

RABBI MOSE ARRAGEL AND THE ART OF THE PROLOGUE IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY CASTILE

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The intense engagement in translations of the Jews in medieval Iberia [Tenth-Fifteenth centuries] is a well known phenomenon. It has been frequently studied since even before Steinschneider's magnum opus¹. Entire fields such as the history of medieval science or philosophy are unthinkable without attention to this phenomenon. And yet, the translators' personalities appear to be rather opaque. They certainly did not lead to the kind of folkloric tales about their lives and loves that we find in the cases of Yehuda Ha-Levi, Abraham ibn Ezra or Maimonides. Interest in the medieval translators would seem to be an acquired taste, a matter of little consequence to the public at large. The exception that proves the rule is a picture, the best known and most frequently reprinted representation of a medieval Jewish translator- the illumination which appears near the Prologue, at the beginning of Arragel's Bi-

1. M. Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen uebersetzungen des mittelalters und die Juden als dolmetscher. Ein beitrag zur literaturgeschichte des mittelalters, meist nach handschriftlichen quellen*, Berlin, Kommissionsverlag des Bibliographischen bureaux, 1893. The translation of Arragel has given rise to a large corpus of studies in diverse disciplines; history of art, exegesis, textual history, biblical studies, history of the romance language. Not all of them are related to our theme. See for example Lorenzo Amigo Espada, "El influjo del latín en el vocabulario de la Biblia de Alba: algunas voces" *Helmantica: Revista de filología clásica y hebrea* 46/ 139-141, (1995), pp. 183-200; Luis Manuel Girón-Negrón, "La Biblia de Arragel y la edición de traducciones bíblicas del siglo XV." *Helmántica* 190 (2012) pp. 291-309.

blia [Maqueda, 1422-33]. It is part of the prefatory, prologal matter or presentation scheme of the codex.

The prologal matter has features which recall the composition scheme of "presentation scenes", an art form of ancient lineage². Some of the details of this visual feature of the prologue have attracted attention leading to hypotheses about its relations to reality. The attitudes of the illuminators/painters to the translator would be reflected in details such as the kneeling position³, the "Jewish badge"⁴ or distinctive sign, even the beard⁵

2. Henry P. McGuire, "Abaton and Oikonomia: St. Neophytos and the Iconography of the Presentation of the Virgin," in *Medieval Cyprus, Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki*, ed. Nancy Patterson Sevcenko, Christopher Moss, Princeton, 1999, 95-105. In the Vienna Dioscorides there is a dedication page in which the princess Anicia Juliana holding a small book and, attended by Prudence with a larger volume, receives a copy of the present codex from a *putto*. The iconography of Arragel and Guzman contrasts with that of the thirteenth century scene of Faraj ibn Salim and Charles D'Anjou. As a token of his esteem for the translator, Charles of Anjou ordered that on the original copy of the manuscript of the "Continens" (MS. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Fonds lat. 6912) the portrait of Faraj should be drawn beside his own by Friar Giovanni of Monte Cassino, the illuminator. See Steinschneider, *Hebr. Uebers.* p. 974. See also James Finn Cotter, "The book within the book in medieval illumination" *Florilegium* (1993) 107-139.

3. At the Bryn Mawr College Library, MS 7, -i.e. the *Constitutiones Clementinae* by Pope Clement V, Southern France, mid-14th century, - fol. 1 contains an illumination. The miniature shows a Pope, probably John XXII, seated on a throne in a papal palace and receiving a copy of the book from Johannes Andrea. At the British Library, Harley 3751 is also from the 14th century, and also includes the same work, and its fol. 1 also contains a presentation scene. Harley 4430, of the last quarter of the fifteenth century is a Valerius Maximus with the presentation scene at f 33. Bodleian Library, Bodl. 211, is a manuscript of pseudo-Roger Bacon, *De retardatione accidentium senectutis*. The illuminations are by an Italian artist probably working outside Italy in the 15th century. The illumination on fol. 1r is a presentation scene. In all of these illuminations the author kneels before a figure on a throne. St John's College, Cambridge, MS H.5 f.1r depicts a man -the translator?- who hands a book to a seated nobleman, possibly Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham while courtiers stand by. The MS is Stephen Scrope's Middle English translation of Christine de Pizan's moralistic work *Epistre Othéa*, c.1450-55. None of the authors kneeling and presenting is Jewish.

4. Rachel Vishnitzer, "Illuminated Haggadahs" *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Oct., 1922), pp. 193-218. See also Sonia Fellous. *Histoire de la Bible de Moïse Arragel*. Paris 2003. Even the badge, one of the oldest subjects of medieval Jewish history, is not as simple as it appears, especially in a courtly frame. Numerous court Jews obtained exemption from wearing the badge.

5. Is the beard, similarly, a clear and unambiguous representation of Jewish subservice which needs no discussion? Joseph Hoffman, "Piero della Francesca's "Flagellation". A Reading from Jewish History" *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 44 Bd., H. 4 (1981), pp. 340-357, produces ten interpretations of one beard by art historians of Piero della Francesca's "Flagellation". His own lends credence to A. Rubens. The cultural resonances of beards in fifteenth century Spain cannot rely exclusively on the frequently translated Statutes of Va-

and the folds⁶ of the cape have been searched for historical significance. The very space or size of the prologal miniature is seen as significant: only a few illuminations –in that large book of more than 300 miniatures– take up a whole page, as does this particular illumination. And yet, everyone agrees that such features of fifteenth century realism as the attempts to characterize individuality by means of facial expressions-i.e. what we expect from Jorge Ingles or the Hispano Flemish school- are absent in this work. The presentation can hardly have taken place at the time of the book's completion. Despite the relatively meagre data on don Luis, it is known that he was engaged in the battlefield at the time. The question of realism and representation, thus, confronts us at the very beginning, at the Prologue of this fifteenth century Castilian work. Naive readings of the visual aspects of the prologal matter may lead us to question and examine other aspects of the introductory matter including the Prologue's narrative of the Arragel project.

lladolid [1412] which order Jews to keep their beards. In numerous visual representations of Christians –e.g. Kings– of the period [e.g. on coins] it seems to stand for masculinity. On the *hombres peludos* motif see Roger Bartra, *El salvaje en el espejo* Mexico 1996. More relevant for fifteenth century *hombres peludos* is Santiago Lopez Rios Moreno, "El motivo del hombre salvaje en la tradición castellana medieval de las razas monstruosas" Madrid U. Complutense 1996. Lopez Rios Moreno studies this motif comparatively: in literature, translations from Latin to the vernacular and folklore on the hairy man. On the hairy man in an Hispano-Jewish text see E. Gutwirth, "The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Jewish Historiography" *Jewish History:Festschrift C.Abramsky* (ed. A.Rapoport-Albert) (London 1988) 141-161.

6. Vishnitzer's pioneering study (see supra) draws attention to the long "grayish" mantle with deep folds and places it and the Biblia in a period which is marked by –and only by– the attacks of 1391 and the Expulsion of 1492. Folds in drapery are a staple of art historical studies, particularly when (in contrast with the Toledan masters of the Arragel Bible) the talent and care invested in the drawing/painting/sculpture are visible, as in the case of Villard de Honnecourt, where Carl F Barnes Jr discerns about six steps in the composition. The centrality of copying from patterns (rather than from observations of reality or examination of textiles) has been emphasized by Francis Ames-Lewis. It could be argued that the lack of preliminary and close analysis of the Arragel Bible's "draperies" or folds before arriving at far reaching conclusions is related (not to similar sustained or systematic studies of drapery but) to assumptions about the historical background. See Carl F Barnes Jr, "The Drapery Rendering Technique of Villard de Honnecourt" *Gesta*, Vol. 20, No. 1, [= Essays in Honor of Harry Bober] (1981), pp. 199-206. Francis Ames-Lewis, "Drapery "Pattern"-Drawings in Ghirlandaio's Workshop and Ghirlandaio's Early Apprenticeship" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Mar, 1981), pp. 49-62

I

As is well known, the Bible, Talmud [Mishna, Gemara,] could not have provided a model for medieval Prologue writing in Jewish communities. Sa`adyah Gaon [b. Fayyûm 882 -d. Baghdad 942] seems in this, as in so many other cases, a pioneer in his efforts at composing prologues. By the fifteenth century, however, this reluctance was less than relevant, a thing of the distant past. Jewish authors, educated in Jewish texts, had, by then, a Jewish prologal tradition. By then, there were texts in Hebrew circulating in the juderias which could be models of prologal art. Not all of them were brief efforts. In the kingdom of Mallorca-Roussillon, Duran's Prologue to the *Ma`aseh Efod* [1403] is not only extensive but has some degree of intellectual autonomy. Strictly speaking, from the perspective of Quellenforschung there would seem to be no need to search outside the rich Hebrew prologal tradition when analyzing a fifteenth century text produced by literate Iberian Jews, let alone by a Rabbi. The Rabbi, however, does not write in Hebrew.

Studies on medieval prologues by Jews and judeo-conversos have underlined a number of formal features which became conventional. These do not support clear cut distinctions between the Jewish and the non-Jewish prologues. Some random examples of these would be general *petitio benevolentiae*; and, within it, the *humilitas* topos; some more precise would be the dedication to a son for example. There are others. In some, there is attention to the language of the composition- this is particularly the case with translations. Their prologues seem to have developed further sub-conventions. The mention of literal versus non literal translations was one of these. The *utilitas* or the *accessus* would be additional examples.

Arragel's Biblia is not only or "purely" a translation, but is intimately bound with the labours of biblical exegesis which constitute a major concern of the work preserved in the codex. They are represented in the glosses, of course, but they also inform the illuminations and the translation. The tradition of medieval Hebrew Bible exegesis itself seemed to involve composing prologues. Those by Abraham ibn Ezra or Nahmanides still open a standard printed edition of the Hebrew Bible, the *Miqra'ot Gedolot*. Literary/poetical elements are not absent. In thirteenth century Gerona, Nahmanides prologue to his Bible Commentary contains a simile: the distance between the

egg of the ant in relation to the outer sphere of the universe is smaller than his inadequacy –like Arragel’s– for the task of commenting on the Bible. Somewhat later than Arragel, but also in fifteenth century Iberia, there would arise the field of modern prologues to Bibles: biblical propadeutics. The fifteenth century scholar from the Iberian peninsula, don Ishaq Abravanel and his role in this field have long since been noted. This has been the view even amongst the many who have been highly critical or at least sceptical about Abravanel’s contributions in other areas. This is not an anecdotal issue, but an important part-if not the origin- of modern Bible readings. The influence of Abravanel on readers of Latin, in early modern Europe may be shown by the citations, translations, copies in libraries, dissertations and other types of evidence. These are still being investigated but they already show the continuity in the chain that goes from fifteenth century Iberia –Portugal and Castile– to Richard Simon. Attention to the art of the prologue, then, was a feature of the fifteenth century culture which produced both Arragel and Abravanel.

II

For over a century there has been a trend of accepting the Arragel prologue as a story –the only story as there are not many independent sources– of the translation. That is, that the Master of the Order of Calatrava, don Luis de Guzmán, in 1422 ordered / asked the Rabbi to translate the Bible into the Castilian *romance* because the Bibles that were at his disposal did not satisfy him. He had heard that the Rabbi, who had been in Guadalajara, had moved to Maqueda in the territories of the Order and that he was able to carry out this translation. The Rabbi refuses because the Jews have a different understanding of the Bible; because illuminations are forbidden; because he cannot be a courtier of don Luis; because he has no scholarly abilities, as he proves conclusively by means of a discourse of ca. 25 pages saturated with citations from Aristotle, Plato, Macrobius⁷, amongst numerous other authorities- both,

7. See Paz y Melia’s study of 1899, which is very similar to the one which introduces the Biblia in 1922: Antonio Paz y Melia, “La Biblia de la Casa de Alba,” *Homenaje a Menendez y Pelayo* (Madrid, Suarez: 1899), vol. 2, pp. 5-93.

explicitly acknowledged or otherwise. Twentieth century scholars have been able to identify some⁸, by no means all, of these. The tenor of the story then, is that the author of the work had refused the commission. The work was nevertheless carried out. Moreover, it continued for c. 11 years. The initial refusal would seem to have become irrelevant, even equivocal, by the time the final form had to be designed. And yet, it was not dismissed as antiquated material, with no significance to the reader of the work. Rather it was placed in the most prominent location of the text: its opening.

The twentieth century acceptance of the prologal narratives seems thus, analogous to the age old acceptance of another narrative, also in Bible translations. As will be recalled, the so called Letter of Aristeas accompanied a work which, like Arragel's, was Bible related. Numerous MSS, about 23, from the eleventh century onwards are known and attest to its medieval circulation⁹. It also provided the reader with a narrative framework for a translation. It was, like Arragel's, a letter. As such it had an address. The letter was addressed to: "Philocrates" who "as you lose no opportunity of reminding me, have set great store upon receiving an account of the motives and object of my mission," According to this narrative,—preserved in different versions, paraphrases and citations—about a bible-related text, seventy two sages had been called in to translate the Bible into Greek by King Ptolemy Philadelphus II of Egypt (285-247 BC), to complete his collection of all the world's books for his royal library. The Epistle-Prologue includes a mention

8. E. Gutwirth 'Daniel 1/4 y las ansiedades del cortesano' in (ed. J.Carreira et al) *III Simposio Bíblico Español I Lusho-Espanhol* (Valencia-Lisboa 1991) pp.639-648. Idem, 'Medieval Romance Epistolography: The Case of the Iberian Jews', *Neophilologus* LXXXIV/2 (2000), pp. 207-224.

9. L. Canfora, "La Biblioteca e il Museo", *SPGA* I. 2, pp. 11-29. L. Canfora, *Il viaggio di Aristeo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1996. N. Fernández Marcos, *Introducción a las versiones griegas de la Biblia*, Madrid 1979. N. Fernández Marcos (trad.), "Carta de Aristeas", en A. Díez Macho (ed.), *Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento* II, Madrid, Cristiandad, 1962, pp. 9-63. Janowitz "The Rhetoric of Translation. Three early perspectives on translating the Torah" *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991) 129-140. For the medieval MSS see the appendix to Wendland's edition for the Teubner series 1900. The preservation of Aristeas in the middle ages is usually ascribed to the placing of the work at the beginning of the Catenae of patristic Commentaries to the Octateuch. There are numerous versions and citations in other authors as well as in the Talmud and in Yosippon. Wasserstein, Abraham, and David Wasserstein. *The Legend of the Septuagint from Classical Antiquity to Today*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Kristeller asserts that Mattia Palmieri's was the first translation into Latin. Kristeller Paul Oskar, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, vol. IV, Roma 1996 p. 220

of the reason for the royal wish: previous translations existed but –as in the case of Guzman– were not satisfactory. They were lodged with no possible communication. In the sixteenth century, Spanish literary texts such as Antonio de Guevara’s Epistles, would introduce the readers of modern languages to this ancient story. Arragel’s discussion of original versus translation, of the difficulties in fixing a meaning, of the problems of subjectivity and historical context (that is to say issues of patronage of Bible translations and the subjectivities of the patron) in the translation of the Bible are all reminiscent of such discussions. In some cases these are also presented in an epistolary, narrative form. If different translators translate differently, then the question of translators’ subjectivities and context becomes paramount.

III

Arragel’s Prologue was not written in Hebrew nor was it addressed to a reader of Hebrew. A search in the *glosas* for the paragraphs which employ the vocative confirms the view that Arragel was highly conscious of his public, the destination of his work. He explicitly articulates this clear objective: to address a specific, non-Hebraist, romance using public. Arragel’s Prologue may, therefore be analyzed also within the tradition of Prologues in the romance of Castille addressed to the community of readers of that linguistic and literary tradition. That is to say the tradition to which his *romance* reader/public was accustomed. The medieval prologue in the *romance* of Castile is a feature of writing in Romance languages and cultures. It therefore would be approached naturally by attention to classical and, later, modern language [e.g. Tuscan] antecedents [rather than sources] and practices.

The Greek Prologues to tragedies [Arist. Rhet. 3.14.1] or the Latin prose prefaces, therefore, would be relevant to any approach to *romance* prologues, such as Arragel’s. Before the third century, authors of scientific works did not write prologues. But, in the third century, of Archimides’ [c. 287-212] works only a few lack prologues; most of them are preceded by letters addressed to a friend containing a dedication. They are devoid of affection. They ought

to be called epistolary prefaces, according to Janson¹⁰. Archimedes is followed, in Janson's classical study, by the epistolary prefaces of Apollonius from Perga to his *Cronica*. That is to say that the administrative distinction between different disciplines [science, literature, etc] to which we are accustomed today is not seen as significant in the scholarly study of such prologal traditions. The theatre or drama, the scientific texts of Archimedes, the works of Apollonius would be studied today in a compartmentalized fashion where the difference would be paramount. And yet the prologal tradition does not change radically from genre to genre; nor does it originate in philosophy or in science or in historiography. It comes from the theatre. Scholars of the classical tradition and its transmission in the middle ages have not projected to the past the administrative divisions of their own institutions but, on the contrary, have noted the common features of the prologal tradition in texts, ancient and medieval, whose disciplinary character differs radically. The procedures of medieval rhetoric are studied across the divide between the forensic, the preacher's homiletic, the notarial and other areas which are different from each other. The notion that Prologues are to be studied in disciplinary or generic isolation is not accepted by scholars of such prologal texts.

Janson noted that, later, the prologue which is not in the form of a dedication became uncommon, even in the field of history books, as authors dedicated their works from the fourth century onwards.¹¹ The epistolary prologue was one of two major types of dedicated prefaces in Latin. These epistolary prologues persist after the classical period. They are to be found in many genres. One of its advantages is that it provides a clear distinction between the introduction and the rest of the text. This epistolary prologue was, therefore, thought to be particularly apt in works such as the *Historia Augusta* or the work of Eutropius. Statius and Martial were models for the custom of providing poetic works with epistolary prefaces. This model had a continuity in later authors such as e.g. Paulinus of Pella in Macedonia, the Christian poet of the fifth century best known for the autobiography he composed at the age

10. Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces. Studies in Literary Conventions* [=Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis Studia Latina Stockholmiensia XIII] Stockholm: Almqvist, 1964

11. Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces. Studies in Literary Conventions* [=Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis Studia Latina Stockholmiensia XIII] p.116.

of eighty three. Also in the fifth century, another Christian poet, Sedulius, opens his most famous poetic work, the *Carmen paschal* with a prose introduction in which he dedicates the work to a priest named Macedonius. The prose dedication/prologue opens the first book of the poem which is devoted to retelling the Old Testament. It was common to use a self derogatory tone, generally known as *humilitas*, part of the general *petitio benevolentiae*. This is a development in which the West –rather than Greece– was leader.

The custom of dedicating works by the author to his son is present in Cato the Elder, Cicero and Seneca the Elder; they were the models for the later Latin authors e.g. Charisius and Marcellus. In fifteenth century Castile, Maestre Juan el Viejo, a converso, a contemporary of Arragel who was educated in the usual Jewish culture of late medieval Toledo, also composed texts and prologue in the *romance*. He begins his work in the *romance* with the assertion that it was written for his son¹².

Janson's analysis of the vocabulary of dedications and requests, leads him to realize that, as they develop in time, they become more demanding and compelling. On the part of the author of these dedications there is a progress from "doing what was asked" to "obedience"¹³ [as in Victor Vitensis "imperio obedientiae ...submitte..."¹⁴] According to Janson, the prefaces of the rhetoricians construct a dilemma between the desire to comply with the request and the unwillingness to write, in order to stress the humility of the writer faced with the subject and the dedicatee. If Cicero's Orator develops the motif of the difficulty of the subject matter, Mamerinus, writing to Emperor Julian, develops the motif of his own incompetence¹⁵. The Prologue thus becomes an expression of "the impossible made possible" in the words of Janson.

Rufinus' [fourth century] translation of Eusebius [d. before 341] begins with a preface in which he writes that his first intention had been to refuse. Victorius Aquitanus writes the preface addressed to Pope Honorius and asserts himself incapable of writing the

12. E. Gutwirth, 'Maestre Juan el Viejo and his Tratado (Madrid MS)', *Proceedings Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, B (Jerusalem 1986) 129-134

13. Janson, p.120.

14. Janson, p.119.

15. Janson, p.121.

work he is prefacing. Livy and Quintilian, both, suggest that their talents are insufficient¹⁶. Cicero is more precise [his “ingenium” is “...exiguum “]. Pliny the Elder’s “ingenium” is mediocre. Victorious Aquitanus’ intelligence is also exiguous. The continuity of the motif of incompetence in the Middle Ages and in modern, living languages has been studied by Curtius.¹⁷ Janson speaks also of an intermediate form: letters sent by an author which are not apparently intended to stand as a preface to the work.

In Statius and in Martial, Gomez Moreno¹⁸ finds the early cases of epistolary prefaces which function as literary manifestos. In fifteenth century Castile, shortly after Arragel, Santillana’s epistolary prologue, the *Prohemio et carta* [1446] –although formally a Prologue to a collection of vernacular texts–, does have a certain autonomy from the particular situation which gives rise to it, hence its inclusion in some Cancionero MSS without the ensuing poems. To be sure, Statius and Martial are probably not direct “sources” of the fifteenth century Castilian Marqués. One would also need to recall that the pattern of humility/ inadequacy/ refusal/acceptance in the middle ages was familiar from the Bible. Medieval readers of Exodus 3-11/12 knew the verse: “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” Moses asked. After Jeremiah is told by God that he had been ordained as a prophet from the womb, he responds, “I know not how to speak; I am but a youth.” (Jer. 1:6) The prophet Isaiah, when entrusted with a mission, said, ‘I am a man of unclean lips’ (Is. 6:5). Jonah, in similar circumstances tried to escape. Daniel

16. *Ib.*, p.125

17. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (tr. Willard R. Trask) (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967, c1953) pp. 93-95; 410-415 amongst others. For the argument against continuity in the medieval prologue see James A. Schultz, “Classical Rhetoric, Medieval Poetics, and the Medieval Vernacular Prologue” *Speculum* 59 (1984) 1-15.

18. A. Gómez Moreno, *El “Prohemio e carta” del marqués de Santillana y la teoría literaria del s. XV* (Barcelona: PPU, 1990) p.18. For the epistle –prologue as a common rhetorical exercise in the middle ages see Anna Krause, “Deciphering the Epistle– Preface to the Comedia de Calisto e Melibea” *RR XLIV* 1953 89-101. For an example of questioning representations of patronage in the late middle ages see Frank Grady, “Gower’s Boat, Richard’s Barge, and the True Story of the *Confessio Amantis*: Text and Gloss” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44.1 (2002) 1-15. For the prefaces as self representations see also William Kuskin, “The loadstarre of the English language” *Spenser’s Shepherdes Calender and the Construction of Modernity* *Textual Cultures* 2 (2007) pp. 9-33.

exclaims in ch 10: 17 "For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me." The Midrashim enlarged on these models.

Nevertheless, the function of the *humilitas topos* in a prologue could be distinguished from that of treatments of humility in general. An almost random example of medieval texts in other traditions, could be one from the seventh century, studied recently by Duffy: *The Ladder of Ascent*. The treatise is preceded by an exchange between two monastic superiors: John of Raithou [author of the *Vita* of the book's author] and John Climacus, author of the *Ladder of Ascent*. There are four items here: a) the letter of the abbot of Raithou asking his friend Climacus to compose a treatise of spiritual guidance b) Climacus answer c) the book in question—the *Ladder of Ascent* and d) a brief tractate at the end of the *Ladder*: "Homily to the Pastor". In b) [= Climacus reply], we find, as Duffy notes, a kind of rhetorical reply to the abbot Raithou's first letter, where he [Raithou] describes himself as "in the most lowly guise: a sinner before an angelic spiritual father, an ignorant person before a talented, inspired teacher and paragon of virtue". Climacus, in response argues that he is himself ignorant, poor in virtue, and a mere learner. He only accepts because obedience is the mother of all virtues. Climacus died c. 650. The model is Moses: Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?¹⁹.

In the late middle ages the prologue becomes the object of intense literary investment in vernacular, living language texts. Some of these examples have been well and frequently studied and they barely require comment. The General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* could be a rightly famous, notable example of complex, laborious design, but it is obviously not the only case. The *Book of the Knight of Latour-Landry* begins with an explanation of how the Knight wrote the book with its exemplary tales for the education of his daughters. The First Day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, begins with a description of the Plague which provides the reason for the journey in which the tales are told. In Lydgate's Prologue to the *Siege of Thebes*, Lydgate imagines a homeward journey in which he tells

19. John Duffy, 'Embellishing the Steps: Elements of Presentation and Style in the Heavenly Letter of John Climacus' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 53 (1999) pp. 1-18.

the first tale. The anonymous Prologue to the *Tale of Beryn* deals with pilgrims once they have arrived at Canterbury. The point to bear in mind is that these are writers chronologically near Arragel and that they are writing, like Arragel, in the living language, the vernacular.

In Castile itself, and in the *romance*, the Prologue was becoming a medium of literary creativity and, in some cases, a space which would lead to creative thinking and writing about literary history, evaluations of literature, literary critiques, literary nomenclature, definitions. In the age of the "Prologus Baenensis"²⁰ an almost random example would be the *accessus* in the *Victorial* [1435-1448]²¹.

III

The prologue to the Arragel Bible is in the form of an epistle. The epistle, as a formal vehicle for prose treatises of varying length, is well known in a number of literary traditions. Some of these have been mentioned above. In the particular case of Arragel, i.e. a Rabbi from fifteenth century Castile, the possible relevant antecedents in Hebrew are too numerous to mention. But there are some which are chronologically immediate and from that particular geographic area. Alami's *Iggeret Ha Musar* [Paroenetic Epistle], would be an example from c. 1416. Duran's *Iggeret Al Tehi Ke Avotekha* [Epistle Be Not like unto thy Forefathers]; Ha Lorqi's *Iggeret* (Epistle) to Pablo of Burgos; Bonafed's *Iggeret* -Epistle, to St Jordi are only a few of the examples in Hebrew of the cultivation of the "Epistle as Treatise", current in the historical communities where Arragel was educated and matured. Alami's *Epistle* is accompanied by a kind of *envoi* in verse where the Epistle/Treatise is likened to a gift.

20. Elena Gascon Vera, "El concepto de tragedia en los escritores cultos de la corte de Juan II de Castilla", *Actas del VI Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas (Toronto, 1980)* 305-307; Julian Weiss, *The poet's art : literary theory in Castile c1400-60* (Oxford : The Society for Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1990) 6.

21. Gutierre Diez de Games, *El Victorial* (ed. Alberto Miranda) (Madrid: Catedra 1993) p 135: "En comienco de cualquier obra quatro cosas se han de inquirir e acatar la causa material e la efetiva e la formal e la final. Porque el oidor siempre debe buscar e querer quien es el autor e de que obra se trata e como en ella trata e a que fin e a que provecho. La causa material en aquesta obra es oficio e arte de caballeria. La causa eficiente es quien la hizo. La causa formal es loar los fechos de un buen cavallero. La causa final es provecho"

The vernacular Prologue-Epistle in this particular period, the late Middle Ages, is more widely known from another, neighbouring tradition. The *Epistle* to the Lord Can Grande della Scala, Vicar General of the Principate of the Holy Roman Emperor in the town of Verona and the municipality of Vicenza [whatever its attribution] is not free of problems, but ultimately, like Arragel's, it is an Epistle to a lord, and, like Alami's, it refers to a gift- a book:

I have often looked at my little gifts and separated them each from the other and then looked through them, looking for ones which might be worthy of and pleasing to you. Nor did I find anything more fitting for your very Preeminence, than the exalted canticle of the Comedy which is entitled Paradiso; and I dedicate it to you by the present letter, as if by a proper epigram; in fine, I dedicate, I offer, I recommend it to you.

That Epistle of the Can Grande is also a written statement about a text, about a literary work-the *Divine Comedy*. In the *romance* of Castile, the *Carta et Prohemio* of the Marques de Santillana presents itself as both a Prologue and as an Epistle. It is a protoessay on literary history in the vernacular which accompanies a collection of poems. In the small circles of literate Castilian nobility of the first half of the fifteenth century, then, there emerge two major works which present themselves as Epistle -Prologues: the Epistle- Prologue placed at the beginning of Arragel's *Biblia* for the Master of the Order of Calatrava and the *Carta et Prohemio* at the beginning of the Marquess' poetic anthology.

IV

The frequent repetition in the textbooks of the narrative in Arragel's General Prologue might well give the impression of a genuine interest -on the part of his readers- in the prologal art in Arragel's text. This would be an optical illusion. In practice one finds brief paraphrases. The exception would be the persistent, sustained and dedicated attention paid by Lipton.²² Without repeating

22. Wallace S. Lipton, "A Blurred Encounter in Moses Arragel's Epistle on the Alba Bible" *MLN*, Vol. 84, No. 2, Hispanic Issue (Mar., 1969), pp. 298-304; idem, "Anti-Iconic Preliminaries to the *Biblia de Alba*", *Romance Philology*, 23, 1, (1969), p. 17-38,

his conclusions, one notices a number of points in this pioneering work. They seem to have in common a certain presupposition about the autonomy of the text from its historical background. Without rehearsing the long standing debate about text and context, certain features have to be pointed out, beginning with the difference between two different, although admittedly medieval, names conflated by Lipton; Arragel and Wolfram von Eschenbach. This brings up the need to understand the tradition within which Arragel is working. Even awareness of the basics, i.e. the sources explicitly acknowledged by Arragel and listed, more or less c. 1899 by Paz would awaken the reader to realize that Wolfram von Eschenbach is not particularly relevant. More recent investigations have shown that Paz' lists constitute only a fraction of the intertextuality. Similarly, the General Prologue is seen by Lipton in isolation from the rest of the text by Arragel. It follows that Arragel's text still needs to be read inside the various traditions in which he creates and the various traditions affecting his romance reading public.

The prologal matter is the product of Arragel's work over many years. It is a contradictory and complex form in Arragel's Biblia. The first step that needs to be taken is to realize that the dedication/prologue at the beginning of the Biblia de Arragel is by no means –and despite numerous [mis]representations,– the only example of Arragel's prologues. Various biblical books in the Biblia de Arragel contain prologues or prologal matter let alone visual prologal items. To be sure, as has been shown elsewhere, Arragel was a reader of previous Bible exegesis in Hebrew. He was influenced by medieval Jewish Bible exegetes whom he read. Indeed, research has been able to show that, at times, his texts read like translations into a modern language of previous medieval Hebrew glosses. This is no mere triviality. The composition of vernacular texts presenting the vernacular reader with the results of Jewish Bible exegesis originally composed in Hebrew is itself an important, threshold phenomenon. It claims for the vernacular something of the *auctoritas* of learned languages amongst other things. In addition there are the variations: not all of Arragel's numerous prologues are identical. The project of comparing these various prologues does not seem to have occurred to readers of Arragel. The relations between the General Prologue and the rest of Arragel's work is not always the same. Thus, for example, in the text of the glosses we find references to the General Prologue:

... en el mi prologo[fol. 31a] yo mostre quanto de peligro de vna lengua en otra romançar auia que la gramatica e equivocaciones e tres tienpos conuiene a saber que viene a las devegadas en el ebrayco un vocablo iudgar se poder en qualquier de los tres tienpos como yo uaron mate por la mi llaga uerbi gracia como yo varon mate por la mi llaga este mot a que yo mate romance otros yo matare romançon e otros yo mato e segund lo que cada vno romança asy glosa carga e tu escucha lo que dire estes vn dicho que segund parece Lamech dos mujeres auia e avn dizen que la vna era para fructo e la otra para vicio...²³.

That is to say that the General Prologue, apart from its narrative and alleged historicity, has other uses. One of these –cited here– is to remind or teach the reader of the Bible translation that translations have their own logic which is not that of the original; that translations could be laborious and that they offer a personal view and a subjectivity: that of the translator who has chosen amongst various options.

V

The question of the subject, therefore, cannot be circumvented. In the case of Arragel there are two noteworthy factors which –amongst others– mould this subjectivity: his patron and public on the one hand, and his “collaborators”, editors or “censors” [e.g. Enzina] on the other. One example could be the case of how an old exegetical conundrum is applied to the particular historical context and specific public addressed by Arragel. The case of II Chronicles may be instructive also because so neglected by readers of Arragel who frequently tend to concentrate on the same passages from other books of the Bible.

II Chronicles 15/1:

The Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded: 15:2 and he went out to meet Asa, and said to him, “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin! Yahweh is with you, while you are

23. Paz p. 111

with him; and if you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. 15:3 Now for a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

The verse 3 is not singled out for comment by Arragel as a self-indulgent or individualistic, personal choice. The description of a time when "Israel was without the true God" was vague and had preoccupied exegetes as early as the Targum [ad loc] and the Midrash [Lev Rabba 19, 160/4] and continued to preoccupy exegetes of whatever denomination well into the modern period. They either identified the period or debated such identifications [possibilities included the ten tribes from the times of Jeroboam; the case of Judah from the times of Rehoboam; times more remote, even the times of the judges, when they worshipped Baal and Ashtaroath,]. It could also be read as a prophecy for a future.

que vernan muchos dias a israel que non ternan dios de verdad son diuisos los ebrayquistas e latinos otros dicen que es el cabtuerio que han que hoy entre la cristiana nascion han e ellos han ser clemencia de hermandat sobrellos pero dizen que hay otro cabtuerio conuiene a saber en la morisma nacion que son los sarrazines maluados enemigos de la fe e son gente sin ley e son mantenedores de secta e non ley e por ende dixo en este testo nin dotor nin ley e digan verdat que los maluados sarrazines nin han doctor nin ley pero los unos y los otros aemos un universal punto en esta parte conuiene a saber non por siempre aunque anos non divulgado fasta el nascimiento del mesias esea verdat el dicho del filosofo que la verdat es verdat caso que sea negada e la mentira mentira caso que sea otorgada que manifiesta es la razon²⁴.

According to Arragel, there are multiple opinions. Christians and Jews differ in their reading of the verse. Arragel uses "ebrayquistas e latinos" rather than Jews and Christians. A reading mentioned in Arragel's Bible is that the "time without God" is that of exile amongst the Christians "today". Another reading is that the "time without God" refers to the *sarrazenos* who have neither law

24. Paz ed. cit. p. 979.

nor doctors. Arragel includes also the notion that “we both have a universal point [of agreement] on this namely that the godless time is not forever [but it is limited]...” Arragel invokes and includes a philosophical notion, namely that truth is truth even if it is denied and lies are lies even if they are accepted.

Arragel’s Biblia –not untypically– produces a discourse in which different and differing opinions may be voiced. At the same time, he seeks consensus. If he does hold that there is a truth, it is not one which will be discovered by human opinions: they deny or assert propositions, but these denials or assertions have no relation to the truth, which is independent. A second feature of this text –which is not unparalleled in Arragel’s Bible– is the strong condemnation of *los sarrazenos*. Here again the attempts to see the work as primarily polemical [anti-Christian] do not work and here again, attention to the context and to patronage is necessary.

The illumination accompanying the prologue in the Arragel Bible leaves one in no doubt that the context of the project is the Order of Calatrava. Don Luis de Guzmán is presented there as the Master of the Order. The frontality of his image is paramount and has ancient roots in Rome and Byzantium. There is no need to speculate about lost original *vorlaege*; by 1433 it could be seen even on coins²⁵. Below him there are the members of the Order. They are represented as being engaged in a particular task: the corporal works of mercy²⁶. Below them is the translator offering/ presenting

25. Some viewers have articulately expressed their reactions: Yarza, –who seems accustomed to images of power in late medieval Castile– has nevertheless described the grandeur of the Master’s image in terms of insolence. Yarza Luaces, “La imagen del rey y la imagen del noble en el siglo XV”, *Realidad e imágenes del poder* ed A. Rucqoi Valladolid 1988 p.281. Yarza Luaces, J.: *La nobleza ante el Rey. Los grandes linajes castellanos y el arte en el siglo XV*, Madrid, 2003, pp. 279-280. Manuel Bendala Galán, on the other hand, describes it in terms of pretentiousness. Manuel Bendala Galán, *Manual de arte Español* Madrid: Silex,2003 p. 406

26. Here again, readers of studies on Arragel would not suspect the precise ideas behind the image, their source or the complexity of the scholastic debates on the issue. The *Summa Theologica*, (ST II, II, Question 32, Article 2) is one point of departure. Another is the New Testament itself: Matthew 25 vv.31-46. The numbers vary, for example. The Arragel Bible illumination follows a traditional enumeration of the seven corporal works of mercy: To feed the hungry; To give drink to the thirsty; To clothe the naked; To harbour the harbourless; To visit the sick; To ransom the captive; To bury the dead. In another context, Ch. Mounts asserted about the *Summa*’s influence: “Proof of this pre-eminence is vouchsafed by the many citations of substantially the same listing in Middle English catechumenal works. Three of these, the so-called Constitution of Peckham, Thoresby’s Lay-Folks’ Catechism, and the Wycliffite adaptation of the latter, form an extremely influential and closely connected

his work to the Master of the Order. Readers of some collections of archival documents of the Order in the fifteenth century, receive the impression that most of them are concerned with acquisition and administration of territorial possessions rather than any military activity. They are, indeed, mostly title deeds to real estate. The military activities of the Order in all the years of Arragel's labours are not as prominent. But the writings in the context of the Order, like the illumination at the beginning of the Biblia, could not concentrate directly on real estate acquisitions or administration, however real. These did not fit concepts of literary and visual, artistic decorum. The decorum which perceives a coherence between the three levels [enthroned Master, Members of the Order, Presentation] of that prologal full page painting is not transparent. It needs to be reconstructed. One possibility is that it lies in the emphasis on the non-military aspects. The link between "warfare and welfare" between "fighting for the faith and caring for the sick" in the ideology of medieval military orders has been seen as emblematic of these institutions²⁷. Another possibility (not unproblematic) is that even at this early date, centuries before il Passignano, there were readers of that other Bible translator, Jerome and of his *Epistles* who saw him as both, a Bible translator and a master of works of mercy²⁸. This is yet another case where the naive readings of the introductory matter fail. The representations for a patron had to appeal to another history.

group of such works". See Charles E. Mounts: "Spenser's Seven Bead-Men and the Corporal Works of Mercy" *PMLA*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Dec., 1939), pp. 974-980. The theme, conventional since the twelfth century, has left traces on mural paintings in e.g. medieval churches in Yorkshire which antedate the most famous treatment of Caravaggio. In general, future students of the works of mercy in the Biblia de Arragel's presentation scene might benefit from Ralf van Bühren, *Die Werke der Barmherzigkeit in der Kunst des 12.-18. Jahrhunderts: zum Wandel eines Bildmotivs vor dem Hintergrund neuzeitlicher Rhetorikrezeption*: Hildesheim: Zürich: New York (DEU) G. Olms 1998.

Although not concerned with the Arragel presentation, the scholarship on the Iberian reception of the theme may be helpful: María Luisa Gómez Nebreda, "Las Obras de Misericordia: Fuentes textuales para su iconografía" *La Biblia en el arte y en la literatura V Simposio bíblico Español 2*, (1999), pp. 417-428

27. Malcolm Barber, *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick* (Aldershot, 1994); id, *The Military Orders: Welfare and Warfare* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

28. Pilar Martino Alba, "San Jerónimo maestro de obras, (de misericordia)". *La Iglesia española y las instituciones de caridad* F.J. Campos y Fernandez Sevilla 2006, pp. 73-84.

The military, anti-Sarracen or anti-Muslim character is embedded in the history of Arragel's patrons i.e. the patron and public of his work. From its earliest times, the Order was concerned with activities such as fortification and they were as military oriented as other communities in Castile. In 1163 Abbot Ramón died and the priests of the new foundation, under their Abbot Rodolfo, left Calatrava to return to the monastic life at Cirvelos. They adopted an even more markedly military character, paralleling the members of the Templar and Hospitaller Orders but still subscribing to the Cistercian rule. Ramón's successor as Master, García, obtained a Bull from Pope Alexander III confirming the Order of Calatrava as a Militia on September 26, 1164. This placed the knights under the Cistercian rule. The teachings of the Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux, had provided them with an ideal of religious-military life²⁹. O' Callaghan, although focusing on the origins rather than 1422-33, has expressed it clearly:

We must now ask ourselves what were the intentions of those who founded the Military Orders? What did they want to do? What were they thinking about? ... the extant documents throw some light on these questions.

I think we can see in these texts the influence of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and of his *Liber de laude nove militie*, and also of his letters exhorting the faithful to take part in the Second Crusade. Sancho III, king of Castile, for example, in his charter giving Calatrava to Abbot Raimundo of Fitero, ordained that the abbot and his brethren should defend the fortress "against the pagans, the enemies of the cross of Christ... so that the Christian religion may be propagated and our kingdom increased and protected." In phrases reminiscent of St. Bernard, the Cistercian General Chapter in 1164 praised the intention of Master García and the brethren of Calatrava to convert from the *militia mundi* to the *militia Dei*, –that is, from the knighthood of this world to the knighthood of God– in order to fight against "the enemies of the faith." Similarly Pope Alexander III on 25 September in

29. Enrique Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla, "Agrarian Structure in the Calatrava Lordships of the Southern Meseta of Castile in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries", in *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick* (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 284-295. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, "Possessions and Incomes of the Order of Calatrava," in *The Military Orders*, Aldershot, 1994 pp. 283-287

the same year approved the friars' desire to fight against the Saracens in defense of Calatrava. The General Chapter again in 1187 praised their intention to turn from the *militia mundi* to the *militia Christi* and to combat the enemies of the faith. King Alfonso VIII (1158-1214) of Castile also praised those who dedicated their lives and shed their blood in combat "against the adversaries of the cross of Christ." He also spoke of the knights as a shield and a wall in defense of the faith against the pagan multitude³⁰.

There is little in the history of the Order to link it to Tortosa-style disputations or to the conversion of the Jews. Arragel's or Enzina's remarks on the days "without God" remind us, once again, that the Arragel Bible was not written in a vacuum, nor was it merely one more insignificant episode in millennia-old Judeo-Christian debates. It had very well delimited parameters in the ideals of the Order which framed it, as is clear from the illumination prefacing and framing the Biblia. Within these clear parameters, the latitude of opinions in the prologal matter on the time "without God" begin to emerge more clearly.

VI

As is well known, around the time [1946] when Castro was awaiting the Buenos Aires edition of *España en su Historia*, his former disciple, Corominas was far away, in Mendoza. He was Professor of Philology and Linguistics at the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo where he founded the Institute of Linguistics and edited *Anales del Instituto de Linguística* while pursuing his etymological interests. When arriving (in the course of his lexicographical work) at the question of */nascion/*, he attributed it to Hebrew. The Hebrew *toldot* would be –by implication–the origin of *romance*, Castilian, Spanish notions of birth and nation. The two exiles, then, seem to have shared views on such problems and, indeed, the Americo

30. Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Interior Life Of The Military Religious Orders Of Medieval Spain* Malta Study Center Lecture Series Presented at St. John's University, Collegeville, MN, October 2001.

Castro et al. edition³¹ of a biblical *romanceamiento* seems to underlie these speculations. For them, 1450 was the moment of origin of these notions in which birth and nation seemed to be intertwined and unambiguous. How does Arragel fit into these concerns of Corominas and Castro, both familiar with and interested in the *romance* of fifteenth century Castile and its Bible texts? Indeed, before 1450, [i.e. Corominas' putative date for the first attested appearance of the term,] between 1422-1433, Rabbi Moses Arragel was engaged in the *romanceamiento* of a Bible. How did the Rabbi employ the term *nascion*?

Tackling the commentary of the Song of Songs, Arragel writes a prologue and argues in it that he will only present half a commentary [...un medio de glosa]. That is to say that the commentary to Song of Songs will be his own, unlike the commentaries on other biblical books, where his own commentaries are mixed with or interpolated by those of the Toledan ecclesiastics, [‘Arias Vasco e otros’]. This reminds us, again, that it is futile to search for a schematic formula to encompass the relations between Arragel and the censors throughout the whole Bible on the basis of minimal evidence usually selected from the beginning of the unwieldy, heavy tomes.

Tradition demanded the allegorization of the lovers, whether God and the Church or the Synagogue or other types. Arragel, however, moves away from particularisms [Jewish and Christian] and pursues another option [equally well attested in Jewish antecedents, e.g. those who read it as an allegory of the love between matter and form]. In the Song of Songs, according to Arragel's prologue to that book, the Bible: "...revelo quales caminos deven la humana nascion seguir... que Dios es el enamorado de la humana nascion" ...revealed which are the ways which the human nation must follow... because God is the lover of the human nation...³². That is to say that Arragel, in the prologue, which he wrote without interference, expresses notions which completely refute the "nationalist" or "birth" theories. How atypical are these prologal

31. *Biblia medieval romanceada según los manuscritos escurialenses I-j-3, I-j-8 y I-j-6. 1. Pentateuco*. Ed. Americo Castro, Agustín Millares Carlo, Angel J. Battistessa. Buenos Aires: Jacobo Peuser 1927.

32. Paz y Melia p. 495.

expressions of the project as a whole? It is obviously related to an intellectual current of thought on God, love and humans which does not begin with Arragel.

VII

This means that we need to understand that the intellectual background is a main factor in his vision of the project. It affects our reading of Arragel and expresses itself also in other ways. These concern textual difficulties, meeting textual challenges and the desire to explain i.e. what may be termed the hermeneutical vocation.

If we see no intellectual factors at all, but merely a simple reproduction of situations of discrimination throughout the medieval world or one more variant in the long list of polemics, we simply cannot understand the numerous passages which concentrate on other aspects. Arragel, for example, writes “glosas al lib segundo de paralipómenos.” When having to comment on the phrase: “errezios instrumentos”³³ he writes “-quasy diga que dizia nus e canciones”. Or, elsewhere “cantando en el tenplo con estos organos que en tanta contemplacion estauan que luego con aquel spiritual delecte en que estauan asentaua sobre ellos el spiritu santo e prophetizauan.”³⁴ Is polemics the motivating factor or is it the attraction and challenge of exegesis that comes through in his Commentary?. In any case such comments may now be added to the corpus of extant primary sources from the Middle Ages on Jewish musical theory or ideas.

Similar is the case of parallels and differences between Chronicles and Kings: “3000 cantaros e en los reyes pone 2000 medidas”³⁵ or [(= II Chron 8/18)] “450 quintales” “en los reyes pone 420”³⁶ or “-250 e en los reyes pone 550”. Pointing to the contradictions within different books of the Bible does not seem to be a particularly effective tool of anti-Christian polemics. Are Tortosa- style polemics the motivation for including a gloss on the –very Castilian– problems

33. Ibid, p. 982.

34. Ibid, p. 929.

35. Ibid, p. 976.

36. Ibid, p. 978.

of royal anointing?: [Paralipom. 1,]” ... por egualar en uncion el sacerdote con el rey que los reyes diesen para la egleja sacerdotal la meytad de sus despojos que ouiessem en las batallas... que el pontifice es egual que el rey...³⁷”.

Similar again is the case of imagining antiquity from a perspective firmly anchored in fifteenth century Castile. What was authorship in antiquity?: “Samuel e Natan e Get compusieron libros los quales muy plenariamente hablaron en las ystorias de los reyes los quales non son hoy fallados”³⁸. Or, elsewhere, he implicitly asks: how was the society of ancient Israel divided?³⁹, “... que tenian sciencia en razon de los tienpos para enseñar lo que debian fazer Israel...todo rey debe tener tres linajes de gentes, oradores, defensores...” How is the notion of the threefold division of society dependent on the Judeo-Christian polemic? By now⁴⁰ it is, in fact, recognized as one of the common “beliefs” of Jews and Christians in medieval Spain.

VIII

More directly evident are the cases of other prologues. Thus the *Glosas del Libro de Ezequiel*⁴¹ begin with a formulation of the prologal, propadeutic tasks: “Conuienenos saber, ante de todas cosas, quien fue este propheta, e definición del su nonbre, e cuyo fijo fue, e como murio, e donde fue enterrado”. The number of the questions is four or five, i.e. not an unconventional variation on the *accessus*. He continues: “Nonbre Ezechiel tanto dezir quiere, segund su interpetacion, como reforçador de Dios, quasy diga que, segund los sus syn miedo dicho sermones e reprehensiones, reforço e fizo en las gentes de Israhel en el temor de Dios. Fue fijo de Buz, el sacerdote; fue leuado con los otros presos a Babilonia. “That is to say that we are offered a certain thematic and historical introduction to prepare us for the book. There is no identity poli-

37. Ibid, p. 931.

38. Ibid, p. 931.

39. Ibid, p. 925.

40. Gutwirth, Eleazar, “The lower orders in XVth century Hispano-Jewish thought”, *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, XXX (1981), págs. 83-98.

41. Paz, ed cit 322 b.

tics in his reconstruction of the background: “Los malos de hijos de Israel, non los buenos, lo mataron a traycion, por que los recusaua de los criminales en que topauan. “The sentence “[Fue metido en el sepulchro de Arphasath, fijo de Noe,] e en la egleja se canta el su canto de los muertos” is an obvious interpolation by Enzina or the others. It could be taken out without changing the prologue. Arragel prepares his reader for the text’s stylistic hermeticism: “La su prophesia fue muy cerrada,” But this becomes a springboard for self reflective meditations by the glossator:

el cerramiento de las prophesias faze e pone muchas dubdas e diuisiones en los glosadores, como pocos acierten en la verdat. Ya sea, señor, que vnos se acercan mas a la verdat que otros, bien asy como los que juegan la vallesta, que vnos se altercan mejor e mas que otros. E en el passado prologo e glosa que fezimos a este primero capitulo, en fin de la glosa de Jeremias, deximos de quales virtudes proceden las visiones que los prophetas veen, como se les inprensionan...

As on previous occasions Arragel distances himself from the tradition within which he works. Medieval glosses and commentaries, far from being binding, have relative validity and are marked by disagreement. The conversation or dialogue takes place between two interlocutors, not Church and Synagogue, but Moses Arragel of Guadalajara and Don Luis de Guzmán. It is here that he introduces the simile which again betrays his concern with his public/patron/interlocutor. Indeed what could be more decorous in addressing a soldier than the allusion to the “vallesta” as equivalent to medieval bible exegesis. “Una cierta maquina de guerra de la qual arrojaban o piedras o saetas” writes Covarrubias invoking Valerius Maximus, Lucan and Pliny [sv]. In any case, the vocative [Ya sea, señor, ...] makes this clear. As in the game, there are no absolutes: some are better and some are less so.

Arragel’s investments in the prologues is clear in another biblical book as well. Thus his commentary on the Book of Proverbs begins :

Este libro de los Ensienplos de Salamon nos enpone en las cosas que son de demandar *en qualquier libro que quisieremos leer*

*en ante que en el se lea cosa alguna, conuiene a saber: que son estas que se siguen: vna, nonbre del libro; dos, de qual sciencia trabta el libro; tres, nonbre del conponedor; quatro, de qual nascion es, e para quien lo conpone; la fin para que lo conpone; cinco, en qual sciencia trabta el libro*⁴².

Arragel presents himself, then, as someone who needs to explain a book. He does so by the prologal trope of the accessus as do other Castilians of his time as shown above and as he does himself in the General Prologue. But then he continues in a manner which bears some consistency with the previously discussed prologue to Ezequiel:

En quanto a lo primero, dize que son (es) nonbre del libro Ensiemplos, que quier dezir que por quanto los ygnorantes son groseros en los principios de las sciencias bien poder saber, el maestro de gracia, poneles ensiemplos, e los ensiemplos en las leyciones son asy como son los anzuelos con que se caça el pesce, e asy como la faze para los panes segar, que con ellos se alcança el pesce e el pan; que muchas vezes como los oydores de las sciencias e leyciones somos groseros en las obscuridades delas e delgadezas, con la grosedat del ensienplo fazenos alcançar a entender lo que ante saber non podíamos...

If in the previous prologue he compared exegesis to *ballestas*, here it is the image of the *anzuelos* which bears the brunt of the explanation. It is the subtlety of the Bible which requires commentaries –like Arragel’s– which are not on the same level as the Bible. As in the General Prologue, so here too, there are contacts with the humilitas convention: *groseros*. But the *groseros* label is not unambiguous and could apply to a number of groups including previous exegetes.

In the wake of Berger’s Bible studies of the late nineteenth century, there arose what may be termed the field of Arragel studies. Its pioneers had to give a global interpretation of this Bible. They did so in terms of the available categories for studies of Jewish-Christian relations elsewhere. At times such categories –polemics,

42. Paz 771, Biblia 447.

tolerance, universalism, particularism, Inquisition– are not particularly apt for the specific problems raised by the various types of works in the *Biblia de Arragel*. Rather, they seem reductions of the richness of different medieval aspects touched by the *Biblia*: representation, translation, exegesis, vernacular authorship and the art of the Prologue.

ABSTRACT

The multitude of approaches to the *Biblia de Arragel* tend to concentrate on one Prologue, the General Prologue. They see their task –somewhat naively– as paraphrasing the narrative therein. The point of departure in this article is that the General Prologue is only one example of prefatory matter in Arragel’s work and that for Arragel the Prologues are an art depending on a number of fields [codicology, MS illuminations, literature, medieval topoi]. Their ideal is not the transparent narrative of events but –through such techniques as the creation of allusive textures– the achievement of deeper sonorities.

Key words: Jews in Spain- *Biblias romanceadas*- Medieval Prologues-Mose Arragel