Translation Challenges in the Poetry of Yona Wallach
Pauline J. Berg

Translation Challenges in the Poetry of Yona Wallach first and foremost offers new English translations of seventeen published poems by Tel Aviv poet Yona Wallach. The thesis briefly describes translation theory as it is relevant to the translation of poetic works, especially from Hebrew. It recounts many of the challenges I faced in my process of translating Wallach's work and how these struggles were resolved. This selection of poems is of those written throughout her career. Wallach's work is feminist and at times her poems' undertones are sexual or religious in nature. The poems are loosely collected around a theme of "the body," as is common to much of Wallach's work. The thesis contains with a short biography of Wallach to contextualize her work amid her life's passions and events. The biography also establishes Wallach's place among her contemporaries in the Tel Aviv scene of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. The goal of the project is to introduce non-Hebrew readers with a fascinating, yet rarely translated, modern Israeli poet, and to familiarize lovers of translated poetry to a process lurking beneath the surface of the poem.

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Translation Challenges in the Poetry of Yona Wallach

Introduction

All translation is failure. While some translation theory suggests that equivalence in terms between languages can exist, certainly a work as a whole can never be translated equivalently.[1] Every translation necessarily loses, or even gains, some intricacies of meaning by the hand of the translator. At times, the translator's own interpretation modifies the work because an original word or phrase has a multitude of meaning, all of which cannot be imparted.

This deficiency of translation is only multiplied when the text for translation is poetic. How can one preserve carefully constructed assonance, rhythm, and rhyme while staying true to meaning? How can one protect the myriad of possible interpretation presented in poetry? Mustn't the translator choose one option, sealing all other doors of possibility? The translator then embodies a second author.

My thesis attempts to capture and convey to the reader the challenges inherent in translation of poetic text. It also seeks an additional goal—a contribution of translated Hebrew poetry from Yona Wallach, an Israeli poet who is not often translated. For this project I have translated seventeen poems. I have highlighted my struggle with each, in hopes that this opening of the translator's brain will display translation theory in action. I have also written a short biography, so that Wallach's poetry may be better understood in the context of her fascinating life.

Biography

Yona Wallach is not only a great poet, but also a fascinating figure of Israeli pop

[1] Edith Grossman, *why translation matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 63.

culture. Though she wrote in the 1960s, 70s and early 80s until her death in 1985, Israelis continue their obsession with her work and her life even today. Wallach not only wrote of her counterculture ideals, but also lived them[2]. She wandered the streets of Tel Aviv, having relationships with whomever she felt like, reading her poetry in the *beit cafes* of the city. Later, Wallach even chose to limit the medical interventions to treat her cancer, desperate to control her own body until the end as she always had, though her poems hint at the darker, ineffectiveness of the endeavor. A weaker body than her strong spirit can wield is a theme of several of her poems.

Wallach brought to her poetry her gendered tone and sensibility, as well as the voice of her generation, complicated though those were. Wallach's poetry, while unique, was indicative of its time in Israeli literary culture, as well as its birthplace, Tel Aviv. Wallach's generation of poets was free to express its individual desire, instead of only communally inspired themes as had been seen in much Israeli poetry previously.[3] Their poetry was aggressive, using slang and disjunctive syntax[4] . Yet Wallach's expression of her own desire goes above and beyond what had been previously acceptable themes for Hebrew poetry, alienating some, and yet gathering many fans. Now, thirty years after her death, Wallach is a classic figure of Tel Aviv poetry. Her poetry influenced Hebrew literature and Tel Aviv culture, helping build the society which now embraces her as its own.

Wallach's poetry is unencumbered by strict poetic structure, yet holds fast to

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[2]"Yona Wallach," *Poetry International Rotterdam.* May 1, 2004. *http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/3182/12/Yona-Wallach.*

[3]Zafrira Cohen, "*Loosen the Fetters of Thy Tongue, Woman": The Poetry and Poetics of Yona Wallach* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2003), 72.

[4]Zisquit, Linda. "On Translating Yona Wallach," *Poetry International Rotterdam.* February 12, 2004. http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/cou_article/item/3110

theme and symbolism. It, like Wallach, flaunts cultural norms and need for comfort. She even explores the gender implications of writing poetry in Hebrew, with its non-neuter grammar, in her poem *Hebrew.* This playing with grammar in her work, especially with that of the narrator, is due to Wallach's complicated relationship to her own gender. She violently casts off her own femininity, creating a method of living in the masculine, yet with the awareness of masculinity's constructed quality and the inherent weakness which underlies it. Wallach said of herself in an interview, "I believe that as a man I am quite out of the ordinary. I believe I am an extraordinary man." 5

Wallach tells her story of being "half man" in a video in which Wallach herself analyses her gender construction.[6] According to Wallach, her performance of gender was affected by both acceptance of some gender norms, such as the love of male strength and denigration of the "feminine within" as weakness, as well as her radical declaration of herself as "half-man." This choice to live out of the "half-man" side of her persona may have come out of chauvinist gender norms as she claims, and caused a harmful fragmentation of herself as she describes. This complex relationship to gender is compelling and distinctive about Wallach's work, and therefore needs to be presented fully when describing the societal reactions to her life and poetry.

Wallach is well-known for her expression of both strength and confidence; as well as weakness, fear and vulnerability--not necessarily simultaneously but certainly

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5 Sela, Maya. "Thirty Years After Yona Wallach's 'Tefillin' Was Published, the Poem and the Photo Remain as Provocative as Ever," *Haaretz.* June 15, 2012 http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/thirty-years-after-yona-wallach-s-tefillin-was-published-the-poem-and-photo-remain-as-provocative-as-ever.premium-1.436587

[6]Qedar, Yair. "יונה וולך על מגן מתוך7 הסלילים של יונה וולף " Y*ouTube.* July 10, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Lq7TUELXXQ

actively. These opposing forces express themselves in Wallach's confident demeanor, and the vigorous effort within her work to name her fear and vulnerability. She expresses the aspects of these within herself through named characters in her poetry. One sees this in her poem "Yonaton," the name of which evokes biblical themes, but also when she uses non-biblical names, such as Cornelia. Wallach's desire to uncover, lay her fear bare for the reader, is a brave attempt to expose the vulnerability within, which she finds abhorrent. She can thus expose her shame to the light of day in an attempt to burn it away. This public expression of her rejected femininity causes the personal turmoil to which the reader is witness, in her frank portrayal of her inner dialog. Wallach's poems "Strawberries" and "When You Come to Sleep with Me" spill open her sexual vulnerability, yet are expressed with a sexually aggressive voice. This balance is explored in many of Wallach's poems that are sexual in nature. Yet with all the bravado of her expressions of sexuality, an underlying sense of vulnerability, fear, and loneliness is maintained. Wallach is an explorer, not an exploiter, of sex.

Wallach's flouting of norms, through the poet's lens and artist's life, is further complicated by her choice of material to explore. Wallach's is an extremely forceful, graphic, provocative sexuality, and she has placed religious characters and Jewish ritual items in dialogue with her unabashed sexual desire in a way that is extremely upsetting for some people, and hugely attractive to others. For this reason, as well as her upheaval of gender norms, Wallach work has been viewed as "extremist," threatening to the society in which it resides.[7]

[7] "Yona Wallach," *Poetry International Rotterdam.* May 1, 2004. *http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/3182/12/Yona-Wallach.*

Wallach is not the only Israeli poet to write about sexuality, or to use religious allusions in her work. These norms were both well accepted during Wallach's era and tie her to the history of Hebrew poetry, which is often full of religious imagery. In fact, these religious undertones are fueled by an assumption of Biblical literacy in both pre- and post-state Israeli society, although recently that assumption is less the case.

Jewish ritual items themselves have been incorporated by secular poets. Abraham Shlonsky's poem, *Toi*l, uses t'fillin as imagery. The t'fillin serve to express secular themes, in fact to applaud secular accomplishment in nation building, over that of religious observance and study. The t'fillin in Wallach's poem, *T'fillin*, do not represent the furthering of a communal goal, the building of a Zionist utopia. Instead Wallach's t'fillin find meaning within the era of the "me culture" in a capitalist inspired 70's and 80's Tel Aviv. Wallach expresses the desire of a generation who has elevated the quest for personal satisfaction as its highest goal. This generation has put the exploration of the individual's inner life on par with the nation's needs, or, indeed, even God's "needs" from man.

In the poem *T'fillin*, clearly God's commandments may or may not be fulfilled, but the act is only secondary to those of an individual's pleasure. The authority traditionally given to God, authority which had been placed second to the secular needs of a nation in Shlonsky, are further subverted in Wallach by the all-encompassing desire of the individual. A religious object evoking an experience controlled by a higher power is religious, while the "use" of religious object in a manner not prescribed by the religion is fetish. Indeed in Wallach's poem *T'fillin* this use is sacrilege to many.

There is a bipolar construction of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv representing opposing

ideologies prominent in Israeli cultural life today. Tel Aviv was established in the modern age to be a model of a cultured European city, and remains anchored in that liberality. However, Jerusalem is clearly a product of its geography and three thousand years long history, and remains a holy city to many throughout the world, including secular Jews. It represents conservative, religious values. As a secular Israeli, Yair Lapid said in a New York Times interview published May 19th, 2013, "Jerusalem is not a place, Jerusalem is an idea." The prominence of sexuality and fetish over respect for religion places Wallach's work squarely in the "Tel Avivi" culture within the Israeli dialog.

Wallach's response to religion was, indeed, complicated, as that of a secular Israeli, raised on a kibbutz in the 1950s would be. Yet, religion called out to Wallach in an unusual way. Not all the religious ideas in her poetry were fetish. Indeed, Wallach had a deeply spiritual side. Wallach believed herself to be a prophet, which she expressed to her friends and in interviews.[8] This tie to the sacred from a life of the secular gave her the ability to write in a way that was not secular or religious, but instead a conjoining of the two.

Yona Wallach is a complex figure who has captured the imagination of many Israelis. Her incorporation of feminist ideas, undermining gender norms, frankness about sexuality, religious imagery, and spiritual themes in her poetry create a unique voice in Hebrew poetry, still beloved today.

[8]Zisquit, Linda. "On Translating Yona Wallach," *Poetry International Rotterdam.* February 12, 2004. http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/cou_article/item/3110

My Translations

All the Trees Have Ribbons

All the trees have ribbons

bows adorned by a butterfly pale and pink

in the hair of thick leaves

and all the trees trembled good girls these trees

like good girls

and weak a little pale in color anemic a bit

and they are delicate not tall

and a bit wide like women

and they come

in a weak moment

with a shy expression from the side

but frontally is too much

what they've begun

only recently

Come Sleep with me like a Man Who Turns to Religion

Come sleep with me like a man who turns to religion

three parts of your life

like three eternal prisoners

sentenced to death

they peer out over the walls

with the craziest gaze

all of them going out of their minds

with a disturbed gaze

clothed

uniforms with red stripes lengthwise

on a white background

they will look over the grey walls

of loathing

between you and me

bricks of the building

of the heart's life built by those

sentenced to death

parts of your life

peer over the wall

The Price of Freedom

Again I want to forget
all the bitter experience
to greet
missing potency
like a “girl.”
We spoke about freedom
and we unbound ourselves,
free
from domination.
And again I see
I can remember
only the one
I know.
To forget a bit
a bit of fresh air
to live for a moment
in a good world
as if I
really know
what is known to me
and was acquired
by bitter experience.

As though there is no price

for freedom.

As though every moment

is not

a war of independence

and as though every moment

areas are not

liable to be conquered

by an invader

when my only collateral is

experience.

Grandma Marmoryal

I will stay with you said the boy I will stay with you
Grandma Marmoryal until you tell me
the whole story about our family
the weird and the horrifying until the last chapters
Yes said Grandma Marmoryal
as she looked through the window as she observed
the weird and the horrifying Yes
I will tell you the whole story and you listen to me
because the loneliness is harder on me than the shame
that's why I'll tell you so that I won't be left alone
here in this shack my one possession
I will tell you how your poor sister
tormented herself until she went out of her mind
now she doesn't know her name
now she is hospitalized with old people
angry just like her
and how your brother ate himself
one night when he thought he was pork ribs
and he fried his hands in duck fat
and how I am left alive
only because of my cruelty and how I pass
it on to you during these days to your body
and to your soul and how you will be
I.

The Isle of Life

The current to the Isle of Life

I found it

and I also drifted to it

amid gardens and golden rays of light

and horrible sights

that I transformed immediately to benefit me

girl of images

girl of visions

creations from the same world

they protect me

I built my bungalow among them

like a creation from another world

and all that she tells me about she radiates

nothing bad will happen to me

on the contrary

it will benefit me

it will take me from amid the crying

the intense flood of the islands of pearls

white and black

and again I will speak my own unique language

that of the creatures of heaven

who dispatch pictures one to the other

and silences

and they see everything in pictures

and know

my body was wiser than I

its tolerance of pain was less than mine

it said stop

when I said more

my body

my body ceased

while I continued

my body couldn’t

staggered

and I stood up forced to walk

my body following

He Detaches Himself from His Sex

he detaches himself from his sex

he calls his sex he

and speaks about him in the third person

a common phenomenon

among men

a woman understands she doesn't know

what she means

or at that exact moment

growing confusion ensues

for whom she actually intended

for her or someone else

which immediately arouses jealousy

and drives you nearly crazy

like a pack of cards

for whom she actually intended

the intellect can't stand when

memory swallows it all

like a giant crocodile

what actually happened

sex drowns like a lost continent

a strange civilization happened upon it

another answer another emotion

engages in abstract matters

the metaphors are refined and clever

at a certain age he is detached from his sex

at age 10-12 until 18

those greatest at great age

those minor at a minor age

those that did not detach from their sex

the minor are sometimes the greatest

depending on whether they understood the situation

if they identified the process at all

the fortunate one who is not detached from his sex

speaks in the first person with lasting awareness

with continuity without the disconnect of feverish desire

he expresses himself simply, with warmth

and demands love as a spiritual nourishment

awakened to his emotional needs all day

with a multilayered holy smile

around him an electric field whole halo

sustaining the soul manipulating him

from biochemical energy's source

from an ancient source restoring itself

disappearing in a flash with the detachment of sexual energy

burning itself with a fire from an inner source

enough to ignite exactly one man

The Blaze Like a Woman

The blaze like a woman

she has red hair

black gloves to her shoulders

and char-black nipples

a result of her skill

a firebrand snatched from fire

what a woman in fiery finery

Mirror Image

the eyelashes are the birds

the forehead, the face, is the heavens

the mouth is the earth

the nose, clouds

the hair, tempests

what are

winds

A Girl of 10, 11

A girl of 10, 11
with no secondary sex characteristics
runs, fawn beside her in the
forest,
or she descends to the bitter well-spring
when she cries—
she teaches one mute to speak from
emotion
the true way
and blood will flow from his mouth
and from his head
if not,
he has blood on his hands.
Girl or boy
one who calls him evil
her evil
wouldn’t know shit.

in her body they became shapes

all the animals

small dragons

floated through the skin

like curves of ears

nose

of a fetus

under the skin

like dragon’s ears

and whole dragons

other animals

lost

other senses

the significance of which

a man

never hears

Period

And a shriek was heard

and the blossoms of blood

began to seep blood

and all the blossoms

started to trickle blood

and a tremendous mob

came to gather the blood

and all things dripped blood

and the sky reddened and darkened

and a small boy walked beneath it

and the sky cleared and brightened

after it had dripped blood

and it was purified and it became light blue

and an enormous golden goblet adorned by

leaves and blossoms of gold

and greater than all the sky

was filled to the top, to its lips with blood

and dribbled blood

and the golden bell adorned by

leaves and blossoms of gold

to show that the share is full

the goblet overflowed

Black Hand

Sometimes a limb grasps independence, for the sake of personage

it twists, jumps, or quivers. A limb like this

is the hands of a pianist, of a strangler

and a limb like this is a Black Hand. Permit a certain

limb to represent you or to be held accountable,

you will be able to live serenely and it will become concerned for

its existence. There was no man behind Black Hand

Black Hand frightened children

by no means was this a black man's hand

and I don't remember that a glove was referred to,

this was a Black Hand from birth.

And I note: a divine voice, near by,

is a Black Hand within the hand itself?

Evidence from a movie: (Like a pianist with amputated hands.

a strangler is hung and his hands are removed

for the pianist who does not play and wants to strangle).

Black Hand wandered alone in the world

there was no man behind Black Hand

and everyone feared that a lonely limb

will perhaps make everything into its servant.

If hands could force whatever on whoever,

an essence rules the Hand, darker still, within the hand

most hands are not aware of it until suddenly!

someone permits and brains recollect

brains makes sure that it disappears into lore.

and every exhale was Oy

and every exhale was Oy even more

and with every exhale I turned into Oy

and Oy when I turned into Oy

and Oy when I turned entirely to Oy

and indeed I am Yes and I am entirely Yes

I am Yes Yes and I am filled by Yes

I am pleased I am forgiving

I love I am ravenous

I am Yes I am filled by Yes Yes

and with every exhale I was Oy

and with every exhale I expanded Oy

rhymes played in me

bells struck me

already long ago I once was

The Heart is Soft

the heart is soft like the body in the instant of death

life is rigid like the body in its rigidity

after death

the final yogic effort of the body

a closing meditation with the last

final focus

and afterward the body and the life become rigid

just like all the disappointment all of it

Crocodile Woman

His jaws are her spread thighs

her navel is his eye

he is liable to be anything, this crocodile

Out of Body

The hypnotist was with me

she talked of the body, tired from all the years

serving and acting for us

and I left the body

and I sat on the edge of the bed

I observed it

and I rose to lick it

to caress it

to care for it

Translation concerns

When attempting to translate a poem, many issues are raised. For example, often ideas and expressions do not directly translate into the target language. A monodist view in translation theory questions whether it is ever possible to translate at all. However, because Wallach wrote in a country exposed to western culture only thirty to fifty years ago, it seems a universalist position fits best, in which translation of Wallach's ideas and images is possible between languages. I explore this issue within the poem *Come Sleep with Me as a Man Who Turns to Religion.* While prisoners' uniforms and underwear may be universal or not, they are more likely to translate well than a theological idea from another culture.

Other aspects of translation which I explore include translation of prepositions which are often relative to their own language and the use of similar registers of language throughout a poem. I have attempted to add words which serve to imply Wallach's intended metaphors. However, many of her implications simply cannot be translated due to words with double meanings. This is also the case with rhythm and sound patterns. I have been content to let Wallach's fall away, secondary to meaning and imagery, and add my own, created whenever possible. This is certainly the work of a poet instead of a translator, however much of it is similar work as Edith Grossman attests to in her book, *Why Translation Matters*.[1]

[1] Edith Grossman, *why translation matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 74.

Challenges

Last Poems

All the Trees had Ribbons by Wallach is a poem that uses metaphor to hint at its subject, girls' transition into sexual maturity. It does not directly state the subject matter, however. Even its strong language in the middle of the poem, וגמרו, leaves doubt in the reader's and the translator's mind since the slang term for orgasm used can also simply mean “finished.” The sexuality can therefore be explained away, just like the widening experiences of the “good girls” of the poem. Three lines from the bottom I chose the word “frontally” even though it doesn't fit the simple language of the rest of the poem. However, in English “frontally” has an association with nudity due to the term “frontal nudity”. The English translation thus continues Wallach's hints representing the maturing girls’ bodies as trees.

In the second line I chose to rearrange the words “bows” and “adorned” in my translation. In English I felt a choice needed to be made as to whether the trees themselves or the bows are adorned. This syntactic feature of English in which verbs follow subjects constrains Wallach's vision of the trees more than would be required in Hebrew. In Hebrew the verb adorned can be left to float in a possibility of meaning for either of the two subjects.

Come Sleep with Me Like a Man Who Turns to Religion was a difficult piece to translate. The first challenge was the title. I chose “Come sleep with me” to

echo the flavor of the Hebrew's use of a casual term for sex and to be in line with other translations of this series of poems. Wallach has quite a few poems which begin תשכב אתי כמו and all of these translations I have seen begin with "Come sleep with me like..." I therefore wanted it to be clear to an English reader that this poem fit into that same series.

Translation of the term חוזר בתשובה, "a man who turns to religion," was the most difficult choice that needed to be made for this poem. If my target readers were knowledgeable in Hebrew phrases and Jewish tradition, I would have used this phrase as a loan word and simply let it remain in Hebrew. I have heard it this way in many Yeshiva conversations; yet, that would not be fair to average English readers. As a loan word the term "signal[s] meaning that [is] not encoded in the words themselves, but are part of a knowledge base held by each person who knows the relevant language and, more importantly, its corresponding culture."[2]

I could not translate the phrase as a calque because the literal translation, "one who returns through the act of repentance," does not fit with either my theology or that of the secular Israelis who also use the term. Therefore, I needed to find a term that compensated for the lack of equivalence in English, yet signified the religious meaning held by only two words in Hebrew.

Complicating matters, I had to compensate for the lack of gendered language in English, and its inability to compactly indicate a noun, "one who...," out of a verb form. חוזר in Hebrew can thus stand in for all three concepts: "male," "one who...," and then the verb itself. חוזר, when translated simply as "returns" in English, loses so much of its

[2]D.H.Aaron, *Subversive Principles:Toward an Ethics of Reading Avot* (Cincinnati:Hebrew Union Press, 2015), 19.

effectiveness. To make up for this problem of scarcity of meaning, amplification[3] occurs and thus more English words used, making a long title even longer. This outcome is unfortunate due to genre constraints which prefer shorter titles for poetry. However, even without translation, Wallach herself often ignores genre norms, leaving her poems untitled or simply using the first line of the poem.

I chose to translate the full phrase חוזר בתשובה "Like a Man Who Turns to Religion." "Turns" here retains an echo of the literal translation "returns," yet doesn't signify a problematic theology within which all Jews once were religious and are now coming back to the correct practices. "Turns" means choosing for the first time, but has the flavor of "turning to," i.e. needing something, and the protective feeling one receives when carrying out this action.

I choose the word "religion" for תשובה even though it eliminates some of the deep meaning held in the Hebrew term. It functions better for two reason. The first is that "religious" is closer to what secular Jews mean by חוזר בתשובה, i.e. someone is becoming דתי, religious. Secondly, "religious" contains meaning for even non-Jewish English speakers who have a notion of turning to religion. Explicating the meaning of the term within the translation would not work in this instance because a full explanation is impossible without knowledge of Jewish theology. It is also untenable due to genre constraints discussed above.

Translation of נפש is an example of directionality[4]. Although נפש is one word in

[3] Vinay & Darbelnet as discussed in Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories, 2nd Edition (Routledge, 2014), 14.*

[4]Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, 25.

Hebrew, it can mean many words in English, only one of which can be chosen in the translation. I chose to translate נפש as "life;" however, this would likely be translated back to Hebrew as חיים. Wallach's "Three parts of the spirit" or of the "soul" from this poem do not seem to have a parallel in Jewish tradition. Therefore, the translation does not seem to be erasing underlying meaning. Instead the translator must make a decision to clear up confusion. A benefit of translating נפש as life is that it can mean three time periods of a man's life instead of only presenting spiritual interpretations.

By using "life" as the translation, a nice opposing parallel is created at the end of the poem using "life" and "death." The lines entail an enjambment that reads "of the heart's life built by those/ sentenced to death/ parts of your life/ peer over the wall." In addition, these middle two lines, in which "life and death" are used, consist of four syllables each which create a nice rhythm. To keep this rhythm, I added the words "by those" to the line prior so it would not interfere. "By those is inherent in the Hebrew but needs to be expressed in English.

I translated לבושים בגדים simply as "clothed" in English. This conveys the full idea of "wearing clothes" as the direct translation would be from Hebrew. The line rhymes with two words of the following line, לבנים עם פסים. This rhyming is lost in English translation. Like all rhyming within my translations of Wallach's poems, it had to be given up to preserve the closest fidelity to Wallach's ideas.[5]

This phrase, לבנים עם פסים, translates literally in slang, as "underwear with stripes." Clearly Wallach means to evoke the image of prisoners' uniforms. Because of the Holocaust, striped prisoners' uniforms are a wrought image in a Hebrew poem. This

[5]Edith Grossman, *why translation matters (*New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 67.

cultural reference translates directly to English. Yet, Wallach's use of a term translated as “underwear” in English implies skimpy garments, which do not cause a reader to consider prisoner's uniforms. Perhaps it is only that Israeli underwear is more substantive than that of western countries? I could have *explicated,* explaining completely in my translation, using the complete phrase “prisoner's uniforms.” However, this choice gives away the entire image, and also inhibits conveyance of Wallach's terse language in this poem. I chose to use one word, “uniforms” to convey enough of the image in English, but do it tersely.

In addition, I consistently translated the reoccurring forms of the verbs שקיף and מבט as peer and gaze, respectively, in order to follow Wallach's intention that phrases using these verbs relate to one another. I also liked the image of prisoners “peering” over the wall.

Due to the syntactic placement of adjectives in English which differs from Hebrew, and to remain faithful to Wallach's short lines, I chose to translate חומת האיבה/ האפורה, which is literally “the walls of loathing/ grey” as “the grey walls/ of loathing”. This intensifies the enjambment with the following line, creating “the loathing/ between you and me.” This meaning works with the ambiguous feelings by the poem's characters for one another, as well as the loathing of religious Jews for Wallach's sensual poetry and wild lifestyle. This enjambment's meaning is likely intended by Wallach. Due to Hebrew syntax and the *smichut*--construct state--between the Hebrew noun phrase “walls of loathing” she was unable to pair the two phrases, “the loathing/ between you and me,” closely to one another in the source text without the word “grey” located between them.

I was unable to convey the assonance found in the two concurrent lines שביני לבינך/ מלבני הבנין completely into the translation. I did, however, preserve the "b" sound with the lines "between you and me/ built with the bricks." I wanted to avoid any sexual imagery that may be implied with the sexual nature of the poem's title, so I used the word "built" instead of "erected".

In *The Price of Freedom* Wallach uses the word השתלטנות, which can be translated as "domineeringness".[6] Since this is not really an English word, I needed to find a noun which fits better into the poem. I chose "domination". It has a close meaning, and additionally the related word, "dominion," reinforces the metaphor at the end of the poem in which the narrator's body is land which has been fought over and conquered. In fact, the sound echo of domination, "nation", implies this land imagery as well.

In line 18 I used the word "know" instead of "recognize" as a translation for מכירה to continue Wallach's intentional use of the memory words *remember*, *know* and f*orget,* at the end of concurrent lines. I felt the need to add the word "really" to the "know", creating "really know" to clear up the meaning of the poem's following line, "what is known to me". While this is not directly a translation issue, it helps to make the translation more easily understood than the source text had been, without interfering with Wallach's meaning or intention.

I removed the expression בידי פולש, "by the hands of an invader," and just left "by"

[6] (Morfix n.d.)

“an invader” translated. I did this to remove a Hebrew expression for which English does not have an equivalent. On one hand, Wallach may intend “hands” to serve a double meaning, implying that the invader of her “body's lands” used “hands” to do the conquering, a sensual reference. Yet the expression בידי, by the hands, when read by a predominately English speaker may push this additional reading when, in fact, in Hebrew it is a common expression which does not imply human hands at all. Removing the word “hands” from the translation does not prevent the “body” metaphor Wallach is using, and avoids confusion.

I changed the literal translation “all my collateral is/ experience” to “my only collateral is/ experience” because both meanings are possible in Hebrew. And, as Grossman's theory of fidelity versus literalness indicates, literalness is clumsy when the meaning is much more complex.[7] Wallach is indicating in this phrase that the narrator has lived freely in a way that the only thing she has achieved from her life's struggle is knowledge gained from experience, thus she has nothing else of value to trade. In this case, the word “only” carries that idea much more saliently. I chose to locate “is”, a word unnecessary in Hebrew, on the second to the last line to preserve Wallach's intention to limit her last line to one word. “Experience” alone as the last line clearly portrays the theme of the poem.

In *Grandma Marmoryal,* Wallach seems to be using the word *memorial* as a created loanword into Hebrew, but spelled in a manner that the little boy's character in the poem may pronounce it. The little boy of the poem sees his grandmother as a fount

[7]Grossman, 67.

of knowledge of his family's past. She sees in him a sort of memorial too, a memorial of herself to be passed down into the malleable boy. The grotesqueness of the word's change to “Marmoryal” not only echoes the odd Hebrew spelling by Wallach, but implies the wrongness of the grandmother's intentions.

In the first line, “I will stay with you” is repeated. The “I” is that of the boy, but the object, “you”, the Grandma, is first written in Hebrew in the feminine, and then appears in the masculine in the line’s second iteration. This strangeness in regard to Grandma Marmoryal foreshadows the poem's end in which the boy becomes his grandmother. Translation of Wallach's use of unusual gender construction to English is fraught with difficulty. English does not smoothly hold the idea of “you feminine” or “you masculine,” and I did not feel the boy could call his grandmother, “grandpa” or “you, woman” so I have left this gender unease out of the English translation.

When choosing a preposition to use in translating line 6, “looking out the window or “looking through the window”, both work equally well in English. I chose “through the window” because it works with the rest of line 6 and line 7 to imply that Grandma Marmoryal is observing the family history, weird and horrifying, in a vision looking through this window and into the past. I chose to translate להשאר as “I am left.” This fits into the phrases “I won't be left alone” in line 10 and “I am left alive” five lines from the end. I chose this translation for להשאר over “remain” because the poem's words are the speech of Grandma Marmoryal, and as a dark figure living in a shack, her speech should be of low register. Similarly, I chose “that's why” instead of “therefore” also in line 10, and “just” instead of “exactly” in line 16.

I chose to capitalize the word “Yes” in line 7 because, repeated, it is the first word

Grandma Marmorial speaks. I did so just as one would at the beginning of an English statement, although Hebrew is without capitalization and thus cannot guide translation on this point. I do not capitalize her following statements. This lack of capitalization except at the beginning of lines reinforces the picture of Grandma Marmorial's words spilling out in sentence fragments like her fragmented memories and prediction.

Four lines from the end of the poem the word מעביר is used by Wallach. I have translated it as “pass,” representing the cruelty that Grandma Marmoryal will pass on to her grandson. The word pass in English can imply “passing down” possessions and traits from generation to generation. However, מעביר can also hint at the word עברה, sin. Grandma Marmoryal's sins cannot be so well implied in English, or, at least, I was not creative enough to do so.

In the poem *The Isle of Life* I chose to use the word “Isle” instead of “Island” to create the image of a fantastical location which the narrator has “found,” drifting to it in the current. This image of the isle is why I also felt empowered to translate בניתי את ביתי ביניהם as “I built my bungalow among them.” “Bungalow” certainly creates that “Fantasy Island” vibe, and allows the translation to mirror the assonance of the Hebrew line in the repeated “b” sound. פזי אור in line 4 was difficult to translate. פז is something golden, and this is its plural. אור is light, therefore “goldens of light” is the right idea. I chose “rays” to be the noun in English so that golden could modify it.

Eight lines from the end, איי הפנינים could be translated as a proper noun, “The Pearl Island,” or “The Isle of Pearls” to mirror the title of the poem “The Isle of

Life." Instead, in this Hebrew *smichut*—construct state--"island" can function simply as a common plural noun, "the islands of pearls." I chose to translate it as a common plural noun so that it is most congruent with my interpretation of the poem—that this flood from the islands of pearls are a flood of tears from the crying in the poem's previous line.

Wild light

My Body Was Wiser than I is found in Linda Stern Zisquit's book of published translations, *Let the Words, Selected Poems by Yona Wallach,* excerpts of which are found at the end of my thesis. My translation of this poem differs from hers significantly. Of the body, in line 2 she uses the phrase "its ability to suffer was less than mine" while I preferred "its tolerance of pain was less than mine." While roughly equivalent, and both possible in Hebrew usage, there are pros and cons to each choice. Certainly the word "suffer" has greater emotional impact, and perhaps more relevance to the later "staggering" body. Yet it is quite a confusing phrase. While tolerance of pain may be a less poetic and more medical concept, without a very careful reading "ability to suffer" is vague, unlike my distinct reference to pain. In fact, because Zisquit has paired "suffer" with the word "ability," it can seem to mean exactly the opposite--that the body still retains ability.

Zisquit translates די in line 3 as "enough" while I instead chose "stop." In Hebrew the word די is a sharp rebuke by anyone incessantly bothered, or can mean an eventual giving up. I choice "stop" as best conveying the first of these. I believe that Wallach's body was in this case signaling its frustration that the protagonist, perhaps Wallach's

soul in this case, continued its onslaught of demands. "Stop" also has the benefit of being a short, sharp word like די while "enough" does not fit this pattern.

Later in the poem, in line 6, Zisquit herself uses the word "stopped" for הפסיק while I chose to write that "my body ceased." In this circumstance, I was constrained by having already used the word "stopped" in my translation of a different Hebrew root, however that is not the only reason for "ceased." The word "ceased" reminds one of "deceased" and, in fact, brought to my mind a local business from my hometown, the "Cease Funeral Home." Since the word "cease" does have connection to a faltering body, I thought it conveyed well the stopping of the body in the poem.

Three lines from the end of the poem, Zisquit uses two words, "it faltered" to translate one word of Hebrew כשל. To investigate this choice, we must use the previous line, "my body couldn't, it faltered, and I got up and had to walk away." It appears Zisquit is struggling to form two full sentences out of these words, which does not seem to be necessary considering Wallach's stream of consciousness style. Also a correct option in Hebrew, I chose to use one word, "staggered" to represent כשל. Dispensing with the "it" and using only one word has greater impact. It is also more authentic to the style of the poem, representing "staggered" in its context as though a word surrounded by commas in one longer sentence.

In the second to the last line, Zisquit writes, "And I got up and had to walk away," while I wrote "and I stood up forced to walk." Again, both are correct. Yet "forced" certainly produces a feeling of an outside force, whether physical or psychological, which causes Wallach's soul to depart from its body. "Had to walk away" to me is reminiscent of leaving one's children at the daycare, and not a force that separates soul from body.

My last discrepancy from Zisquit appears in the last line. She writes “and I got up and had to walk away, and my body after me” while I wrote “and I stood up forced to walk, my body following.” In this case, Zisquit is much closer to the Hebrew than my use of “my body following.” However, I believe that I have conveyed the same meaning, not only with concise and poetic phrasing, but with a clearer image.

Forms

He detaches himself from his sex is about sex, which, unlike gender, is determined by one’s physical sexual characteristics. This classification of male and female leads Wallach to explore whether men and women relate to their sex in a different manner. The poem continues to meditate on sex in general which “drowns like a lost land.” This murkiness of sex swamps Wallach’s message in the second half of the poem. Wallach tells of a “fortunate” man who is not detached from his sex. This man seems to embody traditionally feminine emotional traits, but with a “holy smile” and a “halo.” There is a “biochemical energy” which Wallach has attributed to the male sex at the end of the poem. She leaves the female sex to embody greater understanding and practicality, while the male sex is mysterious with an inherent natural power. In this way, Wallach has once again turned the tables on traditional notions of gender, or, here, biological sex.

מין is the word that is used in Hebrew for biological sex. As it English, מין is also used for sexual intercourse, and in Hebrew it additionally means “type,” as a classification. In the line, “He detaches himself from his sex,” it seemed obvious to me which meaning Wallach was incorporating for מין in the context of the poem. I was,

however, concerned that the word “sex” in English would bring to mind male primary sexual characteristics which could theoretically become physically detached from the male body. Since the word “sex” is so closely equivalent in both languages, even with my concerns the necessity to use “sex” for מין was clear. The tension over the word also exists in Hebrew I’m certain, and so Wallach has left us with confusion.

Two phrases parallel to one another caused me to return to this poem again and again--הגדולים בגיל גדול הקטנים בגיל קטן. The translation of these two simple phrases is hampered by their multiplicity of meanings. The Hebrew preserves all of them at once, while my process of translation to English by necessity must limit the inherent range of meaning.

גדול can mean great, old, or large just to name a few, while קטן is its opposite. The phrasing “those greatest at a great age,” could easily be “those oldest at an old age,” for example, while its parallel would then use the word young. While I felt it was clear the phrase did not refer to physical stature, I believe Wallach likely allows it to reference both age and status. So which to choose? I attempted to find words in English which embodied both characteristics and yet seemed roughly to be opposites of one another. I therefore arrived at “Those greatest at great age, those minor at a minor age,” “minor” referencing “minors” who are not yet eighteen years old. While I do not believe these verses preserve the simplicity in tone of גדול and קטן, I nonetheless have let the matter rest for now.

Two major challenges to translation were presented in this poem, the first surrounding the word “sex,” and, secondly, the phrasing of “greatest” and “minor.” Beyond these there were a number of other Hebrew phrases which presented difficulty, more so than in my other translations. These phrases tested my understanding of

Hebrew structures, my use of a dictionary, and certainly how best to place the words into sensical English with an appealing sound. For example, “electric field whole halo,” “biochemical energy’s source,” “an ancient source restoring itself,” and “disappearing in a flash” are beautiful phrases. They all appear very near the end of the poem, and so I wanted these phrases to connect to one another, together promoting the impression of natural energy.

Blaze like a Woman was a difficult poem to translate because it packs many concepts into very few words and lines. It is hard to convey what occurs in the poem, other than that a fiery woman’s appearance is described. The “fiery woman” in Hebrew is a much more poetic phrase than in English. While אש, “aish” and אישה “isha” don’t share the same vowel sound, their letters are quite similar. It seemed impossible to construct a similarly classic phrase in English while keeping to very simple words used in the poem. In the poem, the word אש is used repeatedly. While a more likely translation of אש would be “fire” I chose to use the more poetic “blaze,” technically still correct.

The title of the poem, האש כאדם, is not the same as its first line, האש כאישה. In the first, the protagonist of the title is not gendered, and so the title would more likely be translated as “the blaze like a person,” while the second certainly refers to a woman. While that change in the phrase one line to the next may seem puzzling at first, clearly Wallach has chosen the word אדם, person, for the title due to its similarity to the word אדום--in Hebrew “red,” the color of fire.

Wallach begins constructing the visual image of her fiery woman, red hair and black gloves to her shoulders. These elegant gloves represent the elegant woman, who is

called איזה אישה אש אלגנטית, “oh how a woman is an elegant fire,” in the last line. All of the words in this phrase begin with the Hebrew letter “aleph,” and three of four words begin with the same vowel sound. The vowel sound of the fourth is similar.

How could I begin to reflect authentically the sounds of Wallach’s language? This woman’s elegance of dress inspired me to take poetic license, translating this phrase into English as “what a woman in fiery finery.” While not as satisfying as the original Hebrew, the English phrase allows for alliteration in two letters, and conveys the “elegance” of her character.

In contrast to her elegant gloves, the woman is described as אודים מצלים מאש, “a piece of burning wood, rescued from fire.” This phrase is the English idiom “a firebrand snatched from the fire,” yet in Hebrew the words also bring to mind survivors of the Holocaust. This reverence to survivors gives one meaning to the woman’s nakedness, with her black nipples, and serves to contrast to her, again, elegant gloves. I chose to add one more fire reference, translating “char-black nipples,” though simply “black” would be the direct translation.

In *Mirror image* Wallach likens the body to natural phenomena, leaving open the opportunity for a surprise question of comparison at the end of the poem. We may not only continue her pattern of similes, “the eyelashes are the birds,” written roughly in parallelism, but ponder the nature of our own bodies. She breaks this parallel structure and rhythm purposefully at times. For example, in the second line she refers to “the forehead, the face,” giving double weight to one side of the simile.

This poem highlights the challenge of translating the “hidden” quality of the Hebrew verb להיות. In Hebrew, many of this poem's lines consist of a noun followed by

an adjective and no verb. The translator therefore must decide whether to build these short blips of imagery into traditional verbal sentences, or to keep them in poetic phrasing of simply noun/verb. I chose begin with verbal sentences, “the eyelashes are the birds” for example, because that structure seemed to lend itself better to being used with a definite article.

I justified my switch to nonverbal form in lines 4 and 5 for two reasons. The first is that Wallach already makes a break in parallelism by changing to phrases with an indirect object for these later lines. The second is much more practical. Because להיות is not expressly written in these Hebrew lines, beginning with “the nose, clouds,” Wallach easily uses a simile in which a singular noun is compared to a plural one. This combination creates an awkward sound in English, and so I chose to avoid using a verb at all. In a poem of longer lines perhaps these decisions surrounding להיות would be less impactful, but in *Mirror Image* these choices stood starkly.

Wallach’s poem *A Girl of 10, 11* describes an almost magical nature scene populated by prepubescent wonder and relationship. The running of both girl and fawn create this impression. The girl’s crying seems to be that of the innocent, as is her relationship to the boy she teaches. Wallach’s refuses to let their youthful actions be classified as evil by the judgmental, worldly adult society. The poem’s abrupt transition to adult eyes is signaled by the coarse language of the last line, “wouldn’t know shit,” which breaks the innocence of childhood existence. Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani assisted with the idiomatic translations in my work.

In the fifth line, I have translated למעין as “well-spring,” instead of simply as “spring.” Although not my original intention because the register is not an everyday

word, well-spring draws the reader into the fairytale world of the girl. “Well-spring” works best here because an alternate translation “the bitter spring” immediately brought to my mind the season spring, and thus “a bitter spring” represented a time of hardship. Since that is the opposite of the tone the poem conveys it is important not to let that imagery arise here.

An idiom is found in this poem which causes difficulty in equivalence of the translation. In the 13th line I have translated דמו בראשו literally, “his blood is on his head,” as “he has blood on his hands.” This, of course, is an English idiom of responsibility for ill consequences which is equivalent to the Hebrew expression. However, Wallach has used “And blood will flow from his mouth and from his head” in line 10 and 11. She obviously wants to connect a literal description of the boy’s fate with the meaning of the idiom by mirroring its words. I cannot find a way to do this in English and leave the idiom intact. Therefore, I hope that simply the use here of blood applied to the boy’s body, both literally and figuratively, will be enough to link these lines in meaning and create a poetic impression.

In Her Body They Became Shapes has a soft and quiet tone, arising from the word צפו, “floated,” in line four. As it is the only active verb in the poem, it creates the poem’s leisurely tenor. The image of floating shapes is clarified by the word “fetus” in line 7, “under the skin” in line 8. Wallach lets the phrase “,כסימני אזניים” curves of ears, float alone in line 5, representing both the larger curved, curled shape of the fetus, and the fetus’ own ears and nose. The dragons and other animals lost may be the fetus’ physical characteristics, in its morphing path from animal-like to recognizably human. Or, they may instead be the lost adolescent world of the now soon-to-be mother.

The floating in the woman's body recalls a state in later pregnancy that I remember quite well. When standing or sitting becomes uncomfortable and tiring, much of a woman's time is spent lying down on her back, with the calming feeling of a fetus, in my case two fetuses, swimming above.

Wallach writes of "other senses, the significance of which a man never hears." I chose to translate אדם as "man" in this line, even though "person" would also be an equivalent translation. In fact, the word "man" may be translated in reverse to other Hebrew terms such as גבר. This choice to specify "man" as the one who will "never hear" reinforces these sensations that only a woman who has been pregnant will recognize. This is an interesting poem for Wallach to have written as she did not have any children. Although she does write in her poem *Absalom* of an abortion she publicly acknowledged, the poem with its pregnancy theme does not fit the autobiographical nature of many of her poems.

Wallach plays with sound and spelling at the end of the poem. The word שמשמעו three lines from the end, and שומע in the last line, obviously share similarities. While I would like to continue that auditory and visual relationship between the two words into English, it seems unable to be done. While "other senses the significance of which" has assonance, it does not convey the same playful quality of the spelling in the Hebrew.

Appearance

Period is a poem about an elaborate image of a bloody landscape. Its tone is one of safety and warmth, however, because it is clear, even from the title, that the blood is that of menstruation. Beginning in the third line, and throughout the poem, verbs with the root נטף are used when describing the actions of the blood. At times a causative form

is used, but not exclusively. When this word is used in a literary manner, as it is in *Period,* it means "to drip," or "to trickle" seemingly regardless of its form.[8]

Wallach is telling a story, a double story. The first is an elaborate scene of flowers, a sky, a great, golden goblet, and even a small boy amid the trickling blood. This story, of course, serves as a visual metaphor of the menstrual cycle. The story is one that begins to build, and then seems to withdraw again mid-way through the poem, the sky brightening, and the appearance of the phrase "*after* it had dripped blood." The climax of the poem only arises with the "enormous golden goblet" of blood of line 14. Clearly as a metaphor for the menstrual cycle there should be no lightening of the flow of blood, only for it to appear again overflowing. Yet a very convincing interpretation by Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani explains that there are indeed two metaphors for this goblet present in the poem.

The first, as I see it, is the most obvious, as it appears in the name of the poem. There is the menstrual blood dripping from "all things" in line 8. Clearly the goblet shape represents the body just as the flowers did. The goblet overflowing with blood represents an aggregate of the blood of the flowers. The goblet is filled עד שפתיו בדם, to its edge with blood. Another meaning of the word שפת is lips, however. I used both "filled to the top," and "to its lips." In doing so I provide both a plain reading as a goblet, then affix a subtext in line with the metaphor of a woman's body.

Wallach's second metaphor, more powerful, is hidden. According to Rabbi Duvdevani, the enormous golden goblet filled with blood represents the Kiddush cup. In some Jewish traditions, during Kiddush the wine is poured, filling the cup to its top, as it is 6 lines from the end. Then one continues pouring wine into the Kiddush cup until it

[8] (Rav Milim n.d.)

overflows, as it does in the last line of the poem. This overflow shows that "the share is full," as Wallach says one line from the end.

But how to deal with this variety of נטף as the metaphoric wine is poured? Perhaps all the words with a similar root should be translated into the same word as discussed as a translation concept above. All the flowers and the goblet share the same root and thus equal the same dripping action. However, to keep this scenario in line with menstruation, the verbs should represent the appearance of the blood, beginning slowly, growing, and then tapering off. I chose to translate נטף in line 3 as "seep blood" to represent the experience of the first day of menstruation. I next used "trickle blood" in line 5 to represent the increasing of the flow. Next, in line 8, I used "dripped blood" to indicate the finally decreasing flow.

When one views the poem as two stories in one, the next two instances of נטף happen within the Kiddush cup metaphor. At first the goblet is filled to the top and I have translated that it "dribbles blood," perhaps as the wine dribbles in a small stream just down one side of the Kiddush cup. Finally, נטף reaches the climax with the last line. As "the goblet overflowed" the wholeness of the moment is marked and experienced.

In line 13 I have used the word "purified" to describe the sky after the rain of blood. My initial impulse was not to use "purified," for טהור, although it is a fitting reference. The word can represent the eventual state of purity for a woman in "niddah," the practice in which a woman is purified after menstruation. I did not think Wallach would embrace the practice of niddah, which many women see as denigrating, in such a woman-positive poem. This is an impression based on my own, perhaps limited, notion of niddah.

Yet, as we have seen, religious imagery is not out of place in this poem. When I was made aware of the goblet representing a Kiddush cup at the end of the poem, I decided a religious message in this other area of the poem is quite possible. Wallach does employ religious metaphor throughout her work and sees herself as an embodiment of a religious message. [9]

Returning to another, very different theory about נתפ, perhaps Wallach is using the same root again and again in the poem to seem meditative, or even constant, like the repetition of the menstrual cycle. Wallach also employs the conjunction "and" as a reversing vav at the beginning of many of the sentences of the poem. I have tried to repeat this usage of the word and "and." I believe when the poem is read aloud "and," too, creates a meditative state, in which one is rocked slowly by the repetition.

The Unconscious Unfolds Like a Fan: Selected Poems

Wallach's *Black Hand* is a dark poem in which Black Hand is both a descriptor and a character in its own right. *Black hand*'s tone is more serious than a spooky story or the fictional strangler horror movie the poem references. As the poem continues, the character aspect of Black Hand becomes more pronounced, although we see from line 1 that the "limb grasps (pun there) independence" and has "personality."

Of course, Hebrew does not employ capital letters. This requires the translator to determine their usage in English. In line 4, I use the translation "a Black Hand," capitalized, yet with an indefinite article. I realize the meaning of this phrase is indeterminate. It seems to be a title or proper name, that other "Black Hands" have also carried, as well as a condition that this hand exemplifies.

[9] (Viler n.d.)

In this translation process, I did not even consider that there may be hands of other colors, and that black could be uncapitalized as an adjective. Obviously, in line 8, "Black Hand frightened children," I highlighted a change—Black Hand became a proper name for this particular Hand when I discontinued the use of the indefinite article before it. Hebrew's lack of an indefinite article to guide me is a challenge.

A necessary question for a poem entitled יד שחורה is whether to translate יד as "hand" or, instead, "arm." The difficulty arises because the entire hand and arm is linked together as one concept in Hebrew, and the two are not usually differentiated. In fact, when they are יד כף is most often used for the hand.

While the possibility of "Black Arm", is not relevant for the pianist or strangler in the poem, it does bring up a difficulty in translating אבר, the second word of the poem. Although limb is the easiest translation, and has a similarly simple register, a hand is not really a limb in English in the same way the hand/arm combination is a limb in Hebrew. Appendage seemed all the better to describe a hand's relationship to the body. Yet this word does not sound scary, but instead medical. Therefore, to preserve the poem's intended tone, limb was preserved.

I won't discuss Zisquit's translation of *Black Hand* except to say that some of her phrasing is cleaner and clearer than mine although they both possess the same basic content and structure.

From the first word *And Every Exhale was Oy* presented two major concerns. The first was a question of how to translate נשיפה. While this word does mean "breath" as in Zisquit's translation, נשיפה is also used when referring specifically to

exhalation. I first learned this from Yoga classes in Hebrew, but it is confirmed by a dictionary.[10] Using "exhalation" changes the poem significantly, simply because inhalation comes first in breathing and is more prominent one would assume that image--that the protagonist is excited or filled with joy at her inhalation. The slight delay of the "Oy," of gratification until the exhale, has a much different connotation.

The second major concern in this poem's translation is "אוי" for which I used "Oy." Should this term be used as a loan word or translated? Certainly, the word "oy" is often used in American Jewish circles as a loan word from Yiddish. One could argue, why translate "oy" from Hebrew if the word is not exactly Hebrew in the first place? It should instead be highlighted as a foreign word for Wallach, signaling its unfamiliarity to the reader by leaving it untranslated. However, in 1960's Israel, and with Wallach's Ashkenazi heritage, Yiddish was perhaps not foreign to Wallach. Her grandparents immigrated from Bessarabia, current day Moldova.[11]

From my limited understanding, the term "oy" in Yiddish is used most often in negative circumstances, to express an unpleasantness. Wallach certainly does not use "oy" with similar meaning in this context. Quite the opposite, clearly. To avoid this confusion of both positive and negative inherent in the term, it seems there are reasons to translate them away by choosing an English word. I admit that I was unable to come up with an English word that carried the same weight as "oy" however. A contending word would have to be short, more like a noise, an exhale of breath, than a standard word.

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[11] Cohen, Zafrira Lidovsky. "Yona Wallach 1944-1985," *Jewish Women's Archive*. (Cohen n.d.)

Another difficult arising was that by translating “oy” I would need to clarify it, stripping it of its ability to signify a multitude of meaning. I did not want to make it simply about “joy,” for example, cutting off the opportunity for other, perhaps sexual, references, which it is likely Wallach intended. In the end, with regard to “oy,” I decided to leave it untranslated, allowing Wallach to speak on her own terms.

In the second and third lines from the end, another small-scale challenge presented itself. I chose to translate חרוזים צעצעו בי פעמונים הלמו אותי as “rhymes played in me, bells struck me.” Yet there was a very different, yet equally possible translation possible. חרוזים can mean “kitch” or “beads” which are then צעצעו ”toyed with.” This is plausible with the next line, פעמונים הלמו אותי, which can mean “It fits me” or “I look good in it.” Obviously, the beads of a necklace could motivate one to say of herself that she looks good. However, as rhymes and bells are both musical, I think my translation has coordination in its meaning linking these phrases. I also think the theme of bells striking is much grander than that of beads or kitch, and thus my translation better fits the exultant tone of the poem.

The heart is soft tells of life and death. Startlingly, life is compared to a body at death. Life is “rigid,” and it is rigid “just like” all the disappointment. Clearly this disappointment is, itself, over life’s disappointments. Death may be “the final yogic effort of the body” in a life of fruitless effort. Wallach’s tale of this hard life allows for softness, physical and emotional, only at one point, where life and death meet. Although the poem is entitled *the heart is soft,* it seems that very little else is. The phrasing of the poem’s first line “the heart is soft like the body in the instant of death” leaves unclear

whether the heart is only soft at the moment of death or whether indeed it has been soft throughout a life of hardship. This softness of heart may contribute to all the pain felt.

A challenge of translation is to preserve the relationship between the same word used in multiple places in the document by using only one word in the target language to represent all of them. In this poem the root קשה is used repeatedly, and I translated them all as "rigid." In line 2 I would have preferred to translate כמו הגוף בהתקשות "like the body in its stiffness" because a more natural translation for rigor mortis is "stiff." However, rigid can also be an adjective for a person's mental state, and thus I felt it was a more likely paring to "life," החיים קשים, "Life is rigid," in the same line. Using either rigid or stiff was an unusual choice for קשה. Zisquit uses the word "hard" throughout, which is the most direct translation. While "life is hard" is certainly an oft used phrase, Zisquit's "hard" denotes difficulty, and thus doesn't really represent the same concept as does a rigidity of what had previously been softness.

My translation uses "final focus" for ברכוז הסופי, while Zisquit uses "final concentration." "Final focus" is, of course, alliteration. As the poem speaks of yogic attempts, I also chose the word "focus" since it is a well-used term in the practice of yoga. In the placement of the words into lines within this poem, Zisquit's choice is more faithful to Wallach, who places one single word on a line following a longer line of words. I chose instead to emphasize the alliteration of "final focus" by placing them on one line alone together.

Another issue of placement of the poem's words into lines comes at the last line of the poem. Wallach's poem concludes with four words on one line, however כולה does not fit within the final sentence and acts as an "add-on" to the line. כולה thus serves to turn the poem into a kind of run on sentence, leaving it feeling uneasily not properly

concluded. In English I needed to use three words to translate one, a term called "elongation." In translating כולה to "all of it," I preserved the line structure in hopes of producing the same tone.

Crocodile Woman creates a sense of the danger encapsulated in a woman's body. By using the phrase "this crocodile" rather than "the crocodile" Wallach implies that she speaks of a specific woman who is particularly dangerous, and who is "liable to do anything." Wallach's use of "his" in "his jaws," "his eye," signifies that the woman's identity is masculine, as are her desires, even while "spread thighs" would more likely produce a feminine role sexually.

Wallach often uses discrepancies of gender in Hebrew grammar, for example, not matching gendered verbs and adjectives with nouns. She also identifies characters with opposing gender traits, or even changes their sex.

> Wallach's monumental design of semi-mythological heroines at once presents the male perception of female's victimization (e.g. "Nizeta is Little Red Riding Hood"), but immediately proceeds to offer an alternative story that challenges the logic of a masculine/feminine dichotomy and its entire range of attached attitudes.[12]

In Crocodile Woman it seems clear to me that Wallach is referring to herself and her own sexual experience, in her "half man" self-named identity. An interview with Meir Vizlander, an Israeli writer who had a relationship with Wallach, describes her similarly,

[12] Cohen, Zafrira Lidovsky. "Yona Wallach 1944-1985," *Jewish Women's Archive*. https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/wallach-yona

She behaved a bit like a man that gets into bed with every woman that he finds attractive, that's nice, that it's possible to spend the night with. [13]

Wallach's crocodile self is explicitly that of vagina dentata. She is warning men of the danger they face in attempting a relationship of any sort with her, and perhaps attempting to produce anxiety. The poem is quite short, only three lines long, however I do not wish to say that it is cut short. The last line serves to draw the poem together in a satisfying way. Instead, the brevity of the poem gives the image of a crocodile in a muddy river, with only its head seen above water for a moment before it lowers back into the depths.

Out of Body creates a window into Wallach's last years with breast cancer. "The body, tired after all these years," is clearly her own. Wallach's chooses to use "the body" as a singular noun, in conjunction with the notion that it is "serving and acting for us" in the plural verb, and so I preserved it in the translation.

In the fourth line Wallach describes herself "יצאתי מתוך הגוף." I chose a smoother translation, "And I left the body" instead of a more literal "I exited from within the body" purely for aesthetic reasons in English. The term "left" or "exited" implies leaving from within herself, but perhaps Wallach did mean to specify that for much or all of her life she had only been a consciousness "within" her own body. She may have wished to highlight this peculiar perception with an additional word. This reductionist aspect of translation, leaving me to make decisions about the meaning of Wallach's implicit meaning, is difficult to balance with my desire as a poet to create harmony of tone.

[13] Qedar, Yair. "יונה וולך על מוץ מתוך7 הסלילים של יונה וולף " Y*ouTube*. July 10, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Lq7TUELXXQ

Yona Wallach's poetry is alive with beautiful imagery and surprising twists. These make it fun to translate. Wallach also uses assonance, rhyming, unusual gender constructions, enjambments, and verbs which float between possible subjects. These aspects of her poetry make it complex and wonderful to read, and challenging to translate. Wallach's work is rich with ways in which translation theory may be explicated and I hope to have done it justice.

In Conclusion

Every translator takes on a project hoping to adequately convey the particulars of the text while insuring the spirit of the text remains intact. Yet, when translating poetry there are higher stakes than prose. If one is to achieve a text of preeminent lyrical language, equivalence of meaning cannot be the primary concern. Instead each word must be weighed against others of the phrase, or indeed the poem itself, for each word's relation to the whole. Even when faithfully transferring the imagery is the primary goal, much can be lost from poetic language and expression that cannot be reclaimed. Just as a poet selects a word for greatest impact, so, too, is effect upon the reader's sensibility the yardstick for translation.

In this project I have carefully chosen words and phrasing, attempting to evoke a smooth quality of diction, register, and tone. While I think this was achieved to a great extent, there are instances in which I am uneasy about the final product. In my translation of *Black Hand,* for example, my translation is choppy and awkward. I wrestled with this effect, attempting to round it into a pleasant sounding text. Only as I

near the end of the project have I come to realize that the poem is not meant to be pleasant and smooth, just as the horror of Black Hand is not to be politely digested.

I use this poem as an example of the great power of the translator. English readers do not know the sound of the poem or the stress points in which one translation objective won out over another equally valid and valuable. I have highlighted and explained some of the choices necessarily made during my project of translating Wallach's poetry. I can defend each of them, but I cannot state that each one led to a better outcome than another translator may find.

Translation of poetry is indeed to write anew as Grossman points out[14]. I believe in the end I was too timid in taking liberties with Wallach's text. I was not able to achieve similarities in the assonance found in her poetry, because I committed to sticking close to the strict meaning of her words for the most part. A worthwhile project in translation theory would set two translations of the same poem, each with disparate poetic language objectives, side by side.

I attempted to reconstruct Wallach's imagery and intent whenever I could. One of her poetic hallmarks is not divulging her meaning, and this proved most difficult. Elements of Wallach's work contain words or phrases that are not clearly attached to their subjects. I necessarily made a choice in circumstances in which it was required to render the text into English fully. These choices are the stuff of translation and the challenges are apparent as I have explained them within my project.

Wallach tackles the body as subject quite often, and many of the poems I chose to translate are such. This focus on physicality was a major draw to this project. The feminist obsession with the body as text is clearly a part of Wallach's work, perhaps even

[14] Edith Grossman, *why translation matters, 74.*

without knowledge of theory. I have also chosen both dark as well as airy, idealized poems to give a sample of Wallach's breadth of tone.

Yona Wallach is a fascinating poet who is not often translated into English, and thus is not well known in the United States. More than simply a practice of translation theory, my project is an attempt to better explore her work for myself and share it with others not necessarily familiar. This has been an experience well worth the effort and I leave the product of my labor to be read by others who share an interest in Israeli feminist poetry.

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Wallach’s Poems

לכל העצים היו סרטים

לְכָל הָעֵצִים הָיוּ סְרָטִים
מְקֻשָּׁטִים קְשׁוּרִים בְּפַרְפָּר חִוְּרִים וְרַדִּים
בְּשְׂעַר הֶעָלִים הַסָּמִיךְ
וְכָל הָעֵצִים רָעֲדוּ יְלָדוֹת טובות הָעֵצִים הָהֵן
כְּמו יְלָדוֹת טובות
וְחַלָּשוֹת חִוְּרוֹת מְעַט בְּצֶבַע אֲנֶמִיוֹת קְצָת
וַעֲנֻגוֹת לא גְּבוהוֹת
וּקְצָת רְחָבוֹת כְּמו נָשִׁים
וְנָמְרוּ
בְּרֶגַע חָלוּשׁ
בְּהַבָּעָה צְדִית בַּיְשָׁנִית
אֲבָל חֲזִיתִית יותֵר מִדַּי
מֵה שֶׁהִתְחִילוּ
לא מִזְמָן

תשכב אתי כמו חוזר בתשובה

תִּשְׁכַּב אִתִּי כְּמוֹ חוֹזֵר בִּתְשׁוּבָה
שְׁלֹשֶׁת חֶלְקֵי נַפְשֶׁךָ
כְּמוֹ שְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲסִירֵי־עוֹלָם
נִדּוֹנִים לָמָוֶת
יַשְׁקִיפוּ מֵעַל הַחוֹמוֹת
בַּמַּבָּט הַכִּי מְטֻרָף שֶׁיֵּשׁ
יֵצְאוּ מִדַּעְתָּם כֻּלָּם
בְּמַבָּט מֻפְרָע
לְבוּשִׁים בְּגָדִים
לְבָנִים עִם פַּסִּים אֲדֻמִּים לָאֹרֶךְ
בְּרֶקַע לָבָן
יַבִּיטוּ מֵעַל חוֹמַת הָאֵיבָה
הָאֻפְלָה
שֶׁבֵּינִי לְבֵינְךָ
מַלְבְּנֵי הַבִּנְיָן
שֶׁל נֶפֶשׁ הַלֵּב שֶׁהֻקִּים
נִדּוֹנֵי לַמָּוֶת
חֶלְקֵי נַפְשֶׁךָ
מַשְׁקִיפִים מֵעַל לַחוֹמָה.

מחיר החופש

שׁוּב אֲנִי רוֹצָה לִשְׁכּוֹחַ
אֶת כָּל הַנִּסָּיוֹן הַמַּר
לְקַבֵּל אֶת פָּנֶיךָ
חַסְרַת אוֹנִים
כְּ"יַלְדָּה".
דִּבַּרְנוּ עַל חֹפֶשׁ
וְשָׁכַחְנוּ עַצְמֵנוּ
לְשַׁחְרֵר
מֵהַשְׁתַּלְטָנוּת.
וְשׁוּב אֲנִי רוֹאָה
שֶׁאֲנִי יְכוֹלָה לִזְכּוֹר
רַק מִי
שֶׁאֲנִי מַכִּירָה.

קְצָת לִשְׁכּוֹחַ
לְהִתְאַוֵּרר קְצָת
לִחְיוֹת לְרֶגַע
בְּעוֹלָם טוֹב
כְּאִלּוּ שֶׁאֲנִי
יוֹדַעַת
מַה שֶּׁיִּדּוּעַ לִי
וְנִקְנָה
בְּנִסָּיוֹן מַר.
כְּאִלּוּ אֵין מְחִיר
לַחֹפֶשׁ.
כְּאִלּוּ כָּל רֶגַע
אֵינוֹ
מִלְחֶמֶת עַצְמָאוּת
וּכְאִלּוּ כָּל רֶגַע
שְׁטָחִים לֹא
עֲלוּלִים לְהִכָּבֵשׁ
בִּידֵי פּוֹלֵשׁ
כְּשֶׁכָּל עֲרַבָתִי
נִסָּיוֹן.

סבתא מרמוריאל

אֶשָּׂאֵר אִתְּךָ אָמַר הַיֶּלֶד אֶשָּׂאֵר אִתְּךָ
סַבְתָּא מַרְמוֹרְיָאל עַד אֲשֶׁר תְּסַפְּרִי לִי
אֶת כָּל הַסִּפּוּר עַל מִשְׁפַּחְתֵּנוּ

הַמּוּזָרָה וְהָאַיֻּמָּה עַד אַחֲרוֹן הַפְּרָטִים
כֵּן אָמְרָה סַבְתָּא מַרְמוֹרְיָאל
בְּהַבִּיטָהּ בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹן בְּהִתְבּוֹנְנָהּ
מוּזָרָה וַאֲיֻמָּה כֵּן
אֲסַפֵּר לָךְ אֶת כָּל הַסִּפּוּר וְאַתָּה הַקְשֵׁב לִי,
כִּי הַבְּדִידוּת קָשָׁה עָלַי מִן הַבּוּשָׁה,
לָכֵן אֲסַפֵּר לָךְ כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא אֶשָּׁאֵר לְבַד
כָּאן בַּצְּרִיף הַזֶּה וְכוּשִׁי הַיָּחִיד
אֲסַפֵּר לָךְ כֵּיצַד אֲחוֹתְךָ הַמִּסְכֵּנָה
יִסְּרָה עַצְמָהּ עַד שֶׁיָּצְאָה מִדַּעְתָּהּ
וְכָעֵת הִיא אֵינָהּ יוֹדַעַת מַה שְׁמָהּ
וְכָעֵת הִיא מְאֻשְׁפֶּזֶת עִם עוֹד זְקֵנִים
זְעוּמֵי פָּנִים בְּדִיּוּק כָּמוֹהָ,
וְכֵיצַד אָחִיךָ אָכַל אֶת עַצְמוֹ
כְּשֶׁחָשַׁב לַיְלָה אֶחָד שֶׁהוּא חֲזִיר צָלָעוֹת
וְטִגֵּן אֶת יָדָיו בְּשֶׁמֶן בַּרְוָזִים
וְאֵיךְ אֲנִי נִשְׁאַרְתִּי בַּחַיִּים
רַק בִּגְלַל אַכְזְרִיּוּתִי וְאֵיךְ שֶׁאֲנִי מַעֲבִירָה
אוֹתָהּ לָךְ בְּמֶשֶׁךְ הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה לְגוּפֵךְ
וּלְנַפְשֵׁךְ וְכֵיצַד אַתָּה תִּהְיֶה
אֲנִי.

אִיֵּי הַחַיִּים

אֶת הַזֶּרֶם אֶל אִיֵּי הַחַיִּים
אֲנִי מָצָאתִי
וְגַם שַׁטְתִּי אֵלָיו
בֵּין גַּנִּים וּפָזֵי־אוֹר
וּמַרְאוֹת אֵימִים
שֶׁהֶסַבְתִּי מִיָּד לְטוֹבָתִי
יַלְדָּה שֶׁל תְּמוּנוֹת
יַלְדָּה שֶׁל מַרְאוֹת

יְצוּרִים מֵאותו עולָם
הֵגֵנוּ עָלַי
בָּנִיתִי אֶת בֵּיתִי בֵּינֵיהֶם
כִּיצוּר מֵעולָם אַחֵר
וְכָל מַה שֶׁתְּסַפֵּר לִי עַל הִקְרִינָה
לא יְעוֹלֵל לִי דָּבָר רַע
לְהָפֵךְ
יַעֲשֶׂה לִי טוב
יִקַּח אותִי מִבֵּין הַבֶּכִי
הַשֶּׁטֶף הָעַז שֶׁל אִיֵּי הַפְּנִינִים
הַלְּבָנות וְהַשְּׁחורות
וְשוּב אֲדַבֵּר בִּשְׂפָתִי הַבִּלְעָדִית
שֶׁל יְצוּרֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם
הַמְשַׁגְּרִים תְּמונות זֶה אֶל זֶה
וּשְׁתִיקות
וְרואִים הַכֹּל בְּתְמונות
וְיודְעִים

★

גּוּפִי הָיָה חָכָם מִמֶּנִּי
כֹּחַ הַסֵּבֶל שֶׁלּוֹ הָיָה פָּחוֹת מִשֶּׁלִּי
הוּא אָמַר דַּי
כְּשֶׁאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי עוֹד
גּוּפִי
גּוּפִי הִפְסִיק
כְּשֶׁאֲנִי עוֹד הִמְשַׁכְתִּי
גּוּפִי לֹא יָכַל
כָּשַׁל
וַאֲנִי קַמְתִּי וְנֶאֱלַצְתִּי לָלֶכֶת
וְגּוּפִי אַחֲרַי

מפריד עצמו ממינו

מַפְרִיד עַצְמוֹ מִמִּינוֹ
קוֹרֵא לְמִינוֹ הוּא
וּמְדַבֵּר עָלָיו כְּעַל גּוּף שְׁלִישִׁי
תּוֹפָעָה נְפוֹצָה בִּפְרָט
אֵצֶל גְּבָרִים
אִשָּׁה תָּבִין הֵיא לֹא תֵּדַע
לְמַה הֵיא מִתְכַּוֶּנֶת
אוֹ בְּאוֹתוֹ רֶגַע יָחוּל
בִּלְבוּל גָּדֵל
לְמִי הֵיא הִתְכַּוְּנָה בְּעֵצֶם
לָהּ אוֹ לְמִישֶׁהִי אַחֶרֶת
מַה שֶּׁעוֹרֵר קִנְאָה מְיָדִית
וּמַטְרִיף דַּעַת כִּמְעַט
כְּמוֹ חֲפִיסַת קְלָפִים
לְמִי הֵיא הִתְכַּוְּנָה בְּעֵצֶם
הַדַּעַת אֵינָהּ סוֹבֶלֶת שֵׁ
הַזִּכָּרוֹן בּוֹלֵעַ הַכֹּל
כְּמוֹ תַּנִּין גָּדוֹל
מַה קָּרָה בִּכְלָל בְּעֵצֶם
מִין טוֹבֵעַ כִּיבֵּשֶׁת אֲבוּדָה
שֶׁצִּיוִילִיזַאצְיָה שׁוֹנָה הִתְהַלְּכָה בָּהּ
תְּשׁוּבָה אַחֶרֶת רֶגֶשׁ אַחֵר
עִסּוּק בְּעִנְיָנִים מֻפְשָׁטִים
וְהַמְּשָׁלוֹת דַּקּוֹת וַהֲבָנוֹת
בְּאַחַד הַגִּילִים נִפְרָד מִמִּינוֹ
בְּגִיל 10–12 עַד 18
הַגְּדוֹלִים בְּגִיל גָּדוֹל

הַקְּטַנִּים בְּגִיל קָטָן
אֵלּוּ שֶׁלֹּא נִפְרְדוּ מִמִּינָם
קְטַנִּים לִפְעָמִים גְּדוֹלִים
תָּלוּי אִם עָמְדוּ עַל הַמַּצָּב
אִם זְהוּ תַּהֲלִיךְ כָּלְשֶׁהוּ
בַּר הַמַּזָּל שֶׁלֹּא נִפְרַד מִמִּינוֹ
מְדַבֵּר בְּקוֹל רִאשׁוֹן בְּתוֹדָעָה נִמְשֶׁכֶת
בְּרֶצֶף בִּלְתִּי מְנֻתָּק שֶׁל חֹם רָצוֹן
מַבִּיעַ עַצְמוֹ בְּפַשְׁטוּת בְּחֹם
וְתוֹבֵעַ אַהֲבָה כְּמָזוֹן רוּחָנִי
עֵר לִצְרָכָיו הָרִגְשִׁיִּים כָּל הַיּוֹם
מְחַיֵּךְ חִיּוּךְ קָדוֹשׁ וּמֶרְכָּב
מִסְּבִיבוֹ הִלָּה שְׁלֵמָה שָׁוֶה חַשְׁמַלִּי
מַחֲזִיק נֶפֶשׁ תַּעֲבֹד עָלָיו
מִמְּקוֹר אֶנֶרְגְיָה בִּיּוֹכִימִי
הַמְשַׁחְזֵר עַצְמוֹ מִמָּקוֹר קָדוּם
נֶעְלָם בְּרֶגַע הַפְּרָדַת אֶנֶרְגְיָה מִינִית
שׁוֹרֵף עַצְמוֹ בְּאֵשׁ מִמָּקוֹר פְּנִימִי
הַמַּסְפִּיקָה לְהַבְעִיר אָדָם אֶחָד בְּדִיּוּק

האש כאדם

הָאֵשׁ כְּאִשָּׁה
יֵשׁ לָהּ שֵׂעָר אָדֹם
כְּפָפוֹת שְׁחוֹרוֹת עַד הַכְּתֵפַיִם
וּפְטָמוֹת שְׁחוֹרוֹת
כְּתוֹצָאָה מִיכָלְתָהּ
אוּדִים מֵצָלִים מֵאֵשׁ
אֵיזוֹ אִשָּׁה אֵשׁ אֶלֶגַנְטִית.

תמונה הפוכה

הָרִיסִים הֵם הַצִּפֳּרִים
הַמִּצַח הַפָּנִים הֵם הַשָּׁמַיִם
הַפֶּה הִיא הָאֲדָמָה
הָאַף עֲנָנִים
הַשֵּׂעָר סוּפוֹת
מַה זֶּה
רוּחוֹת

ילדה בת 10, 11

יַלְדָּה בַּת 10, 11
לְלֹא סִימָנֵי מִין מִשְׁנִיִּים
רָצָה וְעֹפֶר לְיַלְדָּה
בַּיַּעַר
אוֹ יוֹרֶדֶת לַמַּעְיָן הַמַּר
כְּשֶׁתִּבְכֶּה –
תִּלַּמֵּד אֵלֵּם אֶחָד לְדַבֵּר
מֵהָרֶגֶשׁ
כְּמוֹ שֶׁנָּכוֹן
וְדָם יֵצֵא מִפִּיו
וּמֵרֹאשׁוֹ
אִם לֹא,
דָּמוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ.
יַלְדָּה אוֹ יֶלֶד
שֶׁמִּי שֶׁיִּקְרָא לוֹ מְנֻוָּל
לָהּ מְנֻוֶּלֶת
לֹא יֵדַע מֵחַיָּיו.

★

בְּגוּפָהּ נִהְיוּ לְצוּרוֹת
כָּל הַחַיּוֹת,
דְּרָקוֹנִים קְטַנִּים
צָפוּ מִבַּעַד לָעוֹר
כְּסִימָנֵי אָזְנַיִם
אַף –
בְּעֵבֶר,
מִתַּחַת לָעוֹר
כְּמוֹ אָזְנֵי דְּרָקוֹנִים
וּדְרָקוֹנִים שְׁלֵמִים
וְחַיּוֹת אֲבוּדוֹת
אֲחֵרוֹת,
חוּשִׁים אֲחֵרִים
שֶׁמַּשְׁמָעוֹ
מַה שֶּׁאָדָם
לֹא שׁוֹמֵעַ.

וְנִשְׁמְעָה שְׁרִיקָה
וּפִרְחֵי הַדָּם
הֻחֲלוּ לְהַטִּיף דָּם
וְכָל הַפִּרְחִים
הֻחֲלוּ לִנְטֹף דָּם
וְהֶהָמוֹן הֶעָצוּם
בָּא לֶאֱסֹף אֶת הַדָּם
וְכָל הַדְּבָרִים הִטִּיפוּ דָּם
וְהַשָּׁמַיִם הֶאְדִּימוּ וְכָהוּ
וְיֶלֶד קָטֹן הָלַךְ מִתַּחְתָּם
וְהַשָּׁמַיִם נִצְטַלְלוּ וְהִבְהִירוּ
אַחֲרֵי שֶׁהִטִּיפוּ דָּם
וְנִטַּהֲרוּ וְהִתְכַּילוּ
וּגְבִיעַ זָהָב עֲנָק מְקֻשָּׁט
בְּעָלִים וּפְרָחִים שֶׁל זָהָב
גָּדוֹל מִכָּל הַשָּׁמַיִם
נִמְלָא עַד שְׂפָתָיו בְּדָם
וְנָטַף דָּם.
וּגְבִיעַ זָהָב מְקֻשָּׁט
בְּעָלִים וּפְרָחִים שֶׁל זָהָב
לְהַרְאוֹת שֶׁמְּלֵאָה הַמִּכְסָה
נָטַף דָּם מִגְּדוֹתָיו.

יד שחורה

לִפְעָמִים אֵבֶר נוֹטֵל עַצְמָאוּת, בְּשֵׁם אִישִׁיּוּת
הוּא מִתְעַוֵּת קוֹפֵץ אוֹ רוֹטֵט. אֵבֶר כָּזֶה
הוּא יָדַיִם שֶׁל פְּסַנְתְּרָן שֶׁל חוֹנֵק
וְאֵבֶר כָּזֶה הִיא יָד שְׁחוֹרָה. תֵּן לְאֵבֶר
מְסֵיָם לְיַצֵּג אוֹתְךָ אוֹ לִהְיוֹת אַחֲרַי,
אַתָּה תּוּכַל לִחְיוֹת בִּמְנוּחָה וְהוּא יְדַאֵג
לְקִיּוּמוֹ. יָד שְׁחוֹרָה לֹא הָיָה אִישׁ מֵאֲחוֹרֶיהָ
יָד שְׁחוֹרָה הִבְהִילָה יְלָדִים
בְּשׁוּם אֹפֶן לֹא הָיְתָה זוֹ יָד שֶׁל כּוּשִׁי
וְאֵינִי זוֹכֶרֶת שֶׁהֻזְכְּרָה כְּפָפָה,
זוֹ הָיְתָה יָד שְׁחוֹרָה מִלֵּדָה.
וַאֲנִי מְצַיֶּנֶת: בַּת־קוֹל, עַל־יָד
הַאִם הַיָּד הַשְּׁחוֹרָה הִיא תּוֹךְ־יָדִי?
סְמוּכִין מִשֶּׁרֶט: (כְּשֶׁלִּפְסַנְתְּרָן נִקְטָעוֹת יָדַיִם
תּוֹלִים חַנָּק וְאֶת יָדָיו מַעֲבִירִים
לִפְסַנְתְּרָן שֶׁלֹּא מְנַגֵּן וְרוֹצֶה לַחֲנֹק).
יָד שְׁחוֹרָה הִסְתּוֹבְבָה לְבַד בָּעוֹלָם
יָד שְׁחוֹרָה לֹא הָיָה אִישׁ מֵאֲחוֹרֶיהָ
וְכָל אֶחָד פָּחַד שֶׁאוּלַי אֵבֶר בּוֹדֵד
יַהֲפֹךְ אֶת הַכֹּל לְמִשָּׁרֶת שֶׁלּוֹ.
אֵלּוּ יָדַיִם יְכוֹלוֹת לִכְפּוֹת מָה עַל מִי,
תֹּכֶן יְסוֹד שׁוֹלֵט בַּיָּד אָפֵל בְּיוֹתֵר שֶׁבַּיָּד
רֹב יָדַיִם אֵינָן מוּדָעוֹת לוֹ עַד שֶׁפִּתְאֹם
מִישֶׁהוּ מַרְשֶׁה לְעַצְמוֹ וְהַמִּחוֹת זוֹכְרִים
מִחוֹת דּוֹאֲגִים שֶׁהוּא יֵעָלֵם בְּתוֹךְ אַגָּדָה.

★

וְכָל נְשִׁיפָה הָיְתָה אוֹי
וְכָל נְשִׁיפָה הָיְתָה אוֹי יוֹתֵר
וּבְכָל נְשִׁיפָה הָפַכְתִּי לִהְיוֹת אוֹי
וְאוֹי כְּשֶׁהָפַכְתִּי כֵּלִי לְאוֹי
וַהֲרֵי אֲנִי כֵּן אֲנִי כֵּלִי כֵּן
אֲנִי כֵּן כֵּן אֲנִי מָלֵא בְּכֵן
אֲנִי מְרֻצֶּה אֲנִי סַלְחָן
אֲנִי אוֹהֵב אֲנִי רָעֵב
אֲנִי כֵּן אֲנִי מָלֵא בְּכֵן כֵּן
וּבְכָל נְשִׁיפָה הָיִיתִי אוֹי
וּבְכָל נְשִׁיפָה הִגְדַּלְתִּי אוֹי
חֲרוּזִים צִעֲצְעוּ בִּי
פַּעֲמוֹנִים הָלְמוּ אוֹתִי
כְּבָר מִזְמַן הָיֹה הָיִיתִי

הלב רך

הַלֵּב רַךְ כְּמוֹ הַגּוּף בְּרֶגַע הַמָּוֶת
הַחַיִּים קָשִׁים כְּמוֹ הַגּוּף בְּהִתְקַשּׁוּתוֹ
אַחַר הַמָּוֶת
נִסְיוֹן יוֹגִי אַחֲרוֹן שֶׁל הַגּוּף
מֶדִיטַאצְיָה אַחֲרוֹנָה בָּרְכּוּז הַסּוֹפִי
וְהָאַחֲרוֹן
וְאַחֲרֵי כֵּן מִתְקַשֶּׁה הַגּוּף וְהַחַיִּים
כְּמוֹ כָּל הָאַכְזָבָה כֻּלָּהּ

תנין אשה

מַלְתְּעוֹתָיו הֵן פְּשׂקֶת רַגְלֶיהָ
טַבּוּרָהּ עֵינוֹ
הוּא יָכוֹל לִהְיוֹת כָּל דָּבָר הַתַּנִּין הַזֶּה.

מחוץ לגוף

הַמְהַפְנֶטֶת הָיְתָה אֶצְלִי
דִּבְּרָה עַל הַגּוּף הֶעָיֵף מִכָּל הַשָּׁנִים
מְשָׁרֶרֶת וְעוֹשֶׂה בִּשְׁבִילֵנוּ
וַאֲנִי יָצָאתִי מִתּוֹךְ הַגּוּף
וְיָשַׁבְתִּי עַל קְצֵה הַמִּטָּה
הִסְתַּכַּלְתִּי בּוֹ
וְעָלִיתִי לְלַקֵּק אוֹתוֹ
לְלַטֵּף אוֹתוֹ
לְטַפֵּל בּוֹ.