
The present reviewer owes the author and the publishing house of this lovely book apologies for such a late come review in *Melita Theologica*. I am sure they understand that times and work programmes of academics are not completely in their control.

A global description of the volume's contents will not take long to give. The standard 'Acknowledgements' (pp.ix-x) are quickly followed by a slightly longer 'Forward' penned in 1991 by Professor David Moody of York University (pp. xi-xiii). Then comes the text of Korsak's translation of the Book of Genesis. Both Moody's appreciation and Korsak's *apologia* for her translation options are useful in order to understand the nature of the project undertaken.

What critical comments may a reviewer venture upon such 'translation' project? The best procedure to follow in this case seemed to be that of allowing the translator herself and the promoter of her work describe the nature of this undertaking; we shall then be able to suggest a critical reading both of the general guiding principles that she persued in her translation, as well as of some details in her rendering of the Hebrew text.

This linguistic exercise presumes to recreate in English the beauties of the original Hebrew text of the book of Genesis by reproducing many of its formal structures and rhetorical devises. This book means to offer "Genesis made new", says its elegant front cover. This cover allows another interpretative cue: "A Translation of the Hebrew Text." And it is this labelling the venture here "translation' that creates problems for the present reviewer as it will for any translation theorist. For the impression one gets on embarking on the reading of the book from chapter one onwards is that, rather than a translation, we have here a reproduction in English of the Hebrew text of Genesis, set stichwise, in which the medium itself, the English language is 'modified and refined by the characteristic qualities of the Hebrew original" (Moody, p.xii).

In the Acknowledgements (p.ix) and then in the Postscript (p.223), the author situates her enterprise within the tradition of Bible translation founded in Germany by the Jewish scholars Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig in the thirties of the twentieth century; this tradition was resumed in France by another savant of Jewish origins, André Chouraqui, and flowered in his 1982 translation *L'Univers de la Bible*. Mary Phil Korsak is an English lady from Great Britian, but she lives in Brussels, Belgium, where "she taught for many years at the Insitut Supérieur des
Traducteurs et Interprètes” (flap containing information on the translator). She acknowledges that she encountered this approach to translation through “a close collaborator of André Chouraque,” Soeur Jeanne D’Arc, whom Korsak describes as “a French biblical scholar and translator.” Korsak expresses high esteem of this tradition of Bible translation and in her own attempt at translating Genesis, she follows their insights. “These translators were innovative in various ways but perhaps the most interesting thing they did was to reflect each Hebrew word by one and the same word in the target language, repeating the word wherever it is repeated in the original text and choosing paronyms to show how words in the same etymological group are related to one another” (p. 223). This way of rendering a text “enables the reader to perceive patterns and associations in the text that remain hidden in other translations” (ibid). And in her Postscript she explains some of the strategies she adopted in her translation especially of Genesis 1-3. Just to illustrate her approach we shall let her describe how she deals with the Hebrew verbs ‘amar and yalad.

In Genesis 18, 17-33 which narrates Abraham’s passionate dialogue with the Lord to save Sodom and Gomorrah, the verb ‘amar appears no less than thirteen times. And in his 1962 commentary Ephraim Speiser is quoted by Korsak as having rendered the lexeme by seven different locutions: to say, to reply, to reflect, to speak up, to persist, to answer, and through the phrase ‘came the reply’. “Speiser may be said to improve on the original for stylistic reasons. In fact, the Hebrew language does not possess this extensive range of words to introduce direct speech. It has one word, ‘amar. In the present version, ‘amar is rendered by ‘to say’” (p. 225).

In the case of yalad the situation proved to be more complicated for the author. Here is one of the rare cases where “the systematic adoption of one and the same word in the target language involves an adaptation of English to Hebrew usage” (p. 226). To translate yalad which is used for subjects irrespective of their sex if they are humans, and irrespective of whether they are humans or brutes, Korsak opts for “to breed”, “a general term in English, hoping to encourage the reader to reflect on the insight to be gained from having a common word for human and animal reproduction. Most of the currently used in English Bibles had to be rejected because they are too specific. There is the consecrated biblical term “to beget” for a male parent, ‘to bear, to bring forth, to give birth’ for a female parent, and ‘to bring forth,’ ‘to drop’ or ‘to breed’ for animals. For my purpose, the last verb quoted is the only feasible one” (ibid.). Korsak mentions one good result from her decision to translate
yalad constantly through the verbal lexeme 'to breed': "... the use of a single verb for humans and animals implies kinship between the species. This closeness to animals and respect for animal life is confirmed in other ways in the text" (p. 226). What Korsak fails to tell us is whether the choice in the Hebrew text of the verb yalad in its variations was actually dictated by poetic strategy (that is, a conscious selection of the lexeme in order to weave within the linguistic structure the verbal expression of one of the basic themes in Genesis, 'generation') or by linguistic necessity (in the sense that the language has no other term beside yalad).

The present reviewer considers Korsak's adventure into the intricate business of handling the tissues of the Hebrew text of Genesis, as widely open to negative criticism. First of all, there is the issue of the work's literary genre. Is At the Start. Genesis Made New to be regarded as a translation or as a reproduction in English of the formal Hebrew text in its Masoretic recension? The author presents her book as a translation. But there are at least two principles of modern translation theory which Korsak's contribution does not respect: a) Translation theorists today would insist that every language has its own genius which has to be respected. Translation implies that it is the message that the original source, who is the author, wanted to communicate to its original audience or target receptors, that matters. Of course the meaning the source would want to pass on to his/her target audience is incarnated in a system called language which is actually a bundle of systems including that of syntax and rhetoric. But meaning is not linked to form (in our case literary form) by necessity, that is, the same meaning may be expressed in multiple forms. This means that one may translate the meaning of a sentence given in a language without reproducing the syntax and rhetoric in the receptor language; the translator has to find the syntactical structure and rhetoric of the host language that suits the message better. Otherwise the translated text risks remaining marginal to the cultural milieu to which it is introduced simply because the form chosen for the translation will not belong to the receptor language/culture but to an alien culture/language. Professor Moody as well as the author herself admit that the translation strategies adopted entailed bending the English language to the exigencies of the source. This is quite clear in the case of the handling of yalad (pp. 226–227). If English has been able to develop lexically the articulation according to whether the subject is male/female or human/animal, this should feature in the translation of any text carrying the notion of breeding. In the case of the Bible, the author/narrator had to make a virtue of necessity in the sense that as his linguistic medium was limited,
he often had to use his terminology pluriseminally. Fortunately, his handling of the language resources created 'patterns and associations in the text' (p. 223) which can hardly be reproduced in translation if not at the cost of 'bending' the receptor language which thus results unnatural. The present reviewer feels that this has been the case with Korsak's contribution. b) The main procedural strategy which Korsak claims to have learned from her mentors, that is, that of finding the same word in English for the same word in Hebrew has been a serious linguistic mistake. Korsak describes her work as 'a literal, 'word for word' translation.' She confessed that "To ensure exactness, a great deal of spade work has been done at the semantic level to determine which English word can systematically correspond to a given Hebrew word. This way of treating vocabulary differs from that of traditional translators, who replace a single Hebrew word by a variety of English words for reasons of style or context" (p. 224-225). And this is the point. The context has a say in determining the semantic range of a lexeme. And a good example is offered by toledot. It carries different meanings in the different context: geneology, account, generations. In other words, the term in itself is plurisemal and the context helps determining the precise semantic value of the word. And this should be recognized in a translation.

There are several other reamarks that could be made concerning this attempt. But these suffice to show that this is a reproduction rather than a translation, a reproduction which will please Hebrew-lovers perhaps, but will not necessarily help people enter the mystery of the Transcendent God who speaks through the text.

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