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LUÍS DE CAMÕES TRANSLATED INTO HEBREW FOR THE FIRST TIME

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It is well known that despite their forced emigration, the Sephardim of Amsterdam had strong connections with Iberian culture and literature. By virtue of its literary academies (the first, 'Academia de los sitibondos' [*Academy of the Thirsties*], was founded in 1676 and the second, 'Academia de los floridos' [*Academy of the Flowery*], a couple of years later [in 1685]), the city on the Amstel came to be known as the 'poetic capital' of the Portuguese Jewish Diaspora in the second half of the seventeenth century. No other Portuguese Jewish settlement ever harboured as many belletrists as Amsterdam. Therefore, it is no surprise that many echoes of Portuguese authors can be found in the literary production of the Dutch community.

Obviously the Portuguese Jews made a distinction 'between a hatred of the Inquisition and all it stood for, and a general appreciation for the secular authorities,'[1] and as a result, the Iberian culture on the whole has been eagerly retained. The inventories and booklists studied by Swetschinski promise a direct 'insight into the heart of Portuguese Jewish culture,' especially into its literary interests, and confirm the phenomenon had been quite widespread. The rich production of printed books caused researchers to lose sight of the enormous production of manuscripts for a long time.[2] However, one of the most remarkable works yet has been accumulated by Germano Pedro Da Silva in the course of his extensive study of the use and production of Portuguese Literature among the Iberic Jews in Amsterdam, which also includes manuscripts.[3] This *zuta* is dedicated to the Hebrew translation of a Portuguese poem, which is preserved in the manuscript *Kinor dawid* by

[1] D.M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans. The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London 2000) 316.

[2] See for this point G. Nahon, 'Amsterdam metropoli occidentale dei Sefarditi nel XVII° secolo,' *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 49 (1983) 152–182.

[3] G. Pedro da Silva, *La poésie en langue portugaises des juifs 'sefardim' d'Amsterdam*, 3 vols, (Paris 2004) (= Mémoire de thèse. Université Paris-Sorbonne) [unpublished typescript].

David Franco Mendes (1713–1792)[4] and can be considered as a small contribution to the study of Amsterdam manuscripts.[5]

Already in the seventeenth century authors like Miguel de Barrios (1635–1701)[6] justified classical writing in his *Coro de las Musas* (Bruxelles 1672) by the authority of ancient authors like Aristotle, Horace, Virgil; of the Italian Bocaccio, of the Spaniards Gracián, Quevedo and Carvallo; and of the Portugues writers Camões and Antonio Vieira. Several traces of Camões are detectable in the literary production of the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam. Miguel de Barrios himself presents in his *Imperio de Dios en la Harmonia del Mundo* [Bruxelles 1675?] the poem 'Hymno Portugues. / Sacado de los versos de Luis de Camões por el Autor con la allusion del Psalm.' It starts with a verse from the *Lusiads* (Canto X, Stanza 84,6), 'Deoses ò sacro verso està chamando,' and an allusion to Psalm 135:2. Hence he offers a 38-line-long potpourri of verses from several works by Camões.[7] In another book, *Bello Monte de Helicona* (Brusselas 1686), Manuel de Barrios quotes two other poems by Camões, the first Quartain of 'Alma minha gentil que te partiste' (264)[8] and Stanza 56 of Canto X of the *Lusiads*: 'Mas depois que as estrellas ò chamarem' (264–265).[9] In an anonymous manuscript called *Relações*, which consists of a collection of poems (*Cancioneiro* [presumably by Ishac ben Matatia Aboab]) and—according to the details on the frontispiece—was written in the year 5443 [=1683], a copy of the sonnet of 'Sete anos de pastor Jacob servia' can be found.[10] And finally, in the anonymous collection *Romances vários de differentes Authores [...]* (Amsterdam 1688), Camões' poem 'Sete anos de pastor Jacob servia' (fol. 12r) is quoted again.

Luís de Camões (ca. 1524–1580) is considered the most important poet of the Portuguese language and the major figure of Portuguese Renaissance. Although he wrote a considerable amount of lyric poetry

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[4] Primarily known for his *Memorias do estabelecimento: E progresso dos Judeos Portuguezes e Espanhoes nesta famosa citade de Amsterdam*, eds, L. Fuks, R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld and B.N. Teensma (Assen/Amsterdam 1975), which is a Portuguese chronicle of the history of the Sephardim in Amsterdam up to 1772.

[5] Ets Haim Library—Livraria Montezinos [*Kīnor dawid* Hebr. Mss. 255], EH 47 B3, 36.

[6] For his texts, see for instance T. Oelman, *Marrano Poets of the Seventeenth Century. An Anthology of the Poetry of João Pinto Delgado, Antonio Enríquez Gómez, and Miguel de Barrios* (Rutherford/London/Toronto 1982).

[7] Pedro da Silva, *La poésie en langue portugaise*, II, 495–496.

[8] Ibid., I, 201.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., I, 268 [*Relações*; Ms. 1683, fol. 27r].

and dramas, Camões is best remembered all over the world for his epic work *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusíads, 1572), which is regarded as his masterpiece and has been translated into several languages. It is a vision and glorification of the Portuguese world and people of the Renaissance, and includes a recapitulation of the entire history of Portugal (unsurprisingly omitting the Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews).

Camões' style is marked by certain recurring traits that were a part of the artistic conventions of his epoch, including the use of mythological characters and situations. The poem tells of the most glorious episodes of Portugal's history, focusing on Vasco da Gama's travel to establish a maritime contract with the Indies. The poem consists of ten cantos (1,102 stanzas). The stanzas are in *octava real*, groupings of eight ten-syllable verses.[11] One of those stanzas, the 56th of Canto IX, has been translated into Hebrew in Amsterdam and appears in the manuscript this *zuta* discusses.

In Canto IX Vasco da Gama begins the journey home. To reward the explorers for their efforts, the pagan goddess Venus[12] leads the fleet to her Isle of Love (*Ilha dos Amores*) in the middle of the ocean, a kind of garden of delights, on which Tethys, the goddess of the sea, numerous maidens and comely sea nymphs fall in love with the sailors. At the arrival of the Nautas, the ocean nymphs make a pretense of running away but surrender quickly. In this passage, as well as in the rest of the text, mythical gods, pagan and Christian supernatural beings intervene. This shows the spirit of Renaissance to amalgamate classical epics of Homer and Virgil, mythology and Christian religion. Both this fact and the frivolity of Canto IX contradict Christian doctrine and therefore aroused the critique of the Inquisition. Camões wrote his poem in a time and country much concerned with questions of orthodoxy, which were newly articulated by the doctrines of the Counter-Reformation that was launched by the Council of Trent (1545–63). Under the influence of such tensions, Camões felt obliged to include an allegorical passage in his poem regarding his description of the heathen love scene in the second part of Canto IX (Stanza 89):

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[11] The verses are generally *decassílabos heroícos*, that is, the stress falls on the sixth and the tenth syllables of each verse. For further details compare L.A. de Azevedo Filho: 'Luís de Camoes', in M. Rector and F.M. Clark, eds, *Portuguese Writers*, (Detroit 2003) 49–57, 52a.

[12] Camões inserted Jupiter and Venus in his poem to look after Vasco da Gama and his sailors; he availed himself of traditional mythological figures in his description of the Portuguese discoveries, in order to elevate them to mythic proportions.

Que as Ninfas do Oceano, tão fermosas,
Thetys e a Ilha angélica pintada,
Outra cousa não é que as deleitosas
Honras que a vida fazem sublimada.

That the Nymphs of the Ocean, so beautiful,
Thetys and the angelic Island painted,
Are none other than the delightful
Honours that make life sublimated.[13]

The poet of the *Lusiads* saw all pagan mythology as a kind of allegory, preparatory to the advent of Christianity. In 1640, one year after his extensive commentary on the Lusiads was published,[14] Manuel de Faria e Sousa was called upon by the *Sant'Uffizio* to address the heretical question of the pagan gods in this poem. In an ingenious treatise, he demonstrated what he believed was Camões' obvious use of allegory.[15]

In Italy as well as in Portugal, there was a strong hostility of clerics against the licence poets took in interspersing religious themes with the pagan world, for instance when Sannazaro published *De partu Virginis* and his *Lamentatio de morte Christi*. That, however, was in the sixteenth century, and the readership had in the meantime become used to that kind of hybrid texts. It is well known that Italian Jews were well-acquainted with the secular literature of their Christian neighbours, which influenced their own literary production enormously, certainly since Immanuel ben Solomon produced the first Hebrew sonnets at the end of the thirteenth century. Still, the cultural transfer did not include themes of Greek and Latin mythology, certainly not before the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and not significantly in later periods either.[16] Whenever it was attempted, the rabbinical authorities

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[13] W.J. Mickle, ed., *The Lusiad or The Discovery of India—An epic poem. Translation from the original Portuguese by Luis de Camoens*, reprint of the 1776 ed.] (Oxford 1979).

[14] M. de Faria y Souza, *Comentarios a la Lusiada de Luis de Camões*, 2 vols (Madrid 1639). Also listed in the inventories of Portuguese intellectuals in Amsterdam (see Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 305).

[15] Cf. M. de Faria e Sousa, *Información en favor de Manuel de Faria i Sousa sobre la acusación que se hizo en el Tribunal del santo officio de Lisboa, a los comentarios que escrivió a las Lusiadas del poeta Luis de Camoens* (Madrid[?] 1640[?]).

[16] One of those exceptional figures was Azariah de' Rossi (1511–78), who not only read Greek and Latin historical and philosophical works, but also Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, see Bonfil's introduction to Azariah de' Rossi's 'Selected chapters' (R. Bonfil, ed., *Kitve Azaria min ha-adumim*, (Jerusalem 1991) 28–30. Another special case is that of Abraham ben Samuel Mordecai Zacuto (1452–1515), who inserted names from Greek mythology and history in his book *Sefer yuchasin* ('Book of Lineage') in the parts dealing with the time of the Patriarchs and the First and Second Temple periods for the purpose of synchronization. According to him, Jupiter lived in the time of Abraham,

offered strong resistance. At the beginning of the seventeenth century there was controversy over Rabbi David del Bene (alias Elieser David Mehatob, who died in 1635) because he used quotations from works by Italian (non-Jewish) authors and names of pagan gods in his sermons. He went even further by speaking of the 'Holy Diana' ('quella santa Diana') in the synagogue.[17] Although he was not punished with rabbinical excommunication (*herem*), he was forced to renounce this kind of poetic licence. Only a few years later, other authors like Leon Modena (1571–1648) did not hesitate to introduce mythological figures from the pagan world to their literary works.[18] Providing a safe haven for the Sephardi Jews and Marranos who maintained contact with the great Spanish literature of the sixteenth Century and penned works in Spanish and Portuguese, Italy was the country where Samuel Usque translated Petrarch's sonnets into Spanish. This translation is still regarded as 'one of the most successful endeavors of its kind.'[19] His book *Consolaçam as tribulaçoens de Israel* [Consolation for the Tribulation of Israel] came out in 1553 and is to this day considered a classic of Portuguese prose. It, too, incorporated pagan mythological themes and secular literature into an otherwise Jewish-religious context.

At first glance, the decision to translate a stanza of the controversial and somehow frivolous ninth Canto might surprise. Yet, the allegorical interpretation given by Camões himself and Faria e Sousa did not only allow the translator to deal with the frivolity of the stanza but also to free it from Christian connotations. This translation is an example of the complex process of cultural transfer and transformation the following will show.

The manuscript *Kinor dawid* is an exquisite florilegium of different secular poems in several languages (Portuguese, Castillan and French) with Hebrew translations.[20] The knowledge of Hebrew among the

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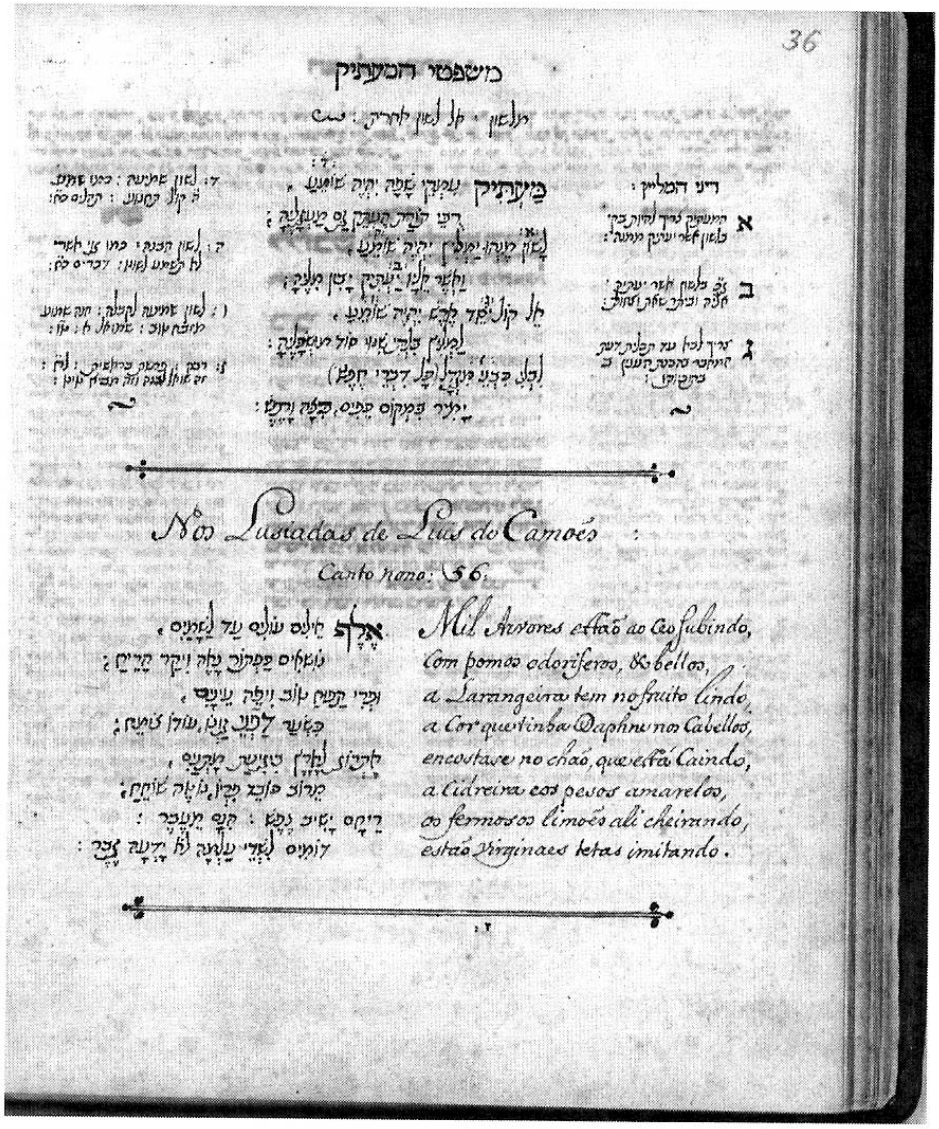
Minerva in the time of Jacob, and so forth, see Y. Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem. Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew* (London 1999) 123–125.

[17] To discuss this case, a rabbinical conference was held in 1598, in which Israel Sforno of Modena and others participated, see David Kaufmann, 'The Dispute about Sermons of David del Bene of Mantua,' *Jewish Quarterly Review* 8 (1896) 513–524.

[18] For instance, Modena lets Pluto, the god of the underworld, appear in his drama *L'Ester*, for a recent discussion, see R. Arnold: 'L'Ester' von Leon Modena (1619). Ein jüdisches Theaterstück in italienischer Sprache,' in M. Keuchen, S. Müller and A. Thiem, eds, *Inszenierungen der Heiligen Schrift* (Paderborn 2009) 93–112).

[19] D. Bregman, 'On the Emergence of the Hebrew Sonnet,' *Prooftexts* 11 (1991) 231–239, esp. 235.

[20] Franco Mendes also translated a poem by the famous Italian poet Pietro Metastasio that narrates the story of Judith into Hebrew, תשועת ישראל בידי יהודית [*Israel's salvation by Judith*], printed for the first time in Rödelheim in 1804.



Courtesy: *Ets Haim Library—Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam*

Amsterdam Jewry is difficult to gauge. Presumably they all received a Hebrew education sufficient to enable them to participate in Jewish worship. The few Hebrew phrases quoted in the poetry of several authors in Amsterdam could easily have been copied from other works. If someone displayed a higher level of Hebrew proficiency, this was reached by their own initiative.

The *Kinor dawid* also contains a bilingual poem (Castillan/Hebrew) that reads 'Jubila y canta agora, que esclarece [...]' (fol. 66). In general

the transcriptions of the original and the Hebrew translations stand side by side (see above figure), which makes a direct comparison possible. David Franco Mendes gives the source of the poem: 'Nos Lusiadas de Luis de Camões/Canto nono: 56'

Mil árvores estão ao céu subindo,
Com pomos odoríferos e belos;
A laranjeira tem no fruito lindo
A cor que tinha Dafne nos cabelos.
Encosta-se no chão, que está caindo,
A cidreira cos pesos amarelos;
Os fermosos limões ali, cheirando,
Estão virgíneas tetas imitando.[21]

אלף אילים עולים עד לשמים,
נושאים כפתור נאה ויקר הריח:
ופרי תפוח טוב ויפה עינים,
כשער דפני גונו, עודו צומח:
אתרוג לארץ ביגיעת מתנים,
מרוב כובד פריו, נוטה שוחח:
ריחם ישיב נפש: הנם מעבר:
דומים לשדי עלמה לא ידעה גבר:

The translation preserves the original's rhyme pattern with the couplet at the end, a-b-a-b-a-b-c-c. The first six lines are translated more or less literally: The word *elim* (אילים; 'trees' in line 1) is used in favor of *etzim* which has basically the same meaning, to translate 'árvores.' *Elim* is a biblical toponym (Ex. 15:27, 16:1 and Num. 33:9) and designates the oasis—with the twelve fountains and seventy palmtrees—where the Israelites stopped for the second time on their Exodus from Egypt. The translation *elim* is therefore an allusion to rest and peace. In both cases the *locus amoenus* restores the voyagers and gives a presentiment of the Promised Land for the Israelites while it preludes the homeland of the Portuguese sailors. The 'aranjeira' in Camoes' original is rendered into Hebrew by *etrog* (אתרוג; line 5) and not by *tappuz* (pl. *tappuzim*). *Etrogs* are primarily grown for Jewish ritual use in the Sukkot harvest festival. It is believed that this is 'the fruit of a goodly tree' mentioned in Lev.

[21] The English translation of Wickle (see note 4) reads: 'A thousand boughs aloft to heaven display / Their fragrant apples shining to the day; / The orange here perfumes the buxom air, / And boasts the golden hue of Daphne's hair. / Near to the ground each spreading bough descends, / Beneath her yellow load the citron bends; / The fragrant lemon scents the cooly grove; / Fair as when ripening for the days of love.' (*The Lusiad*, Book IX, 56th Octave). It is noteworthy that the English translation is more discrete and does not render the last line of the stanza literally but disguises the explicitly sexual allusions of the original text.

23:40: 'And you shall take of yourselves on the first day the fruit of a goodly tree, a palm branch, the myrtle branch, and the willow of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.' Clearly, the whole description matches perfectly with Camões', for this stanza speaks of the fauna and fruit produced on the Island, which is portrayed as a Paradise. On the other hand, there is a clear allusion to a Jewish cultural—and even religious—context that substitutes the secular (non-Jewish) theme with biblical tradition. The seventh and eighth line differ somewhat from the original;[22] again, they can be interpreted as a clear allusion to Jewish tradition when they speak of the 'scents that restore the soul,' thus referring to the incense of the *besomim* box used during havdalah.

The translator did not hesitate to refer to Daphne (דפני; line 4), a dryad, i.e. a kind of nymph, who was turned into a laurel tree by her father to save her from Apollo, who persecuted her in love (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 452–567).[23] This reflects the above described fashion in Jewish literature of the time. Nevertheless, the transfer of a pagan mythological figure shows the opposite direction of what has been shown in the aforementioned cases: instead of replacing secular elements by his authentic religious tradition, Franco Mendes integrated and accepted foreign elements.

A brief look at the contemporary Ashkenazi world confirms that similar attempts were made in the second half of the eighteenth century to enrich Hebrew literature with translations. In that period the first journal in Hebrew (*Kohelet mussar*, 1750–1758) was published by Moses Mendelssohn and Tobias Bock with the specific purpose of proving the ability of the Hebrew language to express anything, from religious themes and sacral contents to poetry (to which one of six articles ['Gates'] is dedicated to; it also contains a Hebrew translation of a contemporary English Poem from 1742).[24] Evincing a predilection for the Enlightenment, authors like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Lessing and Wieland were chosen to be translated into Hebrew.[25] Thus, the *maskilim* tried to

[22] Literally: 'Their perfume [i.e., of the fruit] restores the soul, but they are unreachable / similar to the chest of a young girl, that has not yet known a man.'

[23] For the presence of historical and mythological motifs in the poetry of the Portuguese Sephardim in Amsterdam, see Pedro da Silva, *La poésie en langue portugaise*, 295.

[24] Cf. T. Kollatz, 'Hebräische Zeitschriften in Deutschland (1750–1856),' in M. Brenner, ed., *Jüdische Sprachen in deutscher Umwelt. Hebräisch und Jiddisch von der Aufklärung bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 2002) 43–48, esp. 43.

[25] For the importance of translating in the context of the Jewish Enlightenment, see Shmuel Werses *Trends and Forms in Haskalah Literature* (Jerusalem 1990) 390.

counterbalance the biblical and rabbinical texts.[26] In accordance with this, 'the literary academies may be considered as secular equivalents of the jesibot [institutions for the study of torah and talmud].'[27] The Ashkenazic *me'assifim*—a name the collaborators on another journal, the *Ha-me'assef* (*The gatherer*) liked to use for themselves—likewise tried to transpose literary forms and styles from contemporary, non-Jewish literature to Hebrew literature. This literary venture fused the will to increase the modes of expression of the Hebrew language and the wish to take part in *Weltliteratur*.[28] Franco Mendes collaborated eagerly on this very project, indicating that his *Kinor dawid* should be seen in a broader European context.

The same introduction of non-Jewish culture into Hebrew literature can be perceived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Italy, the Netherlands, and, with some delay, also within the Ashkenazi cultural sphere. If the continued use of Portuguese as the language of daily communication as well as of literary production and the widespread and wholesale retention of Iberian culture in general is an interesting and characteristic feature of the Sephardim in the Netherlands, it is even more important that a handful of learned men attempted to combine secular knowledge and literary taste with Jewish culture. By translating into Hebrew, they helped revive the ancient language, thus creating a precursor of secular Hebrew language use and literature. Undoubtedly, the *Kinor dawid* by David Franco Mendes is an excellent example for this cultural amalgamation.

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[26] 'Ils [les Maskilim] pensaient qu'il serait ainsi possible de contrer, ou de contre-balancer, le poids écrasant de la religion et du judaïsme rabbinique par la richesse de la tradition littéraire et culturelle non-juive des anciens.' From Shlomo Berger, 'Horace et la question de la culture hébraïque au XIX[e] siècle,' *Les Cahiers du Judaïsme* 14 (2003) 108–115, esp. 108.

[27] Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 302. The negative attitude of the rabbis towards secular poetry and the fact that literary production was the privilege of a rich minority as Nahon states in 'Amsterdam metropoli,' 167, accounts for the relative scarcity of academic publications.

[28] See S. Berger and I.E. Zwiep, 'Epigones and the Formation of New Literary Canons: Sephardi Anthologies in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam,' in idem, eds, *Epigonism and the Dynamic of Jewish Culture. Studia Rosenthaliana* 40 (2007–2008) 147–158. In Berlin, Moses Mendelssohn, in order to comply with the request of Gottfried Ephraim Lessing, translated in 1755 Rousseau's 'Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes' into German. For later translation of classical literature into Hebrew see C. Aslanov, 'Les voies de la traduction des œuvres de l'antiquité classique en hébreu. Comparaison de quelques traductions de texts poétiques,' *Les Études Classiques* 65 (1997) 193–210, and for Hebrew literature after Mendelssohn in general see W. Zeitlin, *Bibliotheca Hebraica post-Mendelssohniana. Bibliographisches Handbuch der neuhebräischen Literatur seit Beginn der Mendelssohn'schen Epoche bis zum Jahre 1890*. Second revised and extended edition (Leipzig 1891–1895).