are two people and sits without their permission will be held in contempt [*nim'as*] till he leaves.

[633] and he says: Dismiss the heavy one [*pesado*] by paying little attention to him.

[634] and he says: Eating with a loved one is a remedy eating with an enemy is tedious/revolting [*qavša*].¹⁹

[635] He whose discourse is too long will cause people to hold his words in contempt.

[636] He said: A king wrote on his ring "you have become heavy. Rise!" [i.e. leave].

[637] the sage ordered his son: Do not sit with heavies for I have found in a book of medicine that the company of the heavy is [like a] quartain fever.

[638] and he said: If someone's soul [presses] heavily upon you, turn deaf and blind to him.

[639] and he said: When the heavy knows that he is heavy he is not heavy.

¹⁹ In the context of our inquiry, *qavša* [although not particularly common and although its etymology is doubtful, when it (or its derivatives) appears in the sources] is resonant: It is used about Hananiah ben Azzur. As will be recalled it was used of him in the *Jerusalem Talmud* (*Yer. Sanh.* xi. 30b), where it is asserted that "... And that which was not said to him –like Hananiah ben Azzur. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, Hananiah ben Azzur was a true prophet, but... he heard what Jeremiah prophesied in the upper market and descended and prophesied in the lower market..." *TB Sanhedrin* 56b has him learning by *qal wa homer* from the words of Jeremiah. Abraham ibn Ezra wrote that the false prophet is merely imitating the true prophet and "stealing" his words (IBN EZRA, *ad Deuteronomy* 13:2). It seems clear that the associations evoked by *qavša* and derivatives are those of repetition, imitation and revulsion. It may be recalled that MAIMONIDES, *Guide of the Perplexed*, part II; ch. 40, had referred to Hananiah ben Azzur in similar terms: "Others, like Hananiah, son of Azzur [Jer. 28:1-5], claim the capacity of prophecy, and proclaim things which, no doubt, have been said by God, that is to say, that have been the subject of a divine inspiration, but not to them. They nevertheless say that they are prophets, and adorn themselves with the prophecies of others."

[640] and he said: Do not sit with the heavy for his company is vexing.

Behind the discussions of authorship one senses a unanimous critical consensus as to the lack of quality in the work. Part of this has to do with the character of a “collection.” The opposition between a literature by addition and one by “organic” development of a concept may be carried too far. Here for example, there are recurring themes which create their own kind of coherence. The *pesado* appears in situations of “sitting with” (e.g., do not sit with *pesados* 637; 640) situations of meals or hospitality [634] and conversation [635]. These are the basic, elementary social situations which are regulated neither by religion nor by civil law. The *pesado* has not infringed their criminal, civil or other regulations. For us, the main implications do not concern the problems of the *variae lectiones*, or that of individualistic authorship of wisdom florilegia. Whatever one’s opinion about them, it is quite clear that a mainstream work current in Hispano-Jewish communities provided a model for writing on the subject of the *pesado*. The transition from wisdom to other literary elaborations had already been attempted by Shemuel ha-Nagid. The *pesado*—as shown by the classification system of the *Mivhar* and the rubrics of the Nagid’s *Diwan*—was considered a discrete type rather than the vague negative concepts of late commentators and translators.

V

By the twelfth century, we find a fully developed Hebrew *maqama* in the case of Ibn Zabara’s composition.²⁰ Here, as in the tradition which follows it, the collection of wisdom sayings is grafted to a narrative framework. Thus, chapter seven of the *Book of Delights* contains a scene of a meal, banquet or symposium, where one of the table companions offers to entertain the others with Arab sayings. There are ninety-nine of them. They culminate in this last one:

... a certain king had a ring whereon was graven: Thou hast become heavy. Go!

²⁰ Joseph ben Meir IBN ZABARA (b. c. 1140?), *Sefer Sha’ashu’im. The Book of Delights* (translated by M. HADAS; with an Introduction by M. SHERWOOD) (New York 1932).

Whenever anyone overstayed his welcome he would show him the ring and he would depart...

When he had made an end of uttering his beauteous words and pleasant speeches we laid us upon our couches and our sleep was sweet to us. And when morning came we took leave of him...

The *Book of Delights* repeats the wisdom saying found in the *Choice of Pearls*. The general ambiance is that of table sayings, symposia or hospitality. The “ninety-ninth saying” about the *pesado* would correspond to the *topos* of tedium/*fastidium* in the conclusion; both function as reasons for ceasing to create –i.e.: ending. It includes it within a series whose link to Arabic texts is made explicit (cf. “Arabic sayings”). In this it becomes part of a tradition of Hebrew compositions which invoke this link as part of the presentation of a text. They are therefore, both similar and different from the next example. It comes from the Hebrew composition known as Ishaq’s *Mishle ‘Arav* [*Fables of the Arabs*.]

VI

Given the scant data about Ishaq, the author,²¹ and about his context, one has to attend to the title: Is *mashal* –in this area and period– proverbs, fables, parables or allegories? The question seems to be wrongly posed. It assumes a narrow, technical, exclusive usage of a rather loose term. In the early fourteenth century, Asher of Cologne, Rabbi in Toledo would express a general attitude when acknowledging the aptness of the Arabic language for what may be understood vaguely as literary activities; amongst them is the *mashal*.²² The main thrust is the non-legal quality of such writings, rather than strict literary definitions of genre. The concept is used in a flexible, inclusive way here. The *Mishle ‘Arav* includes proverbs, parables, allegories, poems, and

²¹ Ed. S. SACHS, *Ha-Levanon* IV, p. 290. M. STEINSCHNEIDER *Die hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin 1893), pp. 884-887; for him, the chapter deals with “Belastigung.” See also E. FLEISCHER, “Appendix,” in J. SCHIRMAN-E. FLEISCHER, *The History of Hebrew Poetry in Christian Spain and Southern France* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem 1997), pp. 216-221.

²² E. GUTWIRTH, “Toledo, circa 1320: Los judíos y el Árabe,” in C. CARRETE *et al.* (eds.), *Creencias y culturas* (Salamanca 1998), pp. 97-112.

are not restricted to any one of these media. As is well known, he is cited by Meiri and usually ascribed roughly to the age of Al-Harizi. As in the rest of the text, we find the confluence of maxims/proverbs i.e. a) A gnomic component, frequently in the form of rhymed prose; b) Metered poetry; and c) Brief narratives or stories, allegories, parables. Such prosimetric literature is not restricted to any one source; it belongs to numerous cultures from those of India to Greece. The title, however, is within the tradition of presenting the Hebrew text as linked in some way to such specific language and culture. The Arab authors alluded in the title, however, have not been found by literary historians. For our purposes, what is of interest is the Hebrew tradition, by then centuries old, of interest in such prosimetric texts represented by, for example, the success of the Hebrew *maqamat* in Hispano-Jewish communities. The constant Biblical allusions in its various forms, as well as the occasional Talmudic idioms, are aspects of the author's own creativity.

The continuities with Shemuel ha-Nagid could be found in a) The attention to the effects of the *pesado*; b) The attention to the victims of the *pesado*; c) In the investment in literary development of hyperbolic prayers asking for liberation from his yoke; also, d) there are "lists of horrors" preferable to encountering a *pesado*. These include a meeting with a bereaved bear; the day of separation/departure; the house of mourning; the length of a year of hunger and the lack of clothing.

Nevertheless, Ishaq's text does advance beyond this. He does attempt to rise to the challenge of describing him and creating a character. Its chapter 37 is wholly devoted to the *pesado*. In line with the rest of the book, the chapter opens with a distich which functions as rubric or title:

May the hated *kevedim* [*pesados*] not cleave unto you. Their Creator hates them and He caused the hearts of creatures to change towards them.

Again we find the practice of perceiving and classifying the *pesado* as a discrete, well defined category of wisdom literature. In the gnomic sections of chapter 37 we read that "... he goes to a table without having been called" or "he becomes involved in other people's quarrels" or "he sits in a place which is unfit/not apt for him" or "he prefers advice when

unasked.” The “sitting” and the “table” are some signs of the tradition in which he belongs. Here we have advanced beyond Shemuel ha-Nagid’s refusal to create a character outside of him. The *kaved* is not only an *amplificatio* of tedium, although that is also a component. One of the metered verses expresses the wish to be “deaf while he speaks.”

A story interspersed in the chapter presents the *pesado* in a visit to a sick man; he asks the patient what is his illness and, when told, he replies: “Oh yes, my father died of that illness.” Another story is about the *pesado* who comes to a gathering of friends drinking. He ruins their joy. He tells them to drink and offers to sing a song/poem and they moan repeatedly.

The sick-bed, the drinking party, the descriptions of ugliness (however vague) show not only an engagement with the challenge of poetic creation of a character, but also a move towards a realism of sorts. That is to say, they are concerned, to some extent, with the creation of an effect of reality by introducing certain non hyperbolic, external, concrete details, even if some of them are stock motifs (e.g. the drinking feast). The awareness of the need for some variety and variation on the theme, by then older than a millennium may be perceived in Al-Harizi, too. Here the solution to the same problem seems simple and yet radical. After a thousand years of complaining about the guest who smells like a fish, Al-Harizi seems to be implying that the time had come to explore the smell of the host. In his 34th chapter, the merchant’s invitation –an elaboration of the 22nd *maqama* by the tenth century Al-Hamadhani– he tries to rise to the challenge of representation, in Hebrew, of the host as tedious/annoying rather than the guest as tedious. In a Hebrew mimesis of tedium he has to solve the problem of writing in artistic Hebrew prose about tedium without being tedious. The host becomes tedious, not on the third day, but as soon as they begin to walk towards the house. This first section seems to be a self-reflective satire on literature itself, particularly on the old type of poetic self praise. Another example of tedium is the portrait of the cup bearer –in this case water rather than wine– which is, in fact, by implication, a parody, satire and, ultimately, a condemnation of the basic assumptions of the “classical” poetry in Arabic and Hebrew and more precisely one of its mainstays: the description of the ephebe.²³ He ridicules this

²³ J. SCHIRMANN, *Ha-Shirah ha-Ivrit bi-Sefarad uve-Provans: Mivhar shirim ve-sipurim mehorazim be-tseruf mevo’ot, maftahot ve-tsiyurim* (Jerusalem 1954-1956), vol. 3, p. 183, lines 61-69.

tradition of encomia of the cup bearer as he had previously (*ibid.*, lines 42-46) ridiculed the work of poetic description of the beautiful woman as tedious: *Kol zeh ha-ša'ar* –“all this trouble/pain”– is the guest’s reaction to hearing the basic components of that classical literature: Self praise, description of beautiful women or men, cup bearers, etc.

VII

The fulfillment of the task of renewal is accomplished within that culture and those communities, but in the *romance* of Castile, by Shem Tov Arduviel de Carrión de los Condes, around the mid-fourteenth century.

Lines 527-546 of his *Proverbios Morales* comprise nineteen verses devoted to the theme of the *pesado*. There are textual problems, as they are present in only one manuscript, that of El Escorial (B.IV.21, ff. 1-86). Evaluations range from “long winded and rather insipid”²⁴ to “re-fundicion” and “trivialization.”²⁵ Amongst the most influential critics is Castro, who asserted:²⁶ “Así ingresa en la literatura por vez primera el tema del hombre *pesado*.” He does not seem to have developed this. Nor does he seem to have suspected the long tradition which preceded the *Proverbios*. Shem Tob was studied again and again by Castro’s followers but this notion of Shem Tob’s *pesado* as an epoch making literary novelty has not been impugned, proven or developed even if subjective reactions have differed.

Shem Tov is concerned, at a general level, with the problem of locating the ideal “golden mean” of an ultimately Aristotelian ethics. This “mean” of course was not restricted to a particular area of philosophy; it was searched for in other fields as well such as medicine. This search for the mean then, has nothing strange for ancient and medieval categories.

²⁴ *Proverbios Morales*, Ed. with an Introduction by I. GONZÁLEZ LLUBERA (Cambridge 1947). SANTOB DE CARRIÓN, *Proverbios Morales* (Ed., Study and Notes by T. A. PERRY) (Madison 1986), p. 177.

²⁵ SEM TOB DE CARRIÓN, *Proverbios morales* (ed. P. DÍAZ-MAS y C. MOTA) (Madrid 1998), “Introducción,” p. 95.

²⁶ A. CASTRO, *España en su historia. Cristianos, moros y judíos* (Buenos Aires 1948), pp. 534ff.

The mean, by definition, has no independent place and must, therefore, be located by meditations on the extremes. These extremes are the very matter of the so called *Proverbios Morales*. The question of human's relations to each other, the right mean between solitude/isolation and community/social living or sociability is a large field which was seriously developed in various cultures and in various areas, trends or ways within these cultures. Shem Tov's disquisitions on the extreme of solitude invite, logically, a poetic, versified and symmetrical examination or articulation of the other extreme, i.e. (undesirable) society/company. Once this is understood, there need be no resistance to his decision to create a section on undesirable society any more than to his section on undesirable isolation. Indeed, once we accept (as everyone does) that there is a section on the extreme of solitude, it would be very surprising indeed to find that there is no corresponding section on excesses of company. The transition from solitude to company does not seem illogical or forced. It is certainly explicit:

[547] Mal es la soledat / mas peor es conpañã
de omre syn verdat / que a omre engaña.

[548] Peor conpañã destas / omre torpe pesado:
Querrie traer acuestas / albarda mas de grado!²⁷

Here we have the gradation of three evils and the assertion that the *pesado* is the worst: "mal es... peor." This is the structure of the Ben Sira saying in BB, in *Derekh Ereš Zuta* and, later, in the *Menorat ha-Ma'or*. The "querrie traer a cuestas..." again echoes the convention of the list of horrors which are preferable to the company of the *pesado* that we found in Shemuel ha-Nagid or the *Mishle 'Arav* for example.

Who is the *pesado*?²⁸ This is the underlying question in lines such as:

[530] ... onbre que pesado / es, en todo su fecho...

²⁷ Quotations to the *Proverbios Morales* are taken from the González Llubera Edition (Cambridge 1997)

²⁸ Shem Tov gives us a clearer profile of the *pesado* than his predecessors: He has a "tienda" [H. 550]; he is someone who has a horse and wants an "aparejo" for it [537], who "fazeme preguntas necias" [558]; who wants "que se le ria el mundo" [541].

[531] ... al tal, nin por rruego / non querria falar,
quanto mas tras mi fuego / escuchar su parlar.

[or again (it is preferable)]

[553] yazer en la montaña / a peligro de syerpes,
e non entre conpañia / de omres pesados tuerpes!

[560] Çierto es par de muerte / la soledat, mas tal
compañia com este, / estar solo mas val.

Here, we find again the descriptions or, rather, poetic explorations of the effect of the *pesado* and the list of horrors preferable to encountering a *pesado*, as in Ibn Nagrella or Ishaq, the author of *Mishle 'Arav*. The man who, in the mountain, is surrounded by serpents is a relative of the one who is threatened by Sisera without Yael and, more closely, of the one who encounters “a bereaved bear” (Hos. 13:8). These antecedents help us to understand Shem Tov’s verses. But the image of the “man in the mountain” –traditional analogy to solitude– who is *cercado* (“surrounded”), accompanied (i.e. not alone), is on another level of poetic creation. It raises the central question of the section: Solitude versus company, or, in other words, the question of locating the (ultimately Aristotelian, ethical) golden mean by meditations on the extremes.

The association of *pesado*-hospitality requires certain decisions on which aspects of hospitality to include and which to exclude from the literary representation. It is a problem which must have informed previous treatments. Thus one can think of a tradition of set pieces on the efforts made by the host to offer hospitality. This would explain the existence of a variant: Al-Harizi’s thirteenth century satirical lines on the country yokel as host:

Hospitality is as sweet to my taste as milk wrung out of cattle-curds...; when I hear the voices of guests at midnight I call out to my sons: throw open the gates! Guests that make me as happy as a wolf that has filched a kid from the flock... I delight in doing favours... my eyes long to see guests as the eyes of asses long for barley...²⁹

²⁹ Judah AL-HARIZI, in T. CARMÍ, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (London 1981), 389ff.

Al-Harizi seems to assume that the task of literary constructions of hospitality involve mentioning the moment of arrival; the food; the efforts of others (cf. “I call out to my sons”). Shem Tov, in his section on the *pesado*, seems to see these particular moments as part of the decorum too. Shem Tov includes the motif of the relatives-as-guests:

[528] Non digo por pariente / o amigo espeçial,
que ha por bien la gente / compañia deste tal.

This cluster of associations of relatives and disquisitions on the *pesado* and the theme of host/guest are present in the Talmudic discussion of BB we mentioned above. They link the relative-as-guest to the guest as overstaying his welcome to the field of wisdom literature (Ben Sira). Shem Tov would then be excluding relatives from the description of the *pesado* in a gesture of polemics or disagreement with the ancient wisdom cluster on host-guest-relatives-time span of visit. The notion that in host-guest relations the third day is crucial-the day the guest and the fish begin to stink-is in the *Proverbios*:

[541]... Mas quiere en el [dia] terçero / que se le rria el mundo.

Here again, time (*dia terçero*) is related to the motif of heaviness (*honbre pesado*). Shem Tov includes mentions of a second guest:

[533] Quando vno se parte... / viene [otro] por otra parte.

Here again, the association of first guest and second guest [but no third or fourth guest] is also present in the discussion of the guest who invites a second guest in the Talmudic citation of the Hebrew Ben Sira in BB and *Derekh Ereş Zuta*. The main interest, however, are the techniques of realism in this creation in the *romance*.

[533] Quando vno se parte / pienso perder querella,
viene por otra parte / quien desfaze su fuella.

Does the clearly visible *fuella* of the first *pesado* which is unmade by the second *pesado* (as elucidated by Mota-Díaz-Mas ad. loc.) imply a snowy landscape rather than a muddy one? Whatever the case, this is

no longer the poetry of the sunny patrons and its luminous, stellar metaphors. Equally deceptive would be the superficial resemblance to those eleventh-twelfth century Hebrew “close-up poems,” zooming in on an apple, a fish plate or a gift of cheese.

Although unnoticed, there is an archetypal metaphor which functions as subtext. It stands for a whole cultural tradition. The initial *nasib* of medieval poetry preserves some affinities with the beginnings of the ancient *qasida* of the *Jahiliya* with its song of nostalgia for the ruins of the abandoned encampments. One of its motifs is that of the “ruinas holladas.”³⁰ Ibn Qutayba’s account of the contents of the *qasida* reads: “I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling... and traces...”³¹ ‘Abid ibn al-Abbas in the first half of the sixth century composed the line “Dost thou weep for a vanished abode, over traces of tents outworn”³² or, elsewhere, “the tent traces of Sulaima are all effaced in Dakadik and desolate / the violent tearing winds have swept them away.”³³ ‘Amr b. Ma’dikkarib sings: “When I saw the hard earth hollowed / by our women’s flying footprints...”³⁴ Imr’u ‘l-Qays’ *Muallaqa* has a line which reads: “I led her forth she trailing as we go / her brodered skirt lest any footprint show...”³⁵

Ibn Hazm tells us that, in the Mosque of Córdoba, he studied and commented, under Abu Said Al-Fatah Al-Chafari, the beginning of a *Qasida mu‘allaqa* by Tarafa ibn al-Abd: “I remembered the love of my friend which was like the footsteps of Jawla in the stony grounds of Tahmad.”³⁶ Ibn Hazm describes the poetic convention whereby the departure/separation causes the poet to weep by the site of separation and bemoan while the footsteps of the past revive their buried passion. Ibn Hazm tells the story he heard from “one of the recent arrivals from Córdoba” from

³⁰ E. GARCÍA GÓMEZ, *Cinco poetas musulmanes* (Madrid 1944), p. 37.

³¹ R. A. NICHOLSON, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge 1941), p. 77.

³² G. E. VON GRUNEBaum, *Themes in Medieval Arabic Literature* (ed. with a foreword by D. S. WILSON; preface by S. VRYONIS, Jr.) (London 1981), III, 136.

³³ Al-Abbas in Lyall’s translation, is cited by VON GRUNEBaum, *Themes*, section V, p. 140.

³⁴ NICHOLSON, *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 82.

³⁵ NICHOLSON, *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 106.

³⁶ IBN HAZM, *El collar de la paloma* (trad. E. GARCÍA GÓMEZ) (Madrid 1994), pp. 194-195.

whom he had enquired as to the fate of his beloved. He was told that her footsteps had been erased, her traces had disappeared.³⁷

Levin has shown the importance of the *Jahiliya*'s set of poetic conventions for the Hebrew poetry of the eleventh-twelfth centuries, particularly in those well established staples of critical attention: Shemuel ha-Nagid, Ibn Gabirol and Moses ibn 'Ezra. Thus, for example, the latter's elegy on the death of his sister in law "Shavti we-taltale ha-zeman lo shavu," lines 5-7, include the attention to feet and footsteps; the destroyed dwellings look as though they had never been stepped on by human feet.³⁸

The more evident point of reference would be Shem Tov's own *Debate between the Scissors and the Pen*.³⁹ Here again, the winter of the small towns –nearer to the *Camino de Santiago* than to the Mediterranean– seem to be evoked, although the language (Hebrew) is different from the romance of the *Proverbios*. The *maqama*-like composition dates to 1345 and may contain a reference to the *Proverbios Morales* project or, at least, to the future project of a vernacular composition. The anthropomorphic qualities of the pen are the subject of *dilatatio* in one section (lines 33ff); the pen, in line 49, "runs before him" [i.e. before its master, the writer/author]; in line 52, it "girdles" its loins to run in order to fulfill the author's mission/errand; in line 54, writing is the footprint, trace (or what is left after) the running of the Ethiopian/black man through the white page (*gilayion*). It could be understood as implying that writing –i.e. literary creativity and culture– would be the "footprint" –on the parchment– of these "feet" of the pen. It must be admitted that the image is not as clear and prominent as in other medieval Hebrew texts such as the so called

³⁷ See also E. GARCÍA GÓMEZ *Todo ben Quzman* (Madrid 1972), Tomo II, zéjel no. 147: "Poema de la vejez y los cuervos" (pp. 26ff.); "... no queda nada en pie de aquella casa... partióse de ella quien / sonó su hora y hoy es un "liso hondón"... / su amigo quien perdió / que bien espera? / lo que hace es recorrer llorando el rastro..."

³⁸ See, for example, I. LEVIN, "The Waiting over the Desolate Habitations and the Wandering Night-Vision" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 36 (1967) pp. 278ff; ID., *The Embroidered Coat* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv 1995) pp. 9ff; D. PAGIS, *Shire ha-Hol we-Torat ha-Shir le-Moshe ibn Ezra u-bene Doro* (Jerusalem 1970), pp. 157ff.

³⁹ Shem Tob IBN ARDUTIEL, *Ma'aseh ha-rav* (ed. Y. NINI and M. FRUCHTMAN) (Tel Aviv 1980); F. DÍAZ ESTEBAN, "El 'Debate del Cálamo y las Tijeras', de Sem Tob Arduziel, Don Santo de Carrión", *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid* 18 [69] (1969), pp. 61-102.

Story of Mishal.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the central question –the opposition solitude/company– is amply treated in the *Debate*.

The *fuella* left by Shem Tov's first guest on departing is not that of the abandoned camp, or the footprint of the absent beloved. It seems to take that for granted and draws on it for effect. It is rather an example of the attention to the small, microscopic detail which it shares with its heroic antecessors. The *fuella* is not erased by the corrosive effects of that ubiquitous theme of Arabic and Hebrew poetry (*zeman*) Time, Fortune, World. Rather, it is the act of repetition, the arrival of the *second* bore, which replaces Time's destructive erasure of footprints. If the erasure of footsteps in the *Jahiliya* and later derivatives functions as trigger for poetry and nostalgia, the erasure of footsteps here functions as trigger for a poetry of dismay at impending derivation, repetition, tedium/ *fastidium*, ennui. Needless to say, Shem Tov is not an Abu Nuwas (d. c. 810) who ridiculed the custom of addressing the deserted encampments and of glorifying antiquity: "Let Time efface what was once so fresh..."⁴¹ The aptness of the *Jahiliya* is not the main concern of the fourteenth century *romance* poet from Old Castile.

But he raises the question of some consciousness of the apparent repetitiveness and conventionalism of the very act of writing traditional poetry at this date. Even more pertinent in someone who so constantly seems to rework hoary, millennium old saws and other such derivative materials would be the question of the attitude to the apparently indiscriminate collection of any old sayings, i.e. to the wisdom collections. If that were the case, Shem Tov's turning towards the modern language or "language of the future" would be a coherent outcome of his earlier efforts in Hebrew. Whatever his answer, it is not that of ignoring, erasing or destroying tradition but rather of approaching it on another level.

At this other level, the footprint (*fuella*) is iconic, also, of items of material reality observed, collected and successfully integrated into a language highly charged with abstract nouns and verbs, as one would expect given the wisdom genre. The guest-host relation, by then more than a millennium old, is undoubtedly a theme in the *Proverbios* as it was in Ben Sira. As in the *Choice of Pearls*, or as in the *Mishle 'Arav*, the

⁴⁰ Z. MALACHI, "Mavo le-sippur Mishal," *Mahut* 8-9 (1991-92), pp. 50ff.

⁴¹ NICHOLSON, *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 286.

precise problem is that of having to listen to the *pesado*'s talk: "Escuchar su hablar" (531). The "querria ser sordo / antes quel entender" (559) is a tenaciously repeated phrase of *pesado* wisdom. But here there is a place, a temperature and a visual effect: "Tras mi fuego" (531). The line "el suelo del cabdal" (535) evokes for Díaz Mas-Mota the precise place where the money for buying victuals for the guests is kept: an ark or chest with money and its bottom. Even without exploring the resonances to the "Raquel e Vidas" episode (ll. 114ff.: "Tiene dos arcas llenas de oro esmerado. / Ya lo veedes que el rey le a ayrado...)," one can add the possible "Castilianism" or realism of the implied *arcas* (or *arcones*). In the same direction we find the *çeuada* (536); *aparejo* (537); *calle* (537); *paja*, *vino* (538); *mendruco* (546); *çenteno* (546); *albarda* (548); they are elements of this "Old Castile effect" no less than the *azor* and his *nido*.

In the *pesado* section, there are brief, but significant, cameo appearances by two characters: The wife and the servant. The wife is mentioned as someone from whom he keeps a secret and he is anxious lest she find out. If she knew that he is out in the street, in town ("por villa") trying to find "buen aparejo" for the *pesado*'s horse, she would have a fight ("rrenzilla" l. 539). Shem Tov's narrator, then, is preoccupied with avoiding fights with his wife at home and introduces her as a non idealized character in the poetic narrative. The servant, again, is constructed as part of the family, he is part of "los de mi compana", someone who is prepared to share the variations in the family fortune ("oras mal, oras bien" l. 545). The servant constructed in the romance text contrasts with the old Roman comedy types, he is someone who is prepared to eat a "mendruco" of "çenteno", evidently cheaper fare, and thus share in the household's straits. That is why Shem Tov/the first person narrator, in grateful recognition, is willing to rise early to buy him "pan bueno" (l. 546). The protagonism of the servant in the literature of ensuing centuries might be recalled. This kind of investment in the creation of types/characters such as "the wife" or "the loyal servant" and to the relationship between first person narrator and the characters is part of the general originality of the section which uses the old materials but turns them into something almost unrecognizably new. These proto-characters are embedded in a prosodically unified and sustained composition. It is unified also by the philosophical quest which is its aim: to locate the elusive ethical golden mean. The question becomes significant if we bear in mind the difficulties

in balancing diverse cultural traditions, universalism and localism in the literary criticism of this Castilian poet. It is methodologically emblematic of other, similar thematic issues in the *Proverbios morales*. They too may need further research⁴² as links in thematic chains which are creatively reworked in medieval Iberia.

We cannot, here, follow the *pesado* into modernity. Nevertheless, by way of epilogue, two possibilities may be briefly touched on. The first is the existence of a peninsular fifteenth century *Nachleben* and the second is the extrapeninsular sixteenth century *fortuna*.

In the first case we may recall a text of 1438, the *Corbacho*. Best remembered for its mimesis of living speech, it contains a paragraph which purports to be the speech of a woman.

Pyensa byen, amigo, que caldo de rraposa es, que parece frio e que-
ma; que ella byen ama e quema de fuego de amor en si dentro, mas
encubrelo, porque, sy lo demostrase, luego pyensa que seria poco
presciada; e por tanto quiere rrogar e ser rrogada en todas las cosas,
dando a entender que forçada lo faze, que non ha voluntad, diziendo:
“¡Yuy! ¡Dexadme! ¡Non quiero! ¡Yuy! ¡Que porfiado! ¡En buena
fe yo me vaya! ¡Por Dios, pues, yo de bozes...! ¡Dexadme agora
estar! ¡Estad un poco quedo! ¡Ya, por Dios, non seades enojoso!
... ¡En buena fe yo vos muerda las manos...! ¡Libreme Dios deste
demono...! ¡O, como soys pesado!”⁴³

The second avenue is the possibility of a sixteenth century elaboration of the notion of tedium in Hispano-Jewish cultures. The text which concerns us is that of the “Dedication” of the last volume of the *Centuriae*

⁴² L. STEIN, *Untersuchungen über die Proverbios Morales von Santob de Carrion: mit besonderem Hinweis auf die Quellen and Parallelen* (Berlin 1900), is commonly believed to be a typical example of *Quellenforschung*. Since there have been very few comparable attempts at source work, Stein has acquired by the sheer weight of tradition, a kind of canonical status. Upon closer acquaintance, it becomes clear that it offers what, at best, might be termed analogues. Thus, his materials on two or three of the PM’s verses on the *pesado*, invariably deal with diffuse, vaguely negative concepts such as “bad neighbour” or “thor” (-silly). The passages from the *Pantchatantra*, Honein, *Bocados* are, therefore, less than relevant. This is surprising because, as he cites the *Choice of Pearls* so frequently, he must have realized that there was a chapter devoted to the *kaved* specifically rather than to those vague concepts.

⁴³ ALFONSO MARTÍNEZ DE TOLEDO, *Corbacho* (ed. M. CICERI) (Madrid 1990), p. 225.

of Amatus Lusitanus. The dedication of Amatus' *Seventh Century* is addressed to Gedalyah Yahia and signed in Salonika in August 1561.⁴⁴

He begins by asserting that, upon arriving in Salonika, he had thought of discontinuing his magnum opus because of tedium ([fol. 1] ... *huius inscriptionis me pertaesur iam erat...*). He contrasts this with the variety and abundance of its population. He links sixteenth century Salonika with ancient Greece and asserts that it suffers from diseases as did its ancient counterpart. The Salonikan experience is thus presented not in terms of "problem" or "integration" or "ingathering of exiles" but, rather, it is presented from the perspective of the revival of interest in ancient Greece and Rome, for example, whose texts Amatus had been citing throughout the preceding six hundred cures. He asserts that the complexity of its illnesses has given rise to its extraordinary physicians. The illnesses are compared to other difficulties or challenges which give rise to greater skill. To this effect he adduces the case of birds in areas with less light, which are prized above others. He draws on the Latin poetry of Manilius [Marcus], the first century poet, and Virgil to prove his point. Physicians in Greece have to be illustrious, as was the case with Hippocrates. He decided to dedicate the cures to Gedalyah Yahia because he is a sage and an egregious orator endowed with acute intelligence. In addition, Yahia is renowned for his hospitality to all persecuted/itinerant no matter what their religious confession. In this, he emulates his father, Moses Yahia, who, in the recent plague (1559?), spent thousands of ducats to help cure the poor and bury them. Of interest is his assertion that he hopes that Gedalyah will find, in the cures, reasons for laughter and weeping, corresponding to the human condition. To find reasons for laughter and weeping has been the motivation for creation in fields other than clinical medicine. The link with affect, literature, mainstream culture is clear. It is Amatus himself who draws attention to the writerly, textual, literary quality of his enter-

⁴⁴ That is to say, that it appears to contain cases prior to that date and later than the signature date of the previous volume (1559). His *Curationum Medicinalium Centuria Septem* passed through a number of editions (Florence 1551; Venice 1552, 1557, 1560 and 1653; Basel 1556; Leyden 1560 and 1570; Paris 1620; Bordeaux 1620; Barcelona 1628, and others). References here are to the *Sexagesimo* of Lyons: Amati LUSITANI... *Curationum medicinalium centuria septima* (G. Rouillium: Lugduni, 1570). See E. GUTWIRTH, "Amatus Lusitanus and the Locations of Sixteenth Century Cultures," in ed. D. RUDERMAN *et al.*, *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy-Jewish Culture and Contexts* (Philadelphia 2004), pp. 216-238.

prise. He searches in Salonika for the novelty, the unexpected analogy –ancient and modern physicians, Hippocrates and Amatus or physicians as polar birds–, for the right quotation from Virgil or other school texts. He is the arbiter who values universalism, oratory, intelligence no less than philanthropy. Above all, it is he who constructs the opposition between tedium and Salonika. As tedium (and *fastidium*) is a concept which affects most arts and creativity itself, the implications are not obscure. The Salonikan physician presents himself not only as an authority on the body, but also as authority or arbiter on the arts and culture.

RESUMEN

La transmisión, la traducción y la recreación de ideas de la Antigüedad son un aspecto de la cultura hispano-judía medieval que ha sido aceptada generalmente en las historias de la filosofía, la ciencia, la literatura o la religión. En algunos casos, los eslabones en la cadena de transmisión han sido relativamente bien documentados. En otros, es preciso aún sustanciar ciertas hipótesis de continuidad. Entre ambos extremos se sitúa una amplia gama de posibilidades y diferentes niveles de investigación. En este artículo se muestra que una cadena de transmisión funciona en el campo de la literatura sapiencial, como puede observarse en un caso preciso, el del desarrollo del tema del *pesado*.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Santó de Carrión, cultura hispano-judía medieval, poesía, transmisión y transformación de motivos literarios.

SUMMARY

The transmission, translation and recreation of ancient and medieval ideas are one aspect of Hispano-Jewish Culture which is generally accepted in histories of philosophy, science, literature, religion. In some cases the “links” (Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew, Romance, etc.) in this chain of transmission are relatively well documented. In others the evidence to substantiate hypotheses of continuity is yet to be discovered. In between these poles there is a range of possibilities and different states of research. In the following lines an attempt will be made to argue that there is such a chain operating in the fields of wisdom and literature (metered poetry, rhymed prose). This can be observed in a precise case: That of the development of the theme of the *pesado*.

KEYWORDS: Shem Tov de Carrión, Medieval Hispano-Jewish Culture, Poetry, Transmission and Transformation of Literary Motifs.