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Yitzhak haGorni: Hebrew "Troubadour" from Provence

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to Yitzhak haGorni
and all "lost" poets everywhere

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INTRODUCTION

Simply stated, the purpose of this paper is to "retrieve" a lost poet and to "restore" him to his proper place in the august halls of history and literature. Yet, however succintly phrased, such a statement betrays worlds about the ways in which our culture perceives and uses literature. What is "retrieval?" What is "restoration?" And what is the "lost" subject in need of them? According to T.S. Eliot, the retrieval and restoration of a hitherto unknown poet should imply nothing less than a reordering of the entire canon of literature,[1] and hence our situation within its matrix today.

The prodigal return of a literary son to his fold necessitates a certain amount of readjustment on all members of the household. In Gorni's case, both his near escape from literary oblivion, and the length of his absence (during which certain literary and historical perceptions of his time, and our heritage, have rigidly solidified) make that readjustment "radical" in its etymologically truest sense. A period of life and poetry which has been characterized by the terms "decadence," "mannerism" and bombastic effusion must be reordered.[2] A historical perception of a period of decline

and harassment for Jews must be readjusted. The cultural apprehension of Jewish society in the larger context of Christian society of the thirteenth century, and the social function of the poet within them, must be reconsidered.

These problems of readjustment all raise questions about the often unspecified assumptions we bring to a "history of literature" and, more particularly, the "history of Judaism" and "Jewish literature." These terms suggest more about the political and polemical function of literature, literary histories and Jewish histories in our own culture than they reveal about Gorni's.

The paucity of material on Gorni, and poets like him (and who were they? how many were they? how do we account, in some reasonable fashion, for a "lost" poetic and cultural phenomenon?) is acute. What there is, is stamped with the seal of its own assumptions, critical values and time. When Jacob Provenzali, in the fifteenth century, refers to Gorni as one of the three finest poets in his generation[3], what does that mean? When Ernest Renan, in the nineteenth, sees the same poet as a somewhat curious and mediocre phenomenon, what does that mean? When Schirmann, in our own age, treats him with respect, and Pagis goes so far as to call him one of the most

" original"[4] poets of his age, what does that mean?

These are important questions for scholarship. They are important questions for anyone - scholar or no - who must deal with the importance texts play, in our own culture, in the reconstruction of the past, and the construction of the present.

In a 1979 study of trends in medieval scholarship, the poet and critic, Dan Pagis, remarked that, in the analysis of medieval Hebrew poetry, "as elsewhere, poetic theory is not absolute and timeless, but on the contrary, historically specific."[5]

Few would disagree with such a contention. However, the method by which this historic specificity is extracted is open to argument. Through the ages of literary and non-literary history, different ploys have been assayed. Because of the scarcity of material available on Gorni, all of it must be considered. Thus, perhaps a word is in order about the particular assumptions which underlie our meagre sources.

Seventeen of Gorni's poems survive, some more coherently than others, in a single manuscript dating from the fourteenth century. The poet lived at the end of the thirteenth, and this poses immediate problems of the reliability of the manuscript transmission. He is mentioned by only one contemporary, Abraham haBedersi (i.e., of Béziers), who was profoundly

unimpressed with his colleague's poetic ability, and even more profoundly aggravated by his requests for money. The copyist[6] who strung together the extant poems, in a blank space at the end of a scientific treatise, evidently sympathized with Bedersi. His biographical allusions to Gorni -- often called "the enemy" -- summon up a picture of an irreverent hotspur, wine bibber and lady-chaser. However, if the portraits of Gorni's Christian contemporaries afford any evidence, poets of the period savored precisely such biographies[7], and the information cannot be taken with complete seriousness. No more is heard of Gorni until the fifteenth century, and a stray reference by Jacob Provenzali, who comments:

> This is the greatest level unto itself, praised among men, and not all wise men are worthy of it. For there are wise men who are not masters of speech, and there are masters of speech who are not wise... and happy is he who is crowned with them both... so it was with our sages, may their memory be a blessing, for Rabbi Judah HaLevi and Rabbi Samuel ibn Gabirol and ben Valqiera, and also our own of Provence, haGorni, haHaruzi and haSulami, (who) were greater verse-makers and great pay'tanim ... than the Rambam (Maimonides) and Ramban (Nachmanides), peace be upon them, who were greater than they in (philosophical) wisdom...[8]

Again, the reader must beware of valuative assumptions. Bedersi, whose penchant was for an inflated and over-blown didacticism in verse, disliked Gorni's verses. But is Berdersi's

that of the aesthetic judgment of the age, and how reliable is it over a longer view? And who can say by what criteria Provenzali evaluated the same poet's merit? Judgment both by standards of the academic school, and by popular acclaim, is difficult to determine. With respect to the former, only one work on aesthetics survives on medieval Hebrew poetry, and it was composed long before Gorni ever lived. This is Moses ibn Ezra's Shirat Yisroel[9], which was written in Arabic. Ibn Ezra's instructions on the composition of Hebrew verse represent the classical school of writing, which had loosened its hold on the poets of the Christian period. Thus, we have very little indication as to what standards Gorni's contemporaries would have applied to his work. (For this reason, the response to Gorni by Samuel ibn Devash should be of some interest to scholars.)

The first historiographer of literature to treat Gorni's poems was Ernest Renan, in his histoire littéraire des juifs français, with the aid of Adolf Neubauer. To Renan, Gorni is something of a literary curiosity, a Hebrew "troubadour" whose verses do not merit particular attention. One must remember, however, who Renan was, and what he perceived his task to be.[10] Renan's first major work as a philologist, which appeared in 1848 (a year of other momentous events in France), was the

Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques. Edward Said has suggested that the goal of the French philologist and supreme advocate of reason, was

> scientifically to describe the inferiority of Semitic languages, principally Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, the medium of three purportedly sacred texts that had been spoken or at least informed by God... Thus in the Vie de Jésus Rénan would be able to insinuate that the so-called sacred texts...could not have anything divine in them...
>
> Renan first reduced texts from objects of divine intervention in the world's business to objects of historical materiality...[11]

If Said is correct, Renan's aesthetic judgments of Hebrew poetry -- any Hebrew poetry -- automatically take on the polemical distortion of his time.

Had Jewish scholarship ever reached the extremes of ethereal detachment of text from context which characterized the American New Critics of the early twentieth century, and the Structuralism and Formalism of their European and Russian counterparts, we might have to account for the opposite end of the critical pendulum. However, Jewish text scholarship has always lagged behind the methodological trends and fads of Western literary critics. The study of Jewish, and Hebrew, literary texts has remained tethered, not only to history, but to a naive faith in the validity of called "Hebrew literature." Schirmann's work , for all its sensitivity and thoroughness,

avoids taking the step of treating the text as a text. He sees poems as securely embraced in the context of society and history. This is sound scholarship indeed, but it ignores the call of the text to its own particular voice, body and integrity. It is perhaps to this which Pagis alludes in his attention to the individuality of the poem alongside its cultural context. Schirmann has provided the exacting and meticulous excavation of material, and Pagis takes it one step further, focusing both on the play and interplay of texts linked in space and time, and the individuality of a poetic voice. He strives for a balance between them:

> certain researchers are inclined to base almost all of their research of the style and subjects of Hebrew Sephardic poetry on the comparison to Arabic sources and on delineating the paths of their influence. Such studies bring praise to themselves, but one should not forget that they do not determine the nature of the school, and assuredly not the individuality of a particular poem. Surely the Arabic influence attains, at times, a great power, but even when it is very striking in the secular poetry, it (the poetry) does not use it for the sake of mere imitation...[12]

Thus, medieval Hebrew poetry has, for the most part, suffered a lack of attention to its individual poems. Even the "major" figures -- HaLevy, Moses ibn Ezra, Samuel ibn Gabirol or Samuel haNagid -- in part because of the size of their corpus, have only recently begun to receive literary critical attention. Instead, they have been deployed as part

of the arsenal of historical reconstruction and speculation. Because of the large quantitites of "lost" literature from the medieval period, the retrieval of even a few poems by an "almost-lost" writer can reshape our entire picture of the period in which he lived, and the literature it produced. This was very much so in the case of Moses ibn Ezra, whose brilliant secular poetry was not discovered until much after his less interesting (by our standards) religious works.[13] In the introduction to his study of the Arabic poet, al-Mu'tamid, Ray Scheindlin argues eloquently for the value of close, critical analysis of the individual poet, and his works, why they work, and how they work, as much as in what context they do, and did, so.[14]

The preceding discussion has been included to raise necessary questions of methodological prudence. Any further study of Gorni's poetry will have to take them into consideration. Hopefully, the act of "retrieval" tendered here, in the translation and critical editing of some of those poems, will facilitate such further work.

The body of this thesis is intended to be the poems themselves.[15] Most have never been translated into English. Only six appear, in Hebrew edition, in Schirmann's anthology of

of medieval Provencal and Sephardic Hebrew verse.[16] In the following pages, I would like to provide the following: (1) a general overview of the period in which Gorni, and his contemporaries , flourished and wrote, (2) a general overview of the literary forms of that period, and (3) a cursory introduction to the poetry of Gorni himself. Sadly, as Schirmann noted nearly twenty years ago, and Renan nearly one hundred, the work on this curious poet, Hebrew "troubadour" from Provence, is still far from satisfying.[17]

Isaac ben Abraham haGorni was born in the city of Aire, somewhere around the middle of the thirteenth century. In the southwest of what is now called France, Aire is far from the Mediterranean coast which Gorni was to spend his literary life traversing. It is a city unknown in Jewish history except as this poet's birthplace[18]. How he grew there, and how he left, are equally secrets of the past.

The surviving poems of this unusual poet are dedicated to cities which bestow upon him citizenship in Provence proper, however transient his residence in any one of them. His list of travels includes the cities of Perpignan (now in Spain), Luq, Arles, Carpentras, Apt, Aix, Manosque and Draguignan. Following these cities on a map, we may guess that, in all probability, he visited Béziers and Narbonne, Montpellier

and Avignon as well. His travels seem to have included a combination of river and land routes, and they certainly encompassed some of the most exciting sites of Jewish and Christian history of his time.

If Gorni's itinerary was rich in variety and upheaval, contemporary events were no less so. For Christianity, the time was one of great turmoil. This was the era of the two popes -- and one of them was residing in Avignon, midway between Arles and Carpentras. This was the age of the Albigensian heretics, whose connection to the Christian troubadours has been interminably argued, and never satisfactorily determined. These troublesome religious dissidents, whose mystical, libertarian (the Waldensians, a contemporary sect, even ordained women!) and anti-Rome doctrines, caused so much vexation to the Church, were effectively extinguished by the end of the thirteenth century. The wrath of Rome -- now referred to as the "Albigensian Crusade" -- flamed in full force against them. The determined pursuit of heretics was enabled by the establishment of local centers of interrogation. Thousands of documents, some of the richest documentation of the period, survive in the depositions taken by these organs of interrogation, called "inquisitions," and, under the centralizing authority of Rome, the Inquisition itself. Obviously, the Albi-

gensians were not the only "heretics" to be pursued by the efficient machinery of the Inquisition. The names of many troubadours figure also among the pages of depositions[19], as well as Jews, women ("witches") and undesirables of all cast and color.

In addition, for centuries, wars had wracked the southern coast and the Iberian peninsula. In 1148, Moslem Iberia fell irrevocably to the Almohade invaders. Only the small kingdom of Granada would hold out valiantly until 1492.[20] Still, with the Reconquista -- the Christianization of the peninsula -- completed, peace did not come. From the sad remarks of Moses ibn Ezra, lamenting the despoiling of an intellectual vanguard with the sacking of Cordoba, in the eleventh century[21], until long after the offhand comment of haGorni, "were it not for the wars of the kings and their ministers, he would have come to see me!"[22] peace was a precious breath between battles.

Such political turmoil was disastrous for Jews. With the destruction of the Moslem empires, where Jews had dwelled for centuries in unparalleled productivity and equanimity, many Jews fled north into France;; many more were impoverished overnight. HaLevy and Maimonides were among those to take flight. Pagis has commented on the devastation of

the peninsula's Jewish intellectual elite, during the later persecutions as well:

> The persecution and massive conversions... struck first and foremost at the spiritual elite, and the educated stratum most of all, and, at any rate, the Hebrew poets and their audience dwindled...[23]

Gorni may himself have lived to see the expulsion of the Jewish community from the northern realms of France, in 1306. The edict was issued by Philip "the Fair," who in all likelihood required the financial resources of the Jews to fund his continuing war with Albert, the Emperor of Germany.[24] One of the major sources of livelihood for the Jewish community, which showed remarkable adaptability in its new surroundings in France and Provence, was money-lending, an employ prohibited to Christians. One of the conditions of Philip's edict was the cancellation of all Christian debts to Jews. Nine years later, when King Louis X revoked the expulsion edict, and recalled the Jews (undoubtably motivated by equal considerations of economic prudence), he allowed the Jews the "right" of collecting the payments owed them -- upon condition he receive two-thirds of the collection![25] This was not the first such experience for the Jews. Since Hellenistic times, they had served ably as tax collectors and financiers in royal courts, and because of their own perpetually mutable

status, their assets tended to be liquid rather than landed. In fact, the Jewish aristocracy, which had flourished in the urban courts of Moslem Spain, manifested, even after the Reconquista, a distinct disdain for agrarian pursuits. Abraham Bedersi, a wealthy patron, financier and poet in Perpignan (itself a city of much religious, political and intellectual foment), delivered a scathing attack on one Pinhas Levi. Levi, a poet , abandonned literary pursuits (as Valency wrote not too long ago, "the doctor of poetry has seldom found adequate support in any age"[26]) for a life of farming. One wonders how the pedantic patron of the arts, who also attacked Gorni, felt, when, not too long after, he , too, was forced to flee penniless to Narbonne.

Similarly, Simon de Montfort's 1208 crusade against the heretics of Beziers was financed by the confiscation of local properties. This romantic military hero's slender resources were supplemented with " a series of papal grants, loans from Cahorsin bankers, and receipts from conquered lands."[27] One wonders, again, whence came these ready funds.

Internally, too, the Jewish community was churning. The Maimunist controversy, despite external political upheaval, and even abetted by it, still raged. In and around the cities Gorni visited, the Talmud was burned in the streets. Community leaders commandeered Jewish and non-Jewish authorities in

the ongoing debate over the legitimacy of secular learning. Bedersi's son, Yediah, was active in this battle, arguing, despite his youth, for the validity of secular science.[28]

The Kabbalah was born in Provence. Many of its mystical tenets were undoubtably shaped by the heretical atmosphere which surrounded them, much as the hasidei-ashkenaz in the Rhine valley, were influenced by the Franciscan movement around them. Thus, for instance, we find the notion that the human soul, properly trained, aspires to union with the sphere of divine grace. In this state of ultimate and ecstatic harmony, the two are joined "in a kiss" leading to prophetic revelation.[29] The idea was long entrenched in Christian thought. St. Ambrose, as early as the fifth century, wrote of the spiritual union of the soul and God:

> The soul, raising itself up from the region of the senses... aspires to the infusion of the Divine Word... The kiss of the Divine Word... The kiss of the Word signifies that she is illumined by the knowledge of God... The soul clings to the Word with this kiss.[30]

Never far removed from politics, the art and literature of the period reflect an equal epoch of tumult and change. New forms, themes and tensions begin to inhabit poetry. In the Christian world, the amazingly prolific troubadours

suddenly and mysteriously from the scene. Giraut Riquier, born at Narbonne about 1233, served ten years at the court of Alfonso X of Castile. He died in 1292 or 1293[31]. But Guiraut refers to himself as "the last of the troubadours." Valency comments,

> ... it seems quite as unlikely that Riquier was the last as that Guillaume IX was the first....[32]

Nonetheless,

> the terminal date would perhaps not be taken too seriously, were it not that after 1300 no important poetry was written in langue d'oc...[33]

The Provençal lyric is a form unique in the annals of literature. Provençal itself, like the literary Hebrew of the classical "Golden" and post-classical "Silver" ages, was never a spoken language, but one developed especially for the needs of the genre.[34] The troubadours were the ones who plied it. Ernest Renan first ascribed, perhaps unfortunately, the term "troubadour" to Gorni, who was certainly writing as late as 1293. Thus, Riquier's claim raises a crucial question: were there Hebrew "troubadours?" and was Gorni one of them? We shall return to this question later.

Western scholars speak of the rise of courtly literature, and the traditions of chivalry, as belonging to the twelfth

century. No less a scholar than the inimitable C.S. Lewis takes the little-questioned stand that romance, and love, date just from that point. And it is true that there suddenly flourishes a literature of passion and coyness, of sensuality and romance, with the resistant lady at its core. Whence did it come? Western scholarship has turned to Capellanus, Ovid, Chretien de Troyes, even Sanskrit legends and Celtic mythology. Clearly, an enormous debt is owed to the Arabic poets of the peninsula, and the transmittal of their poetry to the courts of Provence. Moslem Iberia had developed an exhaustive courtly literature, rich in many of the themes we associate with the Western tradition. We find the development of courtly genres -- wine poems, poems of praise for patrons and benefactors, love poems, satires, city poems, hunting and battle poems, rhymed prose <u>maqamot.</u> Their forms and meters became an integral part of Hebrew poetry. (Only two genres are lacking. There are no surviving hunting poems in Hebrew, and only one instance of a battle poem, by Samuel haNagid.)

How much Jews, responsible for the transmittal of so much else of Arabic culture to the Christians, were responsible for the transfer of courtly motifs as well, is not clear. Love,

it is certain, bears a distinctive stamp in the Christian troubadour lyric. For one, the Moslem writer had sung indiscriminately of heterosexual and homosexual loves (as did his Jewish counterpart), and still managed to convey a liking for both sexes. The Christian writer wrote only of the knight's love for the lady, and even then had difficulty conveying more than a profound ambivalence for the female sex.

The result was the spiritualization of love. True, spiritual love has an ancient and venerable history, going as far back as Plato. But, as far as Plato was concerned, it had nothing to do with women. Moslem poetry is full of the delights of sensual love. But , for the Moslem, as for Plato, the ideal love is strictly a homosexual affair. Thus, the unique phenomenon in Christian courtly society was not the celebration of love, but the restructuring of court life, and of courtly valor, around love -- of a woman. Furthermore, the perfect knight is the one who loves his lady without physical consumation of the relationship. The epitome of this concept of "amor lonh" is found in the "biographical" story of Jaufre Rudel, a troubadour of the mid-twelfth century. Jaufre, according to his vidas, fell in love with a woman whom he worshipped faithfully from afar. Finally setting out to find her, he fell ill

en route, and died unconscious in her arms without seeing her.[35] Such was "true love."

The dangers of the heresy of love did not fail to escape the watchful eyes of the Church. Unable to stem the onslaught of this new literature, churchmen sought valiantly to incorporate it. It is precisely at this period that we find flowering the cult of the Virgin, and all its attendant female devotion.

How the "invention" of love, and its elevation to the status of a highly ritualized and cultic art, affected Jewish society and art is a complex question. Under Moslem rule, Hebrew poets wrote poems of drinking, poems to their benefactors, and poems about love to males and females alike. Chivalric literature was translated into Hebrew: translations of Amadis de Gaul and the Lancelot story survive. However, both of these translations are late, and Italian.[36] The Lancelot, at least, appears to derive from an earlier version. The curious tales of Jacob ben Elazar, published in excerpt in Schirmann's anthology[37], are distinctly courtly. Nonetheless, the art of love was an aristocratic pursuit, and its practice required social standing and a great deal of leisure. Only the wealthy had time for love; the poor had no time for extravagant alterna-

tives to marriage.

Of the extant troubadour literature, fully three-quarters is devoted to love.[38] Thus, the subject of courtly love must be raised here. Of the seventeen surviving poems of Gorni's repertoire, not a single one is a love poem. His few references to women are, to borrow from Hamlet, less than kind. Again, we must ask: are these "troubadour " poems?

The possibility exists, of course, that the love object of the Christian lyric - the woman - underwent a subtle transmutation in Hebrew. The configurations of the Christian court, and the Jewish position within it, were not identical with those of Moslem Iberia. More vulnerable and prey to the increasingly changeable winds from the heights of Christian authority, the prominent Jew may have had more than the etiquette of love on his mind. Or, it may be, that he directed the apparatus of love to a spiritual object: to a yearning for Redemption, the Shekhina, or Zion. The apocryphal story of Judah HaLevy's death bears an uncanny structural resemblance to that of Rudel's -- with one major distinction. The "distant love" is not a lady, but a place, Zion. According to legend, HaLevy died at Jerusalem's gates.

HaLevy did, in fact, leave Spain, sometime after 1140,

with the intent of reaching Palestine. His ship was blown off course, and he landed in Alexandria, Egypt, whence he travelled to Cairo, Damietta, Tyre and Damascus. After that, all trace of him is lost.[39]

Several Hebrew poets do show definite signs of troubadour influence in the use of poetic forms and techniques. The two poets most frequently cited in this connection are contemporaries of Gorni's, Todros Abulafia, and Meshullam (Samuel) Da-Piera. The troubadour influence is observable chiefly in technique -- the lengthening of the closing envoi to conform to the troubadour tornada, the shift away from the Arabic "girdle" structure (in Arabic, the muwashashat; in Hebrew, the shir ezor) towards the rhyme schemes and structural patterns of the troubadour lyric (again, the inclusion of a closing tornada or introductory and/or closing razos), the appearance of tenson poetry (in Hebrew, shirei pulmus), the increasing flexibility of meter and rhythm. Pagis and Schirmann both point to the new attention to local detail and description, and the rising individuality of style along with the more assertive intrusion of the poet's personality.[40] In Gorni's case, it is virtually impossible to ignore the commanding presence of the poet's ego. The world of the poem virtually revolves about it.[41] Once the facilitator of conventional social attitudes, the poet

becomes a forceful individual voice.[42]

Did the courtly conception of love find its way into Hebrew poetry? On the surface, it might seem not, but to close the matter so swiftly ignores the complexities of the question.

The moral of courtly literature, from Chretien on, is the paramount virtue of equilibrium in society. Love evolved from an unsettling "disease," whose effects were destructive to social harmony, into an ennobling and integral part of social life. W. T. H. Jackson has pointed out the undeviating pattern of the courtly romance. Within that pattern, society, and its complex regulations, represent stability and order. In the typical courtly romance, a disruption in the social machinery provides the impulse for chivalric adventure, which is ultimately resolved in the return to static equilibrium.[43] The lyric, too, is a form constructed on social conventions. The object and expression of love are almost ritually predetermined. Even the omnipresent losengier, the lurking spies and slanderers who torment the lovers, are nameless figures whose presence is as accepted as that of the lovers themselves. More than one scholar of the troubadour lyric has accurately described these troublesome characters as

the inescapable realities of social circumstance and daily life.[44] They are an integrally indispensable part of the social fabric, as are the impulses to love and verse. In Gorni's poetry, they even take on an added psychological dimension, attesting to the psychomachia waged in the cause of creation.

Courtly literature demands a static view of society, and a static view of the universe. As is still true of literature (and the arts in general) today, a class of leisure is required for its creation and its consumption. The correspondence between Hebrew and Arabic poetry of the Peninsula is a sign of the high degree of acculturation enjoyed by Jews in Moslem society. Some Jews did attain that acculturation in the Christian courts of Provence. They did not, however, write courtly lyrics, in the style of Provençal lyrics. Gorni has had the fortune or misfortune to be considered a Hebrew "troubadour." We do have evidence that such wandering singers existed, Charles le Juif, for instance, or several otherwise unknown characters recorded as "minstrels," the poet Bonfilh, mentioned in the inquisitorial depositions. Many of them sang, not in Hebrew, but in the local tongue. There was a court audience for Gorni's poems, and he relied on

its patronage. However, to judge at least from his surviving poems, he did not sing of love, the obsessive theme of his Provencal counterparts. It is conceivable that there were Hebrew love chansons, now lost. Or, the genre may not have existed. The answer lies somewhere in the shift in social context, and the social function of the poet, as well as the needs and values of his audience.

One source for more information is the poems themselves, in their formal structures and motifs, linguistic tensions and vocabulary, and the possible transference and transmutation of these from contemporary genres. And so, we turn now, to the poems, and Isaac haGorni.

The following discussion of Gorni's poetry will deal with three topics: (1) the extent to which the poems reflect the influence of troubadour forms, motifs and language; (2) the central motif, recurring throughout the poems , of the poet's creative and transforming powers; and (3) the psychological tension within the poems between the forces of order and disorder, and its counterpart in the culture of the time.

Formally, Gorni's poems still bear evidence to the formal heritage of the Golden Age Iberian poetry. They

employ classical meters and the classical monorhyme. Metrically, they also show a greater flexibility, indicative of the weakened hold of the old school, and perhaps the popularization of the genre. Schwa's are inconsistently scanned - for instance, in the word הֲלֹא , which is occasionally counted as two long beats.

There are, nonetheless, strong indications of troubadour influence. The most obvious is the survival of two tenson exchanges, one between Gorni and Abraham haBedersi (Bedersi's half of the poetic duel is not extant), and one between Gorni and a younger poet, Samuel ibn Devash. Both Bedersi's and Devash's poetry are characteristic of the highly artificial and strained pomposity of the didactic school.[45]

Gorni's rougher but more powerful verse stands in extreme contrast to his opponents'. It suggests that the two types of poets may have travelled in very different social circles, despite the dependence of both on the goodwill of a social and literary "establishment." Devash's response is of interest, less for its poetic value (which is slight) than for its elaboration of aesthetic criteria for the writing of poetry. Consistent with the rational, philoso-

sophical outlook of his peer, Yediah Bedersi, he claims:

לאיש משל בכל מדה כבדה והוא משכיל ולא נפש
חכמה
והוא שרה בכל משל ומשל בבת השיר כמו גבר
בעלמה
ושירו צח ויקר מפנינים ומלשם שבו גם אחלמה
והן דפן מליצתו ושירה ובלתו תהיה דפן עקומה

(Man has an analogy for every major attribute:
he is enlightened, and has a rational soul.
He governs each and every attribute
in poetry as a man does a maid
His song is eloquent and dearer than pearls,
jacinth, agate and amethyst
So, too, the wall of his verse and song --
without (guidance), the wall would be crooked.)
(ll. 4-7)

Gorni's response disdains the same intellectualized tone, and develops the graphic and powerful image of the thresher - the "goren" from which his name is derived. He incisively makes his point: the source of the poet's creative power lies, not in adherence to a schoolboy's rules, but in the surge of the ego to weld words and images into meaning.

Devash and Gorni both close their poems with a short series of verses, of different rhyme from the poetic body, reminiscent of the closing tornada of the troubadour poem. Thus, in Gorni's first poem to Devash, he concludes:

אבי אבי הוא העלם הגרני אשר במליצה
נשא
ונשגב, אבי כל תופש כנור ועוגב,
יצחק אבן גרני היושב לוק.

(I, I am the fellow, Gorni, exalted in verse
and sublime, father of all who hold the lute and pipes,
Yitzhak ibn Gorni, a citizen of Luq.)
(ll. 23-25)

And Devash wails:

אם מלאכי מות בתוך גורן יבוס
לא עצרו כח שכון בו שכון
דין הוא: הכי לו אל בחרו להיות
כו בית מנוחתו לשבת מכון
אך גרנך הפך הכי הוא רע וגו-
רן היבוס הוא טוב וגורן נכון.

(If the angels of death in the Jebusite thresher
haven't lost their strength, they will surely stay there
It's a judgment: Strike him! don't select this as
a house of rest, in which to sojourn
Your thresher has become the worst of all! and the thresher of the Jebusite the true and proper thresher.)
(ll. 23-25)

Troubadour motifs, too, appear in Gorni's poems. However, they are not directly transferred, but reworked to his needs. The subject of Gorni's verse is not love, or the lady, but the cities he visits, and the citizens who meet him. This type of "city poem" has a history in the Arabic tradition, where it often serves as a means of satirizing the social conditions of a town.[46] Gorni reapplies several traditional troubadour motifs to describe the reception accorded him, and his creative talents, by the townspeople on his route.

One of these motifs is that of the losengier, those disapproving and suspicious characters whose nameless presence thwarts love and poetry. These anonymous maledictors seek

Gorni's ruin greedily:

נוגן שחוק צריו ורנתם
נהפך, וכל היום נגינתם
השואפים רוח באות לב
כי מי ישיבנה ותאנתם!

(The poet has become his enemies' joke and jest
and constant mockery
They gloat freely in their greed
for who can restrain it, or their lust?)
(Draguignan, ll. 1-2)

מה מצאו בי חטא ועון שוטני?
האעבר תורות, ברית הפרתי?
יחרבו צרי ולא יכתבו
בכתב עמי! ליום אמרתי.

(Why do my denouncers find sin and misdeed in me?
have I broken Testaments, violated covenants?
"May my rivals be annihilated and unwritten
in my people's records," I constantly say!)
(Apt, ll. 6-7)

לאן אנוס ואן אמצא מצודה?
ולי פורשים לכל רוח מצודה!

(To whom shall I flee, and where shall I find refuge?
they are laying a snare for me on all sides!)
(Four Kehillot, l. 1)

מה לך כי נזעקת
ואחרי איש שקט ובטח דלקת
הבקשר קושרים עלי ומורדים
היעלה נא באזני קול פחדים?

(What's with you that you cry out
and burn in pursuit after a quiet, trusting man?
While they conspire against me and rebel
shall fearful voices rise to my ears?)
(Luq, ll. 1-2)

רבת מקנאי ככלבים נבחו

(The slander of my envious ones is like dogs barking)
(Luq #2, l. 29)

Gorni's references to women portray a female counterpart to the losengiers, a highly unchivalric approach. They are destructive forces in the poet's universe. They only bring upon him new accusations:

יאמרו: כנואף אשמרה נשף
חסד אני זוכר ליונתם
ואני לקצווי הנדוד אברח
אם בחלום אפגש עדינתם!

(They say, like an adulterer I watch for night,
I remember the favor of their dove -
But I would flee to the ends of the earth
if I have even met their fine lady in a dream!)
(Draguignan, ll. 13-14)

אולם מצעק על קצינים אני
האומרים: נפשי עדינות חמדה!
ואני מאסתין, אף גאלתין מראות,
אם בחלום אראם- שנתי נדדה
אם בדרכים אפגשם - קל אעבר
לו אחרי אביט - לגל אתעדנה.
קראו שמי פלג- ביסי נפלגה
חברת בנות, ומני נפרדה.

(Still, I declaim against her nobles
who say their fine ladies I've desired!
But I have spurned them, hated even seeing them!
If I see them in a dream, my sleep is disturbed
If I meet them on the streets, I pass by quickly-
If I should glance back, may I turn to a stone!
Call me Peleg, for in my time, divided
is womankind, and parted from me.)
(Arles, ll. 4-7)

In both cases, Gorni links women to the world of the dream, which represents, for him, another type of threat to the poet.

In contrast, the love lyrics of the troubadours often portray the dream as a realm transcendant of social circumstance (represented by the losengier), a meta-reality where the lovers are free. For Gorni, the dream, and the losengier, take on a psychological dimension of internal forces of opposition. The centrality of the poet's ego forces all elements of the poem (note the frequency of first person verbs!) to revolve about him, and even figure as the elements of an interior universe. Even actual historical circumstances -- the war mentioned in l. 32 of the poem to Perpignan -- appear as threats to the poet's ability to create unity and order.

The poet's joy in his ability to create is a motif which permeates the troubadour literature. The power of the poet lies in his capacity to create love and verse, a new reality, even language (Guillaume's nonsense refrain, "babariol, babariol, babarian.") He is a god in his poetic universe. Gorni's attitude towards his creative powers is more ambivalent and tormented, than the joyous strength of the Christian poems. I shall treat this theme more fully later, but I should like to call attention, in this consideration of the adaptation of troubadour motifs, to his use of one significant word - " הפך " - to turn, to become, to transform.

Gorni's use of the verb "נהפך" while hardly excessive, betrays the conflicting forces at work in the poet's attempts to create. While he struggles to maintain control of his poetic universe, the forces of decay and disintegration confront him at every step. This negative creative transmutation threatens the very tools and supports of the poet's trade:

תופי וכנורי לקול בוכים
הופכים, ועוגבי - לקנתם.

(My drum and lute to a voice of weeping
have turned, and my pipes to their lament.)
(Draguignan, l. 6)

ועתה נהפכו עלי למשחית
אהבים נעדרו בהם אמונות.

(But now they have become my destroyer,
these faded loves, which were untrue.)
(The Nightmare, l. 10)

ואחי הם ואנכי אחיהם
ואיך לי נהפכו אויבים פליליי?

(They are my brothers, and I myself their brother -
so how did my defenders become my enemies?)
(Perpignan, l. 19)

וישיעה ראש רודפי אך נהפך
לי בעמלקי ונער מצרי

(And Isaiah, the chief of my pursuers, has now beoome
my Amalekite, and an Egyptian lad)
(Luq #2, l. 30)

In all but one of the above, the verb is passive, and counteracts the poet's active ability to create and transform. The vulnerability suggested by the presence of the losengier is amplified by its relation to the language of being and transformation.

In one particular poem, Gorni's vocabulary implies a strong familiarity with the troubadour ethic. Once again, though, he reapplies it, taking words conventionally associated with love and love-lyric, and using them for something else. This is the second poem to ibn Devash ("Luq #2"), where Gorni takes the word "גיל" - joy - and its grammatical permutations to describe the vindictive rejoicing of his enemies, and his equally vindictive rejoicing over them:

אשכול מרורת לו בכל עת ואני
דבשי אהי אוכל בגיל עם יערי

(He shall always have a cluster of bitterness
while I eat honey in joy with the honeycomb)
(Luq #2, l. 25)

חנם יגילון צורריי ריקם, ועור-

(In vain my enemies will rejoice, emptyhanded...)
(Luq #2, l. 28)

What a strange permutation of the Provençal "joi!" Even more striking is the transfer of a standard love image, in the same poem:

בשוט לשונך תחביא אותו, וחץ
שירך ירי עליו, ועיניו נקר:

(With the scourge of your tongue, blacken him, and the arrow
of your song fire upon him, that his eyes
be pierced.)
(Luq #2, l. 14)

Here is the conventional image of love shooting her arrows, and

piercing her hapless victim through the eyes. But, again, to what use it is turned!

The sources of Gorni's language are largely biblical, as was standard, with several rabbinic expressions (עזות, עול, דר and the paraphrasing of a line from Pirke Abot). Several riddle-forms, and proverbs, are also used. In addition, it seems likely that certain usages, as I have tried to show, come from the courtly vocabulary.

The creative force of the poet is a central theme for Gorni. The poet becomes the vital force which brings poetry to life. If poetry was a string of pearls, as so often depicted by the poets of the Golden and Silver Ages, then the poet was the string holding them together. To Gorni, his power seems nothing short of redemptive, as he breathes life into the assemblage of poetic bones and flesh. Thus, in the poem to Arles, Gorni declares that poetry's survival is dependent upon him; with his death , she shall descend to the underworld with him:

אל תתנני, יה, ביד מתקוממי!
למה ביום אבדי מליצה אבדה?
כי היא בעודי חי, ואתי אחרי
בשאול ובחשך יצועה רפדה.

(Don't hand me over, God, into the hand of my enemies!
why, when I am lost, should verse be lost, too?
For she lives while I live, and will come with me,
after me,
to spread her couch in the dark of Sheol.)
(Arles, ll. 12-13)

And in the poem to Bedersi in Perpignan, he proclaims:

במותי – אחרי ירד כבוד שיר
ביום הֶאָסְפי רבו חללי

(When I die, the glory of song will descend with me,
the slain will be many, the day I am gathered in!)
(Perpignan, l. 55)

The poems are the poet's children, his offspring, his "giants," or, sarcastically inverted, "low ones:"

ואל מי מגבוהים רם ונשא
והחסן כמו ילדי נפילַי
אני נכנע ואף רמים אגדע
ולמרום אני משים שפלַי

(Who of the lofty is exalted and proud,
as powerful as the children of my giants?
Though I am brought low, I will yet cut down the high ones
and place my low ones in the heights.)
(Perpignan, ll. 50-51)

Poetry itself holds the power of life and death:

ראו, אחו בלי מים הֲיִשגה?
ועל יבש הֲיגמל השקדים?
ולולי כי פני אבֶ֫את זה ילדו
אני נושא ואזכר לו חסדים
השימותיו בשירי והמיתו
ואקרא ידעי "נהי וסופדים!"

(Look: can a swampgrass grow without water?
can a dessicated tree bring forth almonds?
Were it not that in this boy the father's face
I bear, and I remember favors he did for me
I would have put him in my song and killed him
and called on those who know "come eulogize!")
(Luq, ll. 8-10)

In contrast, the defeat of his enemies is described as the loss of their ability to give birth:

ואין כח ללדה נוגנים עוד
ואור לא יחזו עיני נפילי

(The players will no longer have strength to give birth
the eyes of the unborn shall not see the light.)
(Perpignan, l. 57)

ואלו הרתה בטנם כזבים
ושכלתים ואין כח ללדת!

(If their belly has conceived such lies,
let me bereave them, so they can't give birth!)
(Four Kehillot, l. 11)

The image is developed in a description of his enemies' having given birth, not to truth and poetry, but "sin" (Arles, l. 40) and "lies" (Four Kehillot, l. 11). In distinct contrast, the power of true poetry is redemptive:

לא סָעֲלַת גרני משיחנו
ידע בארץ נוד ועיפתה

(Since the arrival of Gorni, our savior, neither
darkness nor exile has been known in the land)
(Aire, l. 3)

The poetic act is further associated with images of virility - the arrow, flowing water, the pen. The goren - thresher - also assumes the magical power to stop the Angel of Death in its teeth. The image acquires redemptive dimensions, which are amplified by the poet's assurance in the poem to Perpignan:

לנדחיו אנופף כי פדיתים
והקלתי מסלה אל גאולי

(I shall wave to their scattered parts, for I have ransomed them
and eased the path for those I have redeemed.)
(Perpignan, l. 4)

The recurring pattern is that of uniting composite parts into an array of meaning. The image has formidable resonances in Gorni's time. Since the Golden Age in al-Andalus, Hebrew

and Arabic poets had employed the image of the poem as a string of pearls assembled by the virtuosity of the poet. Gorni evokes this image when he says

עלי בזרך פניני שיר אשבץ
ולא אשליך פניני סול בבלי

(I shall set the pearls of song onto your crown;
I won't cast my pearls before these fools!)
(Perpignan, l. 52)

He deftly fuses the same concept, of the poet assembling scattered parts into a whole, with the redemptive image of the Messiah reassembling the scattered people (see p. 34 above). Thus, we see, that when he pleads, in the poem to Draguignan, that his enemies be denied a "Sukkah" in Jerusalem, he is pleading, not only that they shall not be redeemed, but that they be denied that "gathering" which bestows direction and meaning. It may have Kabbalistic overtones, too. According to Kabbalistic teaching, the vessel which contained the divine light was shattered at Creation, and its fragments flung to all parts of the world. The coming of the Messiah, and Redemption, were dependent upon the gathering of those shards back into a whole.

The Christian world, too, saw the earth as an ordered clockwork of parts. A divine conception of order permeated the universe, from the workings of the stars and planets in their

appropriate spheres, down to the minutely classified and ordered ranks of human, animal, plant and mineral matter. (The same notion is found in the ten sephirot, the ten spheres, of the Kabbalah.) The "Great Chain of Being" governed the universe, and everything was kept in its place. God was the magnetic force at the center of this concentric order. And Gorni, too, who compares himself often and immodestly to the Divine Creator, stands at the center of his universe of words, and their governing order.

Gorni also utilizes architectural motifs, and the deployment of architecturally evocative (biblical) verses. How conscious he was of this preference for biblical locii is impossible to determine. (In general, he shows a preference for the "romance" narratives of Kings and Samuel, the Psalm literature, Isaiah and particularly Job.) Curiously, the poet appears not so much as the architect as the building itself, the assembled order of parts, which must be protected against invading forces. The use of the verb " פרץ " - "break in," "invade" - pervades his poems. One has only to think of the meticulously hierarchized architecture of the Cathedral, which would have been a prominent feature of Gorni's landscape, to realize that edifices of wood and stone would have emanated the same message of a multitude of parts harmonized into a whole. The poet's power

is superior to the builder's, because he can create 'some thing out of nothing' (Guillaume's "farai un vers mi dretz nien").

It is a mark of the genius of this poet that he displays this metaphoric analogy in his own unique way. In the second poem to ibn Devash, it is the image of the thresher, catching and arresting Death in its grasp. Or, in the frightening poetic image of Gorni's dissection and subsequent transmutation into totemic relics, there is an inversion of the image, a kind of inverted creativity, and a testimony to the immortality of the creative urge. In this vision of posthumous destiny, the poet shall be dismembered, and the various segments of his body, along with his pen, the planks of his coffin, and even the maggots consuming his body, shall be worshiped as relics of magical potency (see, Draguignan, ll. 20ff, and virtually the entirety of the poem Schirmann calls "the Nightmare "). This is completely consonant with the poet's image of poetry dying with him. For if the poetic act is the assembling of parts into a meaningful whole - the stringing of a necklace of pearls - his death snips the string, and all fragments return to a meaningless disorder.

(The powerful image of posthumous dismemberment had its source in historical reality. It was not only Jews who

felt uneasy about dying in exile. But, many did die outside of their homelands, and the technology of the times prevented the efficient return of their bodies for burial. The medieval mind took recourse in what will seem to us an extreme solution, dismembering the body, boiling the parts and removing the bones. The bones were buried on the spot, and the boiled appendages shipped home for interment.[47] Such a fate came to no less a personage than Aquinas.[48]

The polarization between urge and demiurge, poetic will and misdirected passion, order and chaos, fills Gorni's poems with tension. The tension is of several types. It is linguistic - for example in the suspended syntax of

אהבים נעדרי בהם אמונות

(those faded loves , which were untrue)
(The Nightmare, l.10)

or linguistic and imagistic, as in the tortured syntax and startling polarity of heat and snow, desire and death:

קרח, בחם חשקי בלילות יחשף
בגדי, ושלג על עצמי ירדה

(Ice, in the heat of my desire at night , strips off my garment, and snow falls on my bones.)
(Arles, l.10)

It is also emotional tension, wrought by the first two, and reinforced by the torment of the poet facing the obstacles to his creating, ranging from social and economic pressures to

the sheer ignorance and stupidity of his audience (cf. Perpignan, I, 59).

Yet, in the world of the poem, even what are clearly external phenomena -- tax officials, slanderers, untrue women and boors -- take on the quality of psychological forces of opposition. The arena is set for a psychomachia; the poetic ego struggles to sustain creativity and creative order among the forces of destruction, death and decay.

The lyric form in general lends itself to this type of psychological criticism, because of its essential egocentricity and first-person exposition, and because of its refined degree of emotional sensitivity. Gorni portrays a man at war with Creation -- in both its social and artistic manifestations. His enemies do not appreciate his artistic worth. They deny him his tenuous livelihood. They hostilely block his access to other poets. They accuse him of squandering his energies on untrue loves and secretive trysts; he has not been attentive to true love, the ennobling passion and motivation of the courtly ethic. Creativity, which should be pictured as a 'putting together,' a harmonizing of elements, is countered with images of dismemberment and disintegration. The poet strains simultaneously for opposite extremes: vengeance and tranquility,

immortality and death.

About him, mutability reigned in the destiny of men. If literature expresses the will of aristocratic society, it still survives by society's caprices. The forces of disorder are always just outside the walls. Moses ibn Ezra writes of poetry while lamenting the sack of Cordoba, and Halper introduces his Hebrew translation of the work with a mirroring reflection on the Great War raging and destroying as he struggles to create. We, too, can testify to no better record, and that is why, perhaps, Gorni's work reverberates forcefully, not only in its own cultural context, but in ours as well. In the end, it was not the psychological enemies which most threatened. The poet sang. Gorni was nearly lost to the forces of human-wrought disorder. There is, hopefully, a moral in the "nearly" -- that the urge to create is indeed transcendant. It is part of the hope of this paper, in beginning the restoration of his work, to further the restoration of that vision.

EDITIONS

Gorni's poems survive in a single manuscript, No. 128 of the Munich collection, in the Munich library, and several epigrams in Günzburg mss. 167 and 288, now in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In his entry on Gorni in the Histoire de la litterature..., Ernest Rénan notes the possibility of more Gorni material being in the Firkovitch collection, but a note at the back of the book indicates that the material was incorrectly identified. (This is fortunate for Gorni, since the Firkovitch collection, in Moscow, is now largely inaccessible to Western scholars.) Munich No. 128 is a fourteenth century manuscript, in which Gorni's poems appear sandwiched between two essays on scientific subjects, in the hand of a somewhat deficient copyist. According to Rénan, Steinschneider's was the first attempt to work with the poetry. He identified the poet of the Munich copy with the poet of the same name mentioned by Bedersi [49] and assembled an edition of three poems for publication in Pollack's Hotem Toknit, published in Amsterdam in 1865. Pollack, however, never published a complete edition, leaving it to Neubauer to produce an 1873 article containing the poems to Arles, Aix, two poems to Manosque, Carpentras, Apt, Draguignan and the exchange with ibn Devash.

In Volume 31 of the Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums (Breslau, 1882), pp. 510-523, Gross reproduced the body of poems not contained in Steinschneider. Curiously, Davidson's listing of manuscript editions omits the Steinschneider work altogether.

The bulk of modern attention to Gorni must be credited to Schirmann. Six poems, included in the Gross edition, appear in his anthology of Provençal and Sephardic medieval verse.[50] Excerpts from these and other poems appear in French translation in Schirmann's 1949 article in Lettres Romanes, Vol. 3, pp. 175-200. Haberman has recently produced several of the poems; unfortunately, I was unable to procure his edition before the completion of this paper. An incomplete version of the poem to Arles, and "The Nightmare" appear in Hebrew and English translation in the new Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse by T. Carmi (Penguin, 1981, pp. 397-400). Thus, much of the work in this paper is unduplicated elsewhere. The need for a critical edition of the entire corpus, and translation of same, is long overdue. The editions of Gross and Steinschneider are highly unsatisfactory and require careful scrutiny and emendation. Even if we do not concur with his evaluation of Gorni, Rénan's century old lament is still essentially valid:

il sérait bien à désirer qu'on publiat la collection complète de ses oeuvres venues jusqu'à nous. A défaut de très-haute poésie, on y trouverait un tableau parfait de la vie interieure de la societé juive du midi de la France, dans la deuxième moitié du xiiie siècle.[51]

NOTES

[1]T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazzard Adams (N. Y., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) pp. 784- 787.

[2]Dan Pagis חידוש ומסורת בשירת החול (ירושלים, הוצאת כתר 1976) ע' 178, 189, 191, and Jefim Schirmann, "יצחק הגרני, מבורר עברי מפרובאנס, ע' 422, ו "עיונים בקובץ השירים והמליצות של אברהם הבדרשי," ע' 398. שתי המאמרים בתוך לתולדות השירה והדראמה העברית (ירושלים, מוסד ביאליק 1979).

[3]Jacob Provenzali, responsa in דברי חכמים לאליעזר אשכנזי. (1849), p. 70. The translation is mine.

[4]Pagis, p. 186.

[5]Dan Pagis, "Trends in the Study of Medieval Literature" AJS Review IV (1979) p. 139.

[6]Rénan identifies the copyist as Yedıah Bedersi, son of Abraham. He gives no justification for the identification. The compiler's vidas material - the biographical inserts which string together the list of poems -- is not favorably inclined to the poet. However, what generation the manuscript with respect to the author of this material is unknown. Some of the errors in Gross's transcription are certainly visual, but they could even be his own. The microfilm of the Munich mss. did not arrive in time for me to pursue this problem.

[7]Robert Gere, "The Troubadours, Heresy and the Albigensian Crusade," Diss. Columbia University 1955, p. 10.

[8]Provenzali, ibid.

[9]B. Halper (שירת ישראל (כתאב אלמחאצרה ואלמדאכרה לר' משה בן יעקב אבן עזרא (הוצאת א' יוסף שטיבל, ליפסיה תרפ"ד).

[10]Edward Said, The World, the Text and the Critic (Cambridge, Ma., Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 276-281, 46-47.

[11]ibid., p. 46.

[12]Pagis, חידוש ומסורת, p. 9.

[13]Halper, p. 9.

[14]Ray Scheindlin, Form and Structure in the Poetry of al-Mu'Tamid ibn 'Abbad (Leiden, Brill, 1974), introd.

[15]Two poems appear in English translation in T. Carmi's Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse (N. Y., Penguin, 1981)pp. 397-400.

[16]Schirmann, השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס (ירושלים, מוסד ביאליק, 1956), ע' 472-484.

[17]Schirmann לתולדות השירה, p. 421.

[18]ibid., p. 424.

[19]Gere, pp. 6 ff. Also, in C. W. Previté-Orton, The Shorter Cambridge Medieval History, II (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1952) pp. 662 ff, 840.

[20]Isaac Baer, History of the Jews in Christian Spain (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1961), Vol. I, pp. 77, 186.

[21]Halper, p. 82. Ibn Ezra writes: אמנם הגיעו צרות על בני אדם בהפקד הנדיבים, והספרות סתה בסיתם, ועט סופרים נשבר.

[22]The poem has been dated 1293. See my note to the text.

[23]Pagis, p. 177.

[24]Graetz, History of the Jews, Vol. IV (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society 1894), p. 47.

[25]ibid., p. 54.

[26]Maurice Valency, In Praise of Love (New York, MacMillan, 1961) p. 96.

[27]Gere, p. 26, and Baer, pp. 89 ff, 131 ff. Also cf. Previté-Orton, p. 664.

[28]Graetz, pp. 42-45.

[29]ibid., p. 6.

[30]Valency, p. 22, n. 40.

[31]According to R. Hill and T. Bergin, Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973) p. 248, Riquier died in 1292. Valency cites a date of 1293, p. 104.

[32]Valency, p. 104.

[33]ibid.

[34]ibid., p. 86.

[35]Hill and Bergin, p.

[36] Both have been recently republished, the Amadis by Zvi Malachi (Tel-Aviv University 1981) and the Lancelot fragment by Curt Leviant.

[37]Schirmann, השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, כרך ב', חלק ג'; Vol. II, Part III, p. 211 - 238.

[38]Gere, p. 6.

[39]I. Husik, A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy (N. Y., Temple/Atheneum Books, 1974), p. 152. The story can be found in almost any discussion of HaLevy and his works.

[40]Pagis, p. 180, pp. 185 ff.

[42]Ray Scheindlin, "Courtly Love in the Hebrew Tradition," still in press, pp. 1-2.

[43]See Jackson's analyses of Chrétien de Troyes in particular, in his History of European Medieval Literature.

[44]Scheindlin, p. 11. The idea was often put forth by Professor Joan Ferrante in her seminar on Provencal lyrics, Columbia University.

[45]The two series of literary crossfire are treated at some length by Jefim Schirmann in the two articles cited in n. 2.

[46]private conversation with Dr. Aziz Aluwaishig, to whom I am grateful for this information.

[47]J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (N. Y., Doubleday Anchor, 1954), p. 143.

[48]ibid., p. 167.

[49]Ernest Rénan, Les rabbins francais, vol. 27 of the Histoire litteraire.... (Paris, 1877), p. 720.

[50]Schirmann, Vol. II, Part IV, pp. 472-484.

[51]Renan, p. 703.

To the "Four Kehillot"

1. To whom shall I flee, and where shall I find refuge?
   they are laying a snare for me on all sides!
   Aha, Gorni! who else gets such scorn and ridicule,
   such woe -- just you, you wretched soul!
   When the money's run out, and there's no meat to nourish,
   then in quakings dear life shall perish!
   Yet surely my redeemer bequeathes and enriches
   and returns losses to the owners -
5 And he's my salvation in trouble, too,
   a shelter against the day of doom!

The poem appears as #404 in Schirmann's collection. It is also found in Gross, p. 514, under the heading: "And this is what he sent to the community of the 'Four Kehillot'."

2. you wretched soul - literally, you plundered soul. The word is usually used biblically with respect to land.

3. dear life shall perish - my translation is at variance with the meaning implied by Schirmann, who notes, החמודה: הגוויה i.e., the body (corpse) shall perish.

4. redeemer - Schirmann notes, גואלי: אלהי i.e., my Redeemer (God). It seems to me more probable that a human redeemer - the patron - is implied. This patron may be the "Judah" of the last verse.

5-6. shelter; wall of brass - Many of the biblical uses are connected to city or building images, perhaps re-sounding the opening picture of the poet as an architectural edifice. This raises the intriguing question of whether the choice of vocabulary is deliberate, or simply the result of a subconscious association. The question is of some interest, since Gorni's vocabulary often concentrates on a certain biblical locus or locii. The David/Saul stories of the books of Samuel and Kings are a frequent reservoir of words. Since

In vain, my pursuers draw close to make me weak;

I shall stand like the walls of brass!

And should they touch my song, he shall scourge them

as one who defiles Temple vessels!

My pride, they plotted to lower and debase,

my honor, among the nobles and commoners.

(Even if all the stars of heaven were to

acclaim me, they could not utter all my glory !)

They'd call me a false, unfaithful fellow,

a great sinner, whose crime is weighty.

If their belly has conceived such lies,

let me bereave them, so they can't give birth!

And if they're creating a tumult because of Isaiah,

should Issac start shaking?

---

these stories also constitute the closest biblical analogue to chivalric literature, they may have enjoyed an extra popularity at this time.

6. wall of brass - cf. Jer. 1:18.

7. temple vessels - i.e., the sacred tools of worship, the implements connected with the worship service.

8. nobles and commoners - a merismus, i.e., among both high and low.

9. acclaim me - the Hebrew has "me" (in the common form "my soul) in the first hemistiche. I have transposed it for the sake of the English syntax.

10. unfaithful - the Hebrew word מכחש is also evoked in Lev. 5:22-23, which concerns the return of lost objects (see v. 4, above).

And where are the wonders of his mouth in versifications

when he's clamoring grace with those mighty ones?

The tax ministers would like to trample on me.

At the taskmaster's voice, I am seized with trembling.

Before the court, I offer my petitions

and plead with the due official:

Wingless, see if the hawk can fly -

without pinion or feather, can the stork?

When I am speaking, may my lord strengthen me

On that direful day, my soother Judah!

---

12. Isaiah - the m s., and Gross's copy indicate a lacuna. Schirmann has inserted the name Isaiah , evidently assuming that the Isaiah (ibn Devash) of the Luq tenson is intended.

13. grace - or, thanksgiving.
mighty ones - See, "Perpignan," note to verse 8.

16. see if... - the verb and syntax identify this as a standard riddle form. Riddle poems, epigrams and proverbs were a genre of medieval poetry, and are found in the works of Hallory, ibn Gabirol , and ibn Ezra, to name a few. In her article, "לנסות בחידות:עיון בחידה העברית בימי הביניים" הספרות 30-31, April 1980, ע'169. Tovah Rosen-Moked describes four common riddle forms, one of which is characterized by its beginning, (or, some grammatical variant of , and followed by the conundrum.

17. quaking - cp. II Kgs. 23:18, where the expression is "let no man move (יזע) his bones." The idea follows through with the rest of the verse. The Gross copy has חליף "transfer", which Schirmann has emended to חליץ "deliver". In either case the intention is similar. The form, חליץ עצמות, is found also in the Rosh Hodesh liturgy, where it figuratively connotes "salvation". The first words of the verse are still dificult, though: does "disturb" refer to a posthumous or living state?

18. direful - a secondary meaning is the Christian fête days, which clearly were days of distress for the beleaguered Jews in their midst.

To Apt

I passed by the raconteurs' troupes
yesterday, I went seeking in the land of musicians
My hand mastered the lute, and at
my right, my strings to the instrument I tied,
and played: Perhaps as I take joy, it will
ease the bitter of heart -- so I sang a song.
It not in my days, after my death may they find
song, after I am buried on Mt. Nebo.

The poem appears as #405 in Schirmann (p. 476, Vol. IV), and in Gross, p. 513, with the heading "And to Apt, he said:"

2. mastered - literally, "my hands cultivated", cf. Is. 48:13.

3. perhaps it will profit the bitter of heart - Davidson's thesaurus of proverbs attributes a similar epigram to Yediah (ha Penini) Bedersi, the son of Abraham haBedersi, whose vitriolic exchange with Gorni is still extant (see, further on, "Perpignan"). The proverb is: "כאשר יסר לב המשורר, ימתק שירו" (when the poet is bitter of heart, his song is sweet.) Dan Pagis, in his book חידוש ומסורת בשירת החול (ירושלים, 1976) cites a contemporary of Gorni's, the poet Valqiera (around 1269) "אמור, איך תערוך איש אל משורר, והוא הלב ישמח עת ישורר" (Say, how shall a man treat the poet, who gladdens the heart when he sings) (p. 179).

4. Mt. Nebo - the burial place of Moses. The exact site, of course, is unknown, but the mountain was. Gorni sees himself as the Moses of poetry!

"Should a prophet of song like Gorni arise, let him be
sacred, don't touch him!" I was told.
Why do my denouncers find sin and misdeed in me?
have I broken Testaments, violated covenants?
"May my rivals be annihilated and unwritten
in my people's records," I constantly say!
The Amalekite is my bane; he stalks to pursue me.
I will curse him like Shimi; I will scuttle along after him,
Should a celestial host arise and pursue me.
would I quail, would I now be frightened?
The time for sighing has scattered and passed,
Now I am crowned with years of rest like a jewel.

---

5. Should ... arise - Schirmann has emended the line considerably. See his note. The biblical reference is, again, to Moses.

7. unwritten... records - cf. Ezek. 13:9.

8. Shimi - see Sa. 16:5 ff. This image of the skulking maledictor is a strange one for our hero to invoke. The verb עפרתי, which I have translated as "scuttle", is a biblical hapoxlogomenon (II Sa. 16:13), as is the hithpa'el form of שער (Dan. II:40). The selection of rare words suggests Gorni's knowledge of the Bible was more than rudimentary, and probably quite extensive.

I shall be a lord forever, even if I am swept

from the honored sanctum like a locust or grasshopper!

Oh earth! go gently with me, and the gentle people of Apt -- and go

gently

with those devotees of love I remember.

By the Lord's temple, and service, I swear,

I would not betray them, and I have not lied!

The breath of my song shall brush over their faces,

I shall not even let a hair of their flesh flutter!

---

11. if I am swept... grasshopper - I have had to transpose within the hemistiches. The syntax is literally "even if from the sanctum/honored, like a locust or grasshopper I am swept." Schirmann indicates a variant meaning for דביר - "place."

12. go gently ... gently - the punning on "Apt" is impossible to translate, but very beautiful. The expression "go gently" (לְאַט) is almost identical in sound to the city name, Apt (אַט)

13. I swear - my addition. The Hebrew oath formulation does not require words.

15 They met me trembling, the could not stand

they looked and shared in what I'd done

Some proffered their delicacies to my mouth

I drank their wine to intoxication

I dwelled among them like a king amidst the troops

Reclining on them, I was gloried.

They loved me freely, I shall love them

forever, for they have chosen as I chose!

---

15 shared in what I'd done - אשר בקרתי - literally, what I investigated, more colloquially perhaps -"checked out", thus where I had been and all my doings. Schirmann notes - השתתפו.

16. to intoxication - literally, "and I became drunk."

17. reclining on them - the image is one of the king reclining on his servants in majesterial dominion, cf. II Kings 5:18, 7:2, 7:17.

To Draguignan

The poet has become his enemies' joke and jest
and constant mockery
They gloat freely in their greed
for who restrains it, or their lust?
They trust in their wealth; while I am a humbled
wanderer, they are under their fig trees.
I am wretched; they, like a watered garden,
rise and flourish in their garden beds.
Keep their shelter out of 'Salem!
don't let them build their dwellings on Mt. Zion!
My drum and lute to a voice of weeping
have turned, and my pipes to their lament.

The poem appears in Schirmann as #407, pp. 481-482, Vol. IV, and Gross, pp. 513-514, with the heading:

> And to Draguignan he said:
> Children of Draguignan, may you have neither dew nor rain nor fields -
> for there was the shield of haGorni besmirched; let the heavens
> fight to take revenge:

1. has become - the words technically belong to the second hemistich.

5. shelter - literally, "Sukkah;" the canopy of Redemption. 'Salem- Jerusalem. The poet seeks to deny them redemption.

Let my good name in their mouths

be absent as Rabbi Meir's in the Mishnah!

Woe to the day I sojourned in a place of jackals!

woe to the day I dwelled in their domain!

Would I might live at the end of the seas -

I would roam far away from their province!

They would seek me in their chambers,

they would have me a lurker at their corner

---

7. Rabbi Meir's - given credit for the anonymous dicta and editing of the second century legal compilation called the Mishnah.
the Mishnah- literally, "their" Mishnah, but the pronoun is clearly intended for the sake of the rhyme.

10. They - the infamous and omnipresent losengier, see my note to l.17 of the poem to Arles. In the troubadour lyrics, they slander the lovers and thwart their trysts.

Or turning at night to young men

following my lust - - so they believe!

They say, like an adulterer I watch for night,

I remember the favor of their dove -

But I would flee to the ends of the earth

if I have even met their fine lady in a dream!

I almost await my day of death,

my name shall be lost, and their complaints cease.

But their day nears, and then I'll find them

beneath me, with the advent of their holy days!

My hope is in the end of days; in life,

I'll hearken, and have my fill of their barbs

---

11. following my lust - literally, "straying after my heart."

12. dove - i.e., the lady, perhaps sarcastically.

13. dream - similarly expressed in l.5 of the poem to Arles. The dream image is thus restricted to a denial of vision -- a rather unusual inversion of the yearning plaintiveness with which many troubadours invest it.

15. beneath me - the image may be intended to suggest the medieval Wheel of Fortune, whose arbitrary turn reverses the high and low.

16. my hope - Schirmann has emended Gross's " שכרי " - my reward, which seems also acceptable.

What are their deeds, or who are their fathers? he

that should be their protector and shield?

I'll curb my tongue, while time

and season still play their way.

If only the heathens would hear my songs,

I would arouse their understanding!

How I fear the day of my death

lest they make of me their icon!

From then on, they'll cease offering to an idol

and burn their incense to me.

---

19. heathens - Schirmann interprets this as a reference to the Christians. See, also, the following note.

21. idol - literally, to "Gad," a biblical object of idolatry. Schirmann, again, interprets this as a slur against the Christians, and referring to the Christian saints. The reading is consistent with the derogatory references of the second poem to ibn Devash, where, in response to Devash's "how shall a Canaanite slave speak with/ a free man" (l.13), Gorni retorts, "What's this vain fool that I should cling/ to him? How should a Hebrew cling to a Christian? "(l.20).

They'll grind my pen for old men

'there would be virility in it for their old age!

Would that they'd gather my words and carve them

in stone, their forms on tablet

May my days yet crown me with pleasure

that they might grant to me their favor!

---

22. grind my pen - an unusual idea. It represents a vivid attachment to the totemic power of objects. Freud's class essay, "Totem and Taboo," is pertinent here, as are contemporary theories of metaphor and metonym. The latter are still outdone by this particular genre, whose metonyms function affectively as well as representationally.

To the Adulterer

What have you to do desiring these strumming maidens?
do you picture yourself a lord over noblewomen?
Love a hag or an adulterous woman --
they're fitting for you, and not these maidens!

The poem appears in Schirmann's anthology as #408. I have borrowed his title. It also appears in Gross, p. 523.

The Nightmare

I am now about to lament for my desire ,
the voice of my drum has already ceased to respond.
My trespasses have prevented goodness, my friends -
how many sins and transgressions I have!
My joyful lute has become my mourner
my pipes, a voice of weeping and lament.
With the end of my desire, and exhaustion of my appetites,
the gifts and tokens of love have ceased.

The poem appears in Schirmann's anthology, pp. 483-484, as #409. I borrow the title "The Nightmare" from him. It appears also, with an English translation, in T. Carmi's recent anthology, The Anthology of Hebrew Verse (N. Y., Penguin, 1981) and in Gross, pp. 522-523, with the following heading:

> Accounted to Gorni the desirer, his last passionate words while still in life, and his remaining years were many:

1. Carmi translates "I shall now lament my desires ,/ the silenced beat of my drum." Because of the dative prefix to "desire," which is absent before "drum," I have not made "drum" an object of "lament."

2. my friends - my supporters, my advocates. The poet addresses these faithful few in his lament.

3. my joyful lute - cf. Lam. 5:15.

4. appetites - Carmi translates, "passion." See Ps. 140:9.

5 Day has descended, and the shadows have fled

No breeze is fluttering in the gardens

In my heart is a dread of death -

what hope have I, a dumb jackass!

But let my desire inflame the world's foundations,

and may clouds dwell over my tomb

And if I die while I am still young,

may my plaints descend with me to Sheol!

---

5. breeze - literally, "spirit," "wind," with its direct Hebrew connotation to the wind/breath of God "fluttering" on the waters in the Creation story.

6. dumb jackass - literally, " a colt the son of jackasses" (Zachariah 9:9).

7. clouds - the cloud of God's glory hovered over the Israelites' Ark throughout their wilderness journey. The Hebrew verse has an inverted grammatical symmetry (subject -verb/ verb-subject), literally "let my desire the foundations of the world inflame/ and dwell upon my tomb the clouds." Carmi does not translate the verb as subjunctive, but future definite: "Oh, my passion will set fire to the earth's foundations/ clouds will hover above my grave."

8. plaints - i.e., the poems .

Once I was a chaser of desires,

fabled a hellfire among the provinces,

But now they have become my destroyer,

these faded loves, which were untrue.

From far away, they shall bring to every peddlar

the dust of my tomb, to be fine ladies' powder,

The planks of my coffin shall be for barren women -

so they may give birth to sons and daughters.

My maggots, let them grind up for the stammerer,

and the mute shall utter seventy tongues.

---

9. hellfire - cf. Job 17:6. Carmi has "[my lust] was likened to [the fires of] hell."

10. Putting the consequence before what precipitates it is a lovely example of form following sense in the Hebrew. The resolution is suspended until the second hemistich, where we see the impermanence and mutability of these past loves. Carmi emends , loves "which had no virtue to them."

11. to be... powder - Gross's lacunae, "to...surround(?) fine ladies," is emended by Schirmann, similarly adopted by Carmi, and quoted by Pagis, חידוש ומסורת..., p.186, as "לשמרוקי עדינות"

13. seventy tongues - according to legend, after the failed attempt to build the Tower of Babel, human language diverged from one common tongue to the "seventy tongues" of humanity.

My hair shall be frets on instruments of song

Playerless, they'll make beautiful tunes

My girdle shall be an adulterer's belt

so he cease adultery and wantoness

And all my instruments Temple vessels shall become,

my vestments for a relic hoarded.

If only someone would pulverize my bones to dust

before they make them into icons!

---

14. playerless...tunes - literally, "they'll make tunes well, with no player." The legend refers to King David, whose harp would purportedly play of its own accord, when its frets were rippled by the garden breeze. However, it should be noted that Tristan, too, was famed as a harpist, and his musical ability had magical affect.

15. adultery and wantoness - literally, to commit adultery (there is no verb for this in English!) and to be wanton. Carmi has "to put a stop to his fornicating and whoring."

16. The pun is hard to duplicate. The Hebrew word כלי is a general term which doubles for musical instruments, and vessels or instruments of all sorts, including those used in the Temple cult. The implication here is that they shall serve as Christian relics. Carmi has "all my belongings will be declared holy relics."

17. if only someone - literally, "and who."

My sayings shall bring wisdom to the fool,

to naif and learned, understanding.

---

18. naif and learned - a merismus is clearly intended, but is difficult to literally convey. The expression is "to the youth and the wise man." The cultural association is antithetical to our own, where age is no longer associated with respect and wisdom.
understanding - literally, understandings, knowledge.

Perpignan

1 At the head of all tale-tellers' songs, I lift my tale,

as the father of all players, I rouse my pipes.

I turn this way and that, and there is none

like me in all the lands!

I arise to be the solacer of song

with comfortings I'll requite my mourners.

I shall wave to their scattered parts, for I have ransomed them

and eased the path for those I have redeemed.

General note: The precise biblical allusions of the verses have been appended to the Hebrew text. Those mentioned below are only the most essential for an English reader unfamiliar with the biblical passages in question.

1. father ... players - according to the Bible, Tubal-Cain, the son of Cain (Gen. 4:21).
   pipes - the usual translation for חלילis "flute." However, it was found that many metrical difficulties of the Hebrew were resolved by an אַי rhyme, which is plural. חלילים may be some undefined wind or percussive instrument other than the flute. See, for instance, Mishnah Bikkurim 3:3, where a percussion instrument seems to be intended.

3. mourners - i.e., the despairing songs.

4. scattered parts - again, of poetry. The image is frequent in Arabic verse, where prose is traditionally described as 'scattered," and poetry 'gathered.' The Moslem poets also described a poem as a string of pearls - gathered, obviously, by the poet.

They have appointed me among my brothers as prince
they have established me elect among the*lords,
I emerged a cypress among the*briars
and rose as myrtle 'midst the*thistles.
I remain alone the prophet of song,
my intellect is singled out.
There's no death in me - I'll be taken up like Tishbi,
raised up like the angels and the*gods!
My myriad talents exalt my heart,
the might of my deeds transports me!
Who can stand up to me in song?
though he ascend like dust, he'll be dung on my shoes!
If I rejoice when the mighty ones sing in chorus,
when I shout forth, they'll all bow at my feet!

---

5. the lords - the asterisks indicate that I have changed the literal "my" lords to the definite article. The "my," as in many subsequent verses, seems merely present for rhyming purposes, and makes little contextual sense.

6. the thorns, the thistles - see n. 5.

8. Tishbi - i.e., Elijah the prophet, who ascends to heaven in a fiery chariot (I Kings 19:4 ff).
angels and the gods - the gods, see n. 5. The "angels and gods" could equally be "mighty and great ones." Both words are somewhat enigmatic, since, like many of the Hebrew terms for divine beings, they also apply to human positions of power.

And woe to the wretched land of Provence -

not one of my community seeks out my verse!

If I have now arisen

to play well, and these fools hate me -

let them hate me! and then my glory will be greater!

can such a people tell my praises?

15 Far away, princes mention me,

all the more those who know well my deeds.

When I offer my verses to <u>their</u> mouths

they lust for watermelon or scallions!

On the day my hand lays down my pipes,

_____ ? _____

Aha! in Provence , there are many jealous of me,

in my own circle, and within my own borders.

---

12. <u>woe to</u> - Eccl.

13. <u>hate</u> - more literally, "abhor," "loathe," but "hate" seemed more in keeping with the tempo of the verse.

16. <u>their</u> - i.e., to the ignoramuses of Provence.
<u>watermelon or scallions</u> - the rebellious Hebrews in the desert reproached Moses for their fare of manna, and recalled fondly the Egyptian diet of watermelon and scallions - cf. Nu. 11:5 ff.

17. the line is corrupt, and מחוללי may be a scribal dittography, as it follows so closely upon חלילי .

They are my brothers, and I myself their brother -

so how did my defenders become my enemies?

What fault do these fools find in me?

let them test me, and I'll remove my dross!

The day I abandon and give up on my companions,

should I leave them - I'll burn incense to the *gods!

For many days, they've gone without God's teaching,

and no teacher, woe to them and me!

They've run after wealth, hysterically,

they've called these *misers princes,

when everything they give is only "possibly,"

a drawn-out hope and "maybe."

---

19. defenders - literally, "those who plead for me."

21. the gods - see n. 5.

23. hysterically - בתמהון / לבבם - an uncommon, albeit not rare, enjabment of the hemistiches. Literally, "in stupefaction of the heart," "assourdissement." The Golden Age poets would never have broken the hemistiche caesura. By Gorni's time, however, even though enjabment is far from the rule, it is not an infrequent exception.

and there is none in all the lands (?) - the cup shall pass
also to you, Provence, daughter of my travail -
Lift up your eyes, and see the land Sepharad,
and there, Bedersi, the great ones' darling
The father of all who hold the lute of verse
the greatest of all who play upon the harp!
From the time the sun comes out east of your land
until evening as I await the *shadows,
I favor your dust, more than the dust of Eden.
For Bedersi's sake, you are dear to me.
I have pined remembering how long it shall be
until I see him, and then I shall prance like a calf!

---

25. there is none in all the lands - the meaning is unclear, perhaps to imply 'no land escapes its fate - to you, too, Provence, the cup shall pass ..."
the cup shall pass - i.e., your turn will come, cf. Lam 4:21. See also the second poem to ibn Devash,
daughter of my travail - or, "daughter of my sorrow."

26. Sepharad - the Hebrew term for the region which became Spain; mistakenly derived from Obadiah 20.
Bedersi - Abraham haBedersi (i.e., of Béziers), poet and wealthy patron residing at this time in Perpignan. According to the vidas links between the poems, Gorni curried Bedersi's favor in hopes of remunerative appreciation. Bedersi's vituperative replies, which survive, suggest his wish was somewhat less fulfilled.

Were it not for the wars of the kings and his ministers,

he would have come if I had drawn him by my cords.

Just hearing of him, unseen, has made me desire him

I would have sought him, but I don't know the *path.

Yet many have told me of his glory,

young and old have recounted to me.

If someone could draw his picture for my eyes

engrave it in red upon my walls,

Then I might look upon it to quiet my groanings

and the fevered heart which blazes in my loins!

Were they to put me in an iron vise,

I would say his name and blast my bonds -

---

31. the wars - Schirmann suggests this is a reference to the wars between Philip II of France and Pedro III of Aragon, which would date the poem around 1293.
he would have come .... - one would expect the pronouns to be reversed, i.e., I would have come to him.

35. groanings - literally, roars.
fevered - literally, heated. In medieval medical science, there were four major bodily systems, corresponding to four humors and the four elements. A "heated heart" would be a source of emotional disturbance, anger, disease, etc.

36. bonds - נבלי are, correctly, flasks or skins for containment of fluid. Steinschneider indicates uncertainty about the word, which may possibly be כבלי, "bonds".

36 -37. The "name" has the power to transform the poet's hypothetical situation. Similarly, in ll. 34-35, the iconic image of Bedersi can transform his emotional distress to a state of calm. Gorni

Were they to bind me in thick ropes,

I would surely sever the *cords!

You make your handiwork great, Abram,

shile the day is short, and the workers idle,

For tokens between my eyes I shall place them

on my garments they are the *fringes

But don't let your heart glory in my submission,

when I cry "please, my lord" to you, or "help!"

my son (?) for my hand has grown mighty as your hand

to play, like David, song upon my instrument.

---

frequently resorts to metonymic images which retain a totemic, affective power. The frequency of such 'affective metonyms' appear in his extant work is striking, and the poetic effect both unusual and powerful. See my discussion of Gorni's poetic techniques, p.

38. handiwork - literally, work/deeds of your hands, i.e., the poems.
while the day ... idle - Pirke Abot 2:15.

39. tokens ... fringes - the familiar language of Dt. 6:8, 11:18, Ex. 13:15, from the daily prayer service. Here, again it refers to the tokens of song.

41. my son - unclear.
David - King David, who was renowned as a harpist as well as warrior, and employed to soothe King Saul.
my hand ... to play - The synecdoche of the hand or pen is commonly associated with the act of poetic creation, and Gorni is not unique in exploiting it. Within the extant corpus of his work, it is a recurring motif. Compare, for instance, the song

Am I Shiloni because I was so frightened

when you came out to attack my rear?

he who was sent to wander in the land -

Is there one to light up the eyes of the benighted through song?

---

to Arles, ll. 19 - 21, and l.23, and the song to Draguignan, l.22. Clearly, there is equally intended a double meaning: as the hand/pen comes to stand symbolically for creative ability, they also euphemistically carry the allusion to the speaker's sexual potency. This conflation of poetic and physical virility, whether conscious or unconscious, is as old as poetry itself. Its coy and self-conscious articulation in medieval Hebrew secular poetry may be linked to the observable materialization of themes and motifs in the post-classical period. The poetry of Gorni's time is more grounded in the earthly subject, and evinces a love for the particular, the physical detail. This may be seen in the poetry of Gorni's contemporary, Todros Abulafia of Toledo, who, in addition to his strikingly physical love poems, may be credited with the first "salacious" poetry (see "Courtly Love ....." unpublished article by Ray Scheindlin, p. 21).
As for the sexual associations to the image of the hand, I offer one of Blondheim's notes to his 1927 edition of a macaronic "wedding-night" poem (REJ #81, 1927). He comments on the line, * יש בגיד נותן טעם
מואס אֵה צי קורטיים מיטיר

> est bien connu comme euphémisme pour "membre viril". Cette phrase, et d'autres aussi de notre poeme... se recontrent dans le text suivant ... je réimprime le poeme en entier, pace pudici lectoris... (p.)

* The mss. is dated 1452, but the epithalamia genre, albeit minor, was long known, and adopted from the Arab tradition. Blondheim translates and transcribes:

> "Il y a dans le tendon ce qui donne un goût:
> Mot a ci corteis métier."

42. The tens exchange between the poet Shiloni and Bedersi is extant, and discussed by Schirmann in his article, "עיונים בקובץ השירים והסליחות של אברהם הברדעי" בתוך לתולדות השירה והדראמה העברית (ירושלים, מוסד ביאליק, 1979) ע' 397-420.

They've scared him, and in shame he returned to his land -

and you think his song is to be compared to mine?

45. When he has caused his brothers' hearts to swoon like his heart

and seen the adorned one like the rest of my defamers?

Yet here I am, Gorni, a wall

of brass, and I will answer my inquisitors brashly!

Let them all come do battle for me -

to all who come I shall divide the *spoils

I shall vaunt myself -- who will account me

a deceitful man, my ruses with me?

---

44. his song to be compared to mine - literally, "his song my proper due", or "my lot", i.e., you think his lot, or portion (poetic creations) are (like) mine?

45. When he ... heart - the reference is to the cowardly soldier whose fear infects the rest of the troops (Dt. 20:8, Mishnah Sotah 8:5).

48. - 51. There can be little doubt as to the double entendre here. Its history is as old as poetry, no doubt. The virility of the poet is measured in his ability to "father" verses, and his pen is the instrument by which he accomplishes this. Gorni's temporary pecuniary indisposition, he claims, has not affected his literary potency.

Who of the lofty is exalted and proud,

as powerful as the children of my giants?

Though I am brought low, I will yet cut down the *high ones,

and place my low ones in the heights.

Though all the rivers cannot fill the sea

my rivers fill both sea and dry land!

I shall set the pearls of song onto your crown,

I won't cast my pearls before these *fools!

My ways have been concealed from men --

but come out with me and follow in my paths!

While I live, my defenders, plead with me!

and ministers, clutch my coattails!

When I die, the glory of song will descend with me,

the *slain will be many, the day I am gathered in!

---

49. children ... giants - again, his poems.

51. cannot, can - my additions. Literally, "don't", or "will not."

52. cast ... fools - a standard cliché. See Hebrew note for similar expressions. Davidson's thesaurus of proverbs, for instance, lists "don't cast pearls before swine, or impart wisdom to one who cannot value it." "Pearls" are a common image for poetry, and the Arabic poet often described his poem as a string of pearls (see my note to 1.4). See also in the New Testament, Matthew 3:7. The epigram is ubiquitous.

55. slain - again, the poems.

When I go down, crowned princes and lords will be desolate

and rulers wail

The players will no longer have strength to give birth

the eyes of the *unborn shall not see the light.

I do not sing to exalt myself among this generation

you've known my toil and tribulation

But lest my people forget their tongue

so the remnant of my soldiers utter greater eloquence

That they may recall my songs, from generation to generation,

as the father of all players, I rouse my pipes.

---

56. and lords - the words properly belong in the second hemistiche, although their predicate is the same as "princes'" predicate, i.e., will be desolate.

57. unborn - literally, fetuses, embryos. The mataphor is extended from ll. 55-56. The players (i.e., poets) will no longer have the strength to create, and their unborn poems shall not see the light.

58. this generation - literally, "the generation."

פרפיניין

ויטב אלהים לגרני ויתהלך בארץ לתור מנוחה ויבוא עד פרפיניין וימצא שם המשורר ר' אברהם פרופ' בדרשי וימצא חן בעיניו ויעש לו בתים.

בְּרֹאשׁ שִׁיר מוֹשְׁלִים אֶשָּׂא מְשָׁלַי   כְּאַב כָּל נוֹגְנִים אָעִיר חֲלִילַי
וְכֹה וָכֹה אֲנִי פוֹנֶה וְאֵין אִישׁ   בִּלְעָדַי בְּכָל אַרְצוֹת גְּלִילַי
וְשָׂמְתִּי לִהְיוֹת לַשִּׁיר מְנַחֵם   וּנְחוּמִים אֲשַׁלֵּם לַאֲבֵלַי
לִנְדָּחָיו אֲנוֹפֵף פִּי פְּדִיתִים   וְהֵקַלְתִּי מְסִלָּה אֶל גְּאוּלַי
וְזִמְּנִי מִשְּׁאָר אַחַי לְנָגִיד   הֱקִימוֹנִי וּבָחוּר מֵאֲצִילַי
וְיָצָאתִי בְּרוֹשׁ בֵּין נַעֲצוּצַי   וְעָלִיתִי הֲדַס בֵּין נַהֲלוּלַי
וְנִשְׁאַרְתִּי לְשִׁיר נָבִיא לְבַדִּי   וְנִפְרַדְתִּי לְהַפְרֵד שְׂכָלַי

השיר, המופיע בכתב-היד מס' 128 של ספריית מינכן, נמצא במהדורה של מ' שטיינשניידר, בחותם תוכנית Hebraische Synonymik לאברהם בדרשי, מהדורה ג', אמסטרדם, 1865, ע' 5-6. שם הוא מופיע, כנראה, בלא ניקוד או הגאות.

המשקל: המרובה (ᵕ – – – ᵕ – – – ᵕ – –).

1. כאב כל נוגנים- השווה בר' ד:כא. חלילי- בגלל המשקל, החרוז ברבים. אפשר שמילת "חליל" לא מתכוונת לצורת הכלי המודרני. עיין, למשל, במשנה ביכורים ג:ג 8 "הֶחָלִיל מַכֶּה;" אפשר שהכלי מין תוף, או חלילי יווני.

2. וכה וכה אני פונה ואין איש- לפי שמ' ב:יב. גלילי- בשום מקום, בכל ארצות הגלות, לפי יש' ח:כג.

3. ונחומים אשלם לאבלי- לפי יש' נז:יח.

4. לנדחיו- זאת אומרת, לחלקי השיר. בתורת השיר הערבית, מתארים את השירה כ"natham" (נאספת) ואת הפרוזה כ"nathar" (מפוזרת). גם אפשר שגרני קורא לכל התפוצה - היחידים המפוזרים בארצות הגלות. מסלה- יש בשטיינשניידר "מחלה," ותקנתי לפי יש' סב:י. גאולי- שטיינשניידר העתיק "גואלי" אבל אף הוא מזכיר צורך לתקן לפי המשקל.

5. וזמני- בשטיינשניידר, "זמני." צורה זו ידועה, למשל, אצל יעקב בן-אלעזר, מתוך "ספר המשלים" (שירמן, השירה העברית... כרך ג', ע' 211) "זִמְּנִי אֵיךְ נְדִיבֵי עָם/ תְּשׁוּ מִבְּנֵי בְלִיַּעַל?" אמנם, "זמני" פה לא מוקבל ל"הקימוני" ולא אפילו הגיוני. תקנתי, יש צורך להוודות, לצורה לא נמצאית הרבה, אבל הגיונית יותר.

6. ברוש בין נעצוצי- ו-הדס בין נהלולי- לפי יש' נה:יג; יש' ז:יט.

7. ונשארתי....לבדי- השווה יש' מט:כא, דניאל י:ח. שכלי- המילה מנוקדת שְׂכָלַי, לפי המשקל.

ואי-סות כי להלקח כתשבי / להעלות כאראלי ואלי
ירימגן רב סגלות לבבי / וירהיבו בנפשי עז פעלי
ומי כשיר לפני יעמד - אף / פעם יגבה יהי דמן געלי
ואם ארן ברן יחד בני אל / פרעי יכרעו כלם לרגלי
ואין ארץ פרוינצאה האמלה / ואין דורש מליצי מקהלי
ואם רמלי ושקמתי כהיום / לבגן טוב יתעבוני אוילי
יתעבוני ואז יגדל כבודי- / הגוי כזה יתפה מהללי?
מרחקים בגידים יזמרוני / ואף כי יודעי טוב יעללי
פתאי מן מליצותי לפיהם / אבטיח יאוו או בצלי

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8. ואי-סות- צורה קצת משונה. ראה באיוב כב:ל - "ימלט אי-נקי." כתשבי- אליהו. עיין ב מל'א, יט:ד ואילך. כאראלי- לפי יש' לג:ז.

9. וירהיבו...עז פעלי-יש בשטיינשנידר "הרחיבו" ותקנתי לפי תה' קלח:ג.

10. דמן-לפי מל'ב, ט:לז, למשל, או ירמ' ט:כא.

11. ארן ברן- לפי איוב לח:ז.

12. אמלה- לפי יחזק' טז:ל.

13. ושקמתי- לפי שופט' ה:ז. יתעבוני אוילי- מובן, אעפ"כ, מעניין להזכיר את הפסוק בתה' נג:ב - "השחיתו והתעיבו עול," השמע המילים "אויל"/ "עול." הופעתה השנייה של המילה "יתעבוני" בפסוק הבא מצביעה, אולי, על שגייה בהעתק.

14. מהללי- המילה מופיעה רק פעם אחת בתנ"ך, במשלי כז:כא.

16. אבטיח יאוו או בצלי- לפי במד' יא:ה.

ויום תשכב ימין גלי חלילי / מחולי אשכחה לעבד פסילי
אהה לי! בפרובינצאה רב מקנאים / מתי סודי אשר תקצה גבולי
ואחי הם ואנכי אחיהם / ואיך לי בהפכה אויבים פלילי?

והנה בי ימצאו עול פתאים / תחנוני ואסירה בדילי
ויום אשש מידעי וארפם / ואעזבם אקשר אל פעלי
ורב ימים ללא תורת אלהים / ללא מורה אהה להם ואללי
ירוצון אחרי ההון ותמהון. / לבבם קראו שוע לכילי
וכל מתן ידיהם רק ב"אפשר" / ותוחלת ממשכה ו"אולי"
ואין מכל ארצות תעבר כוס / עלי ארצך פרובינצאה בת חבלי

שאי עיניך ראי אדמת ספרד / ושם הפדרשי חמדת גדולי
אבי כל תופשי כנור מליצה / גדול הפורשים על פי נבלי

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17. מחולי אשכחה לעבד פסילי- שטיינשנידר העתיק: "מחוללי אשכחה לעבוד פסילי." אינני בטוחה איך לתקן את המילים. המילה "מחוללי" באה מיד אחרי "חלילי," ואפשר שיש טעות פה. השורה כולה לא ברורה - גלי חליל? יש אפילו אפשרות שהוא רצה לומר "גלי חללי" מפני שיש הרבה דוגמאות המשתמשות במילה "חלל" והפועל "שכב" בתנ"ך; למשל, עיין ביחזק'לב:כ-לא.

19. פלילי- לפי דב' לב:לא.

20. אסירה בדילי- לפי יש' א:כה.

21. אשש-לפי איוב ט:כו.

23. קראו שוע לכילי- לפי יש' לב:ה.

25. תעבר כוס- לפי איכה ד:כא; כלומר, לא לעבור על גורלך. חבלי- מצוקותי; השווה הושע יג:יג.

26. ספרד- נזכרת בתנ"ך בעבדיה כ.

27. אבי כל תופשי כנור- לפי בר' ד:כא. הפורשים על פי נבלי- לפי עמוס ו:ה.

כצאת ממזרח שמש לארצה   לעת ערב אחכה אל צללי
אחונן מעפר עדן עפרה   למען תהרשי בעמת אלי
ודלותי לזכרון עוד לימים   ואראנה ופשתי כעגלי
ולולי מלחמות מלה ושרים   כבר בא אם משכביו כחבלי
חמדתיהו לשמע לא למראה   אבקשהו ולא אדע שבילי
אבל לי ספרו רבים כבודו   והגידו זקני לי ועולי
תמונתו לעיני פי יתאר   ובששר חקוקה על כתלי
ובה אביט להשקיט שאגותי   וחם לב התלהט בין כסלי
ואם בנפשי בכף ברזל יביאון   זכרתיהו ונפוץ כנבלי
ואלו אסרוני בעבותים   אנתקהו כהנתק פתילי
בעגלות ידק אברם תגבר   ביום קצר והפועלים עצלי

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28. ממזרח שמש ל- מהמזרח; עיין, למשל, ביש' נט:יט, או מלאכי א:יא.

30. דלותי- לפי תה' קטז:ו. ופשתי- לפי מלאכי ג:כ. פירושו של רש"י לפסוק זה להשמין, ואולי המשורר ידע את פירוש זה, משום שהוא שם את המילה בניגוד ל"דלותי."

31. ראה את הערתי לתרגום האנגלי.

32. לא למראה- לפי יש' נג:ב.

33. ועולי- ונערי. מקור המילה איננו תנ"כי, אלא, לפי אבן-שושן, באסתר רבה ג'-"עולה אחת שנשתירה לו."

34. ובששר- ובאדום. עיין בירמ' כב:יד, וביחזק' כג:יד.

35. ובה אביט- יש בשטיינשנידר "ובא אביא" ותקנתי לפי המשמעות.

36. נפוץ- יש בשטיינשנידר "ונפצתי" ותקנתי לפי המשקל וגם לפי שופ' ז:יט. נבלי- לפי ירמ' מח:יב.

37. אסרוני בעבותים- לפי שופ' טו:יג, ויחזק' ג:כה. אנתקהו...פתילי- לפי שופ' טז:ט.

38. ביום קצר...עצלי- עיין בפרקי אבות ב:טו-"המלאכה מרובה והפועלים עצלים; כנראה, "עצילי" איננה הצורה העדיפה אלא הוצרכה בגלל החרוז. תגבר- בשטיינשנידר, "הגבר."

ובין עיני לטוטפות אשימן   ועל כנפי בגדי הם גדילי
ואל ירום בהמנעי לבבך,   בקראי "בי אדני" לך, ו"אחלי!"

בני מי גברה ידי מידך   לנצח מדוד שיר מכלי
השילוני אני מי החרדתי   ביום צאתך לזנב נחשלי
אשר שלח לשוטט באדמות   היש מאיר בשיר עיני אפלי?
וחתתו בבשתו שב לארצו   ושירו נחשב לך לחבלי?
והוא המס לבב אחיו בלמו   וראה הענק בשאר רכילי
והיום הנני גרני לחומת   נחשת אענה עזות לשואלי
מי יתן ורבים ילחמו לי   לכל יבא אחלק את שללי
ואשתבח מי זה יחשבני   כאיש נפתל ועמדי התלי
ואל בי מגבוהים רם וגאה   והחסן כמו ילדי נפילי

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39. ובין עיני...אשימן- לפי דב' ו:ח, דב' יא:יח, שמ' יג:טו. הנוסח ידוע מהתפלה. גדילי- לפי דב' כב:יב.

40. אחלי- תעזור לי! השווה מל'ב, ה:ג, תה' קיט:ה.

42. השילוני- הנביא אחיה השילוני מופיע בתנ"ך בספר מל'א, יא:כט, יב:טו, טו:כט, ודברי הימים ב, ט:כט, י:טו. אמנם יש לשער שגרני מדבר על המשורר השילוני שגם בקר אצל בדרשי. ראה הערתי לתרגום האנגלי.

44. וחתתו בבשתו- המילים מופיעות ביחד במקרים רבים בתנ"ך. עיין, למשל, בירמ' מח:א, מח:ט, מח:לט.

45. המס לבב אחיו- לפי דב' כ:ח. גם עיין במשנה סוטה ח:ה. הענק-קשוט. השווה, למשל, שיר השירים ד:ט.

46. לחומת נחשת- גרני השתמש באותו דמוי בשירה אחרת,"לארבע הקהלות," (כאן, וגם מס' 404 בתוך שירמן, השירה העברית ע'475),שורה 6. עזות- לא מילה תנכ"ת.

47. לכל יבא- הזכרת לפתיחת ההגדה? ("כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח.")

48. נפתל- לפי משלי ח:ח. התלי- לפי איוב יז:ב.

49. והחסן- השווה עמוס ב:ט, יש' א:לא. כוונת המילה – עז.

אֲנִי נִכְנָע וְאַף רָמִים אֲגַדֵּעַ   וְלַמָּרוֹם אֲנִי מֵשִׂים שְׁפָלַי
וְהַיָּם לֹא יְמַלְּאוּ כָּל נְחָלִים   יְמַלְּאוּ יָם וְיַבֶּשֶׁת נְחָלַי
עֲלֵי גִזְרָה פְּנִינֵי שִׁיר אֲשַׁבֵּץ   וְלֹא אַשְׁלִיךְ פְּנִינַי סגל נְבָלַי

דְּרָכַי נִצְפְּנוּ מֵעֵין פְּנֵי אִישׁ   וְצֵא אַתְּ בְּעִקְּבֵי מַעְגָּלַי
בְּעוֹדִי חַי מְלִיצַי תִּפְצְרוּ בִי   וְשָׂרִים אֶחֱזוּ כַּנְפֵי מְעִילַי
בְּמוֹתִי – אַחֲרֵי יֵרֵד כְּבוֹד שִׁיר   בְּיוֹם הֵאָסְפִי רַבּוּ חֲלָלַי
וְנַפְשׁוֹ פְּרָדְתִּי מְנֻזָּרִים   וְאַדִּירִים יְהֵילִילוּ הַמּוֹשְׁלַי
וְאֵין כֹּחַ לְלֵדָה נוֹגְנִים עוֹד   וְאוֹר לֹא יֶחֱזוּ עֵינֵי נְפִילַי
וּבַדּוֹר לֹא לְהִשָּׁמֵר אֲשׁוֹרֵר   יְדַעְתֶּם אֶת יְגִיעַי וַעֲמָלַי
אֲבָל פֶּן יִשְׁכְּחוּ עַמִּי לְשׁוֹנָם   וְצַחוֹת יֶהְגּוּ יֶתֶר חֵילַי
לְמַעַן יִזָּכְרוּ שִׁירַי לְדוֹר דּוֹר   כְּאַב כָּל נוֹגְנִים אָעִיר חֲלִילַי.

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50. אגדע- השווה יש' סה:ב, א:י, מל'ב, א:יב. פניני שיר- דמות רגילה וידועה. היא נמצאית בהמון מקומות: בה.חכמוני ג 44, חריזי כותב "ר' משה בן עזרא מושה הפנינים ממליצות הרעיונים," ואבן גבירול כתב חיבור שלם בשם "מבחר הפנינים." שם מוצאים דוגמא קרובה לזו של גרני: "אל תשליכו הפנינים לפני החזירים, ואל תמסרו החכמה למי שאינו יודע מעלתה"(אוצר המשלים והפתגמים לישרשל דוידזון, ירושלים, מוסד רב קוק, תשי"ז) ע' 103 מס' 1600. דוידזון גם מזכיר פתגם זה: "המורה כסיל יסודות עלומים/ כזורק לחזירים הפנינים" (ממשיכת האורות). הפתגם גם מפוזר בספרות הערבית, ויש עוד מקור ידוע בברית החדשה, מטיו ג:ז. הדמות (וכן המאמר) עממית למדי.

53. נצפנו...בעקבי מעגלי-לפי תה' נו:ז, תה' עז:כ. מעגלי- דרכי; ראה, למשל, תה' כג:ג, משלי ד:יא.

54. אחזו כנפי מעילי- משחק מילים. המילים מופיעות באיוב לח:יג בנוסח "לאחוז בכנפות הארץ," וגרני הופך את הכנף לחלק של בגד.

55. ביום האספי- לפי דב' לב:נ, בו מדובר במשה.

56. אדירים- השווה דב'ה' ב,כג:כ. יהילילו- יש בשטיינשניידר "והילילו" והוא עצמו מציע תיקון זה.

57. כח ללדה- יש בשטיינשניידר "ללדת" ותקנתי משום שני סבות. אחת, לפי יש' לז:ג, מל'ב, יט:יג. סיבה שנייה היא שמוש אצל גרני "לארבע הקהלות" שורה 11. נפילי- השווה תה'נח:ט, קהלת ו:ג, איוב ג:טז.

59. צחות- לפי יש' לב:ד.

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In addition, I should like to call attention to two entries in the Encyclopedia Judaica:

----"Isaac ben Abraham haGorni" Vol. 9, pp. 14-15.

----"Poetry: Medieval Hebrew Secular Poetry" Vol. 13, pp. 682-690.

and, of course, "last but not least," the Mandelkern Concordance and the Hebrew Bible.