Carmen Caballero-Navas

Writing in Hebrew in Romance-Speaking Settings. The *Sefer Ahavat Našim* and the Language of Medieval Hebrew Medical Texts·

Carmen Caballero-Navas
Universidad de Granada

1. Introduction

Around the mid-twelfth century, Hebrew became the language into which scientific and medical works were translated, copied, commented on and, to a lesser degree, originally written by western Jews. By the end of the century, the Hebrew medical corpus was launched, which was built predominantly on translations, although a few original works were also composed. Regardless their source, the first generations of translators and authors had to strive to transform Hebrew into a language apt to convey scientific and medical knowledge.

The *Sefer ahavat nashim*, or *Book of women's love,* is a Hebrew compilation of different kinds of knowledge relating to the care and preservation of the health and beauty of the human body, especially the female body. Although it has been preserved in only one late fifteenth century copy,[1] it was written by an unknown author, no later than the middle of the thirteenth century, in Catalonia or Provence. The work is eminently practical and, like other compilations of the late Middle Ages, is composed as a recipe book with hardly any theoretical input.

From a linguistic point of view, the *Book of women's love* is an extremely interesting work and, I believe, representative of the period and genre in which it was written. The analysis of the linguistic characteristics of this compilation proved very useful to establish the context and date of its composition, as well as some other features related to the process of its textual production and transmission (Caballero-Navas 2004, 15-23).

In this paper I will argue that the writing of the book was highly influenced by a Romance language: Catalan or Old Occitan, or both, since at the period in which the book was written, if we regard the middle of the 13th century as its date of composition, the relationship between both languages was certainly close (Nadal &Prats, 194-205; Riquer & Comas; Paden). I will also discuss how this influence takes place, acknowledging the importance of oral language, and how it affects the grammar, the lexicon and the spelling of the Hebrew in which the compilation was written.

2. Main linguistic features

The most distinctive linguistic characteristic of the book is the supposedly incorrect use of classical Hebrew grammar. The inconsistency in the use of grammatical gender

[1] MS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Pluteo 44.22/7. Fols. 94r-94v; 66r-80v; 54r-58r. It was edited and translated into English by Caballero-Navas (2004).
I have resumed my earlier work on this subject in the framework of the above-mentioned research project, one of whose aims is to recover aspects of Hispano-Hebrew legacy unattended or less attended to by scholars, which are the result of cultural contacts between different traditions. Based on the assumption that not all Hebrew written production has received the same attention from the academic community, the main objective of the research team is to provide further analysis of aspects not addressed so far and, in some cases, to recover a cultural legacy scarcely known. Texts are approached from current perspectives of research which bring light upon contexts of creation, transmission and reception, with especial attention to bi- and multilingual settings.

and number, and the disagreement between subject and verb are relatively frequent. This phenomenon is partly the result of the state of Hebrew usage at the end of the Middle Ages, but also of the compiler's imperfect knowledge of Hebrew grammar and, as I intend to demonstrate in this paper, of the influence of a Romance language upon his writing.

To see the medieval Hebrew language as a homogenous whole is to disregard the influence on it of the geographical, political, social and cultural differences in which Jewish communities developed during this long period. Throughout the Middle Ages, Jews adopted a new attitude to Hebrew, and used it in a variety of ways, according to the territory in which they were living and the literary genre for which they required it. In the effort to adapt Hebrew to the new demands made by the areas of knowledge on which authors (especially translators) were writing, they were careless over style and created grammatical irregularities, making the criterion of utility or תועלת –that the text be comprehensible to the users– more important than linguistic purity or צחות הלשון (Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 251-264; Ferre 1991 and 1998-99; Assis & Magdalena, and Morag).

The Hebrew of the *Book of women's love* shares this criterion of utility, in which ease of comprehension by possible readers prevails over all else. This is provided by a great number of transliterations and loan translations of terms, mainly related to the preparation of remedies, which readers probably knew better in the Arabic, Latin or Romance forms, than in those of classical Hebrew, if they existed. Regarding the supposed grammatical errors in the book, although they may in part be due to the linguistic incompetence of the compiler, I should point out that, having compared the text with other sources,[2] the Hebrew in which other late medieval treatises are written is in general lacking in grammatical correctness. Some of the grammatical irregularities that can be observed in the *Book of women's love*, shared in different degrees with those other late medieval Hebrew treatises, are: the almost complete disappearance of the particle את of the accusative; on occasions, the incorrect use of the construct forms; and profuse disagreements between the number and gender of the nouns, adjectives and verbs (Caballero-Navas 2004, 17). The influence of the Romance language is evident in the grammar, but especially in the vocabulary. It can be perceived in the use of Romance words and also in the spelling of medical and pharmacological terms whose etymology is Latin/Greek and, to a lesser degree, Arabic.

2.1. Grammar

Similarly to Romance vernaculars, Hebrew is a gender-specific language. Interestingly, the lack of agreement between the grammatical gender of nouns, adjectives and pronominal suffixes, and between those and verbs, is one of the most discernible grammatical mistakes in the book. Such grammatical disagreements are due to a variety of factors, among the most important of which are:

1. The ambiguity produced by the morpheme of different gender which some Hebrew nouns take in the plural (Assis & Magdalena, 9). This feature often caused non-sufficiently competent authors, translators and copyist to make mistakes regarding the gender of the accompanying adjective: בצים אחרים (f. +

---

[2] The following are some samples of late medieval Hebrew works that have been studied in this respect: *Sefer Hanisyonot* (Leibowitz-Marcus); *Sefer ha-toledet* (Barkai 1991); *Ziḵron ha-ḥolayim ha-hovim be-klei ha-herayon, Terufot le-herayon niqr'a magen ha-roš*, and *Ha-ma'amar be-toldah niqr'a sod ha-'ibur* (Barkai 1998); *Ša'ar ha-našim* (Caballero-Navas 2003); *Sefer refu'ot* (Blasco); and *Še'ar yašub* (Caballero-Navas 2006).

m.) (109); שבועות שלימות‎ (m. + f., 109); הנמלים גדולים‎ (f. + m.) (117).[3]

2. The tendency to use the supposedly generic masculine:

האוכל תמרים תכף אחר לידתה‎: if she eats (m. in Heb.) dates immediately after childbirth.

הנושא...תלוי בצוארה‎: [to prevent pregnancy]: if she hangs (m. in Heb.) from her neck...

I would like to stress here that the continual use of the masculine grammatical gender –confusing grammatical gender and the sex of people– is common to the history of western textual production, with the result that women have been obliterated from the texts (Grupo NOMBRA; Violi; Rivera Garretas).

3. The confusion between the masculine second person singular and the feminine third person singular of the future tense of verbs, which in Hebrew share the same pattern.

4. The influence of the gender of the nouns in the Romance language spoken in the geographical context where the book was produced, or by the scribe or compiler (Assis & Magdalena, 10).

In my view, the impact of the Romance language on the compiler (or the scribe) contributes in a very notable proportion to the inconsistency of the grammatical genders, causing continual disagreements (Caballero-Navas 2012, 340-341). We can classify the typology of these disagreements attending to the following phenomena:

a. Adjectives whose grammatical gender is different to that of the Hebrew noun to whom they follow, but similar to that of its equivalent Romance noun:

עכביש חיה‎ (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *aranya/aranha viva* (f.) (111)

מרקחת טוב‎ (f. + m.): Cat./Old Occ. *electuari bo/bon* (m.) (117, 149)

צמא גדולה‎ (m. + f.): Cat. and Old Occ. *molta set* (f.) (121, 167)

קמח לופיני ירוקה‎ (m. + f.): Cat. and Old Occ. *farina verda* [*de tramussos*] (f.) (123)

נתק יבשה‎ (m. + f.): Cat. and Old Occ. *crosta seca* (f.) (125)

עז לבנה‎ (m. + f.): Cat. and Old Occ. *cabra blanca* (f.) (127)

המים הטובות‎ (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *l'aigua/aiga bona* (f.) (127)

מים מנוסות‎ (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *aigua/aiga provada* (f.) (131)

מים עשויה‎ (m.p. + f.s.): Cat./Old Occ. *aigua/aiga feta* (f.s.)[4] (129)

---

[3] The numbers in parenthesis refer to the page of the Hebrew edition where the terms and phrases appear (Caballero-Navas, 2004). All the examples that follow will be also referred to the edition in like manner.
[4] This is also an instance of disagreement in grammatical number: the noun "water" is masculine plural in Hebrew (מים‎), while it is feminine singular in the Romance languages [agua, aqua, aigua, aiga, eau]. This is the reason why the adjective, disagreeing completely with the noun, has been written in the feminine singular.

שחורות (פנים) (m. + f.): Cat. and Old Occ. *cara negra* (f.) (127)

צמר לחה (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *llana humida/lana umita* (f.) (133)

ורד אדומות (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *rosa vermella/roza vermelha* (f.) (135)

ורדים שלגיטים וטובות (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *roses... bones/rozas... bonas* (f.) (149)

ורדים אדומות (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *roses vermelles/rozas vermelhas* (f.) (155)

זה מרקחת שהוא מנוסה וטוב (f. + m.): Cat. *aquest electuari està provat i és bo* (m.) (147)

בשר שמנה (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *carn greixosa/grayshosa* (f.) (151)

(פתילה) טוב (f. + m.): Cat./Old Occ. *pessari bo/bon* (m.) (163)

תחבושת טוב (f. + m.): Cat./Old Occ. *emplastre bo/bon* (m.) (165)

מרקחת מופלא (f. + m.): Cat. and Old Occ. *electuari meravellós* (m.) (165)

מרקחת יבש (f. + m.): Cat. and Old Occ. *electuari sec* (m.) (167)

כף קטנה (m. + f.): Cat./Old Occ. *cullera/culhiera petita* (f.) (169)

תולעת שחור... ואם אדום (f. + m.): Cat./Old Occ. *verm negre... i vermell/vermelh* (m.) (145)

גפרית חי (f. + m.): Cat. and Old Occ. *sofre viu* (m.) (171)

b. Pronouns and pronominal suffixes whose grammatical gender is different to that of the noun that works as their antecedent in the sentence, but similar to that of its Romance equivalent:[5]

האיש ההוא שנתנה לה (תפוח) (noun m., suffix f.): Cat. and Old Occ. *poma* (f.) (109)

והוא כמו תולעת ויש לו (noun f., suffix m.): Cat. and Old Occ. *verm* (m.) (109)

עכביש חיה ושימה (noun m., suffix f.): Cat./Old. Occ. *aranya/aranha* (f.) (111)

עוקצה תוך אזנה (מחט) (noun m., suffix f.): Cart. *agulla* (f.); Old Occ. *agulha/gulha* (f.) (113)

ישים צפרדע ויקשור עליה (noun m., suffix f.): Cat. *granota* (f.); Old Occ. *granoilla/granolha* (f.) (115)

מרקחת טוב לזה ואין דומה לו (noun f., suffix m.): Cat. and Old Occ. *electuari* (m.) (117)

ויניחנה (מים) (noun m.p., suffix f.s.): Cat./Old Occ. *aigua/aiga* (f.s.)[6] (123)

במים שנתבשל בה (noun m.p, suffix f.s.): Cat./Old Occ. *aigua/aiga* (f.s.)[7] (165)

---

[5] Pronouns and pronominal suffixes, as well as the noun to which they refer, have been underlined for the sake of clarity.

[6] For disagreement in grammatical number due to the influence of the Romance, see above note 4.

צמר לחה ותשה (noun m., suffix f.): Cat./Old. Occ. *llana/lana* (f.) (133)

(שורש מלווא) וכתשנה וטגנה (noun m., suffix f.): Old. Cat. *raïl/rael*; Old Occ. *raïtz/rays* (f.) (157)

אם ישאנה (שורש) (noun m., suffix f.): Old. Cat. *raïl/rael*; Old Occ. *raïtz/rays* (f.) (171)

c. Disagreement between the grammatical gender of subject and verb, attending to the grammatical gender of the Romance equivalent of the noun:[8]

כל הזמן שתהיה שם (הקשר) (noun m., verb f.): Cat./Old Occ. *lligadura/liadura* (f.) (115)

לנתק יבשה שנתיישנה (noun m., verb f.): Cat. and Old Occ. *crosta* (f.) (125)

The fact that certain nouns are systematically in disagreement with the adjectives or verbs, which follow or precede them, gives consistency to my argument. That is, these discrepancies are not the result of scribal mistakes, but of the ascendance upon his writing of the language that the compiler (or the scribe) was most familiar with. Most probably his mother tongue.

2.2. Lexicon: Terms transliterated from other languages
One of the main complexities that the translation of the *Book of women's love* presented was the great number of non-Hebrew words written in Hebrew characters or *le'azim*, and of Hebrew words whose known meaning did not correspond to the needs of the text. As Hebrew scholars have established regarding the medieval stage of that language, the necessity to adapt to the new cultural requirements obliged Hebrew to acquire lexical resources to make up its deficiencies. Thus, the pioneers of medical and scientific writing created a lexicon of terms and expressions for medicine and pharmacology, which did not yet exist in Hebrew.[9] In the same vein, some authors elaborated glossaries of terms to facilitate the identification and understanding of medical, pharmacological, and technical terminology in a multilingual context.[10]

Neologisms were made from words or roots of words in classical Hebrew and given new meanings, semantic borrowing was practised and words from other languages transliterated (Ferre 1991, 90). Therefore, this compilation uses a series of Biblical and/or Rabbinical terms whose semantic content was adapted to denote a reality for which Hebrew had no name. These new meanings did not appear out of nowhere, obviously, but were the result of a process of transformation from the semantic field to which they belonged and arose as a consequence of either the attempt to qualify and

---

[7] Ibidem.

[8] Nouns and verbs have been underlined for the sake of clarity.

[9] During the nineties of the 20th century, scholars began to pay attention to the linguistic strategies and techniques developed by medieval translators and authors of science and medicine to adapt Hebrew to new uses. For example, Sáenz-Badillos (1993, 251-264), Ferre (1991, and 1998-99), Assis & Magdalena, and Morag. Later on, the numerous and relevant studies of Gerrit Bos –often published in collaboration with other scholars– on medical and general Hebrew terminology, devised in the main by translators from Arabic into Hebrew, as well as on medical glossaries and synonym lists, have enhanced our understanding of medieval Hebrew terminology. For some examples of his work, see Bos & Ferre & Mensching, Bos & Mensching (2000 and 2015). and Bos (2011, 2013, 2016).

[10] Apart from the works by Bos and his collaborators cited in the previous note, see Olmo & Magdalena, as well as Magdalena.

specify the content so as to signify a new reality, or through metonymy based on semantic transference. Examples of the preciseness of meaning are תחבושת, which in classical Hebrew means compress, bandage, and in medieval medical texts changes to mean poultice;[11] and מרקחת (drug, mixture of spices), which in this text – and in others (Mcvaugh & Ferre, 92-93, 106-107 and 110-111)– signifies "electuary".[12] Both terms have been identified with their new meanings to such a point that, when they appear in the manuscript, they are given the grammatical gender of the vernacular translation of the word, not that of the Hebrew:

מרקחת טוב (noun f. + adj. m.): Cat. *electuari bo* (m.) (117, 149)

זה המרקחת (adj. m. + noun f.): Cat. *aquest electuari* (m.) (141, 147, 159)

זה התחבושת (adj. m. + noun f.): Cat. *aquest emplastre* (m.) (151)

זה מרקחת שהוא מנוסה וטוב (noun f. + pronouns and adjs. m.): Cat. *Aquest electuari està provat i és bo* (m.) (147)

תחבושת טוב (noun f. + adj. m.): Cat. *Emplastre bo* (m.) (165)

מרקחת מופלא (noun f. + adj. m): Cat. *Electuari meravellós* (m.) (165)

מרקחת יבש (noun fem. + adj. m.): Cat. *Electuari sec* (m.) (167)

Regarding metonymy, the Hebrew word פתילה, which signifies *wick* or *plait,* acquires, as a result of semantic transference, the meaning of *pessary* (a medical substance introduced into the body by means of a vaginal suppository).[13] The same happens to the term מוך (cotton wool), which at times in this manuscript also takes the meaning of *pessary*.[14] Although it should be pointed out that in these two specific instances the process of semantic transference is similar to that which they have undergone in Romance languages. For example, in medical treatises written in Castilian, we find that *mecha* and *tritafe* (wick) are also synonyms for *pessary,*[15] which raises the question whether this is a case of metonymy or a loan translation from another language.

With regard to loan translations, it is extremely difficult to discover from which language they have been produced and when they became current. This occurs because the language of scientific works in general has several underlying strata consisting of the original Greek, the translations and original works written in Arabic, and those written in Latin. Nevertheless, in the *Book of women's love*, it is evident that expressions have been borrowed that are common in the Latin and vernacular treatises devoted to women. For example, the use of the word "flowers", פרחים, for menses,[16] or that of "mother", אם, for the uterus.[17] Ron Barkai has suggested that the predominance of the word רחם (*reḥem*) for the uterus shows a textual influence of Arabic, in which a very similar term exists (*raḥim*), while in the texts translated from or influenced by Latin medical literature the term אם is preferred, which, according to Barkai, is the translation of the word *matrix* (Barkai 1998, 54). Although I share with him the view that the differing

---

[11] Caballero-Navas (2004, 119, 121, 125, 141, 149, 151, 153, 155, 165, 169, 171, 173).

[12] Ibidem (117, 119, 139, 141, 147, 149, 151, 157, 159, 165, 167, 171, 173).

[13] Ibidem (153, 155, 157, 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171)

[14] Ibidem (115, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157, 159, 161, 167).

[15] See the glossary of Bernard of Gordon, *Lilio de Medicina* (1991).

[16] On this tradition, see Green (21). For the occurrence of the word פרחים with the meaning of menstruation in the compilation, see Caballero-Navas (2004, 157, 159, 171).

[17] Ibidem (149, 153, 156, 157, 161, 171, 172, 173).

use of each of these two terms can serve to uncover their different origins, I believe, nevertheless, that, at least in the case of the *Book of women's love*, the term אם is not the loan translation of the word *matrix*, but of *mother* [*madre, mare, maire*], the Romance translation of the Latin term. This Romance word was used often in treatises written in or translated into the vernacular[18] and, undoubtedly, in the linguistic surroundings in which the compiler "heard" many of the other terms he has introduced in this work.

All the same, the option most used in the *Sefer ahavat nashim* to fill the terminological gaps in Hebrew is the transliteration of words from other languages. I have counted approximately 470 non-Hebrew terms. However, I have noted transliterated or *aljamiado* words of which Hebrew versions already existed; in fact, at times, the Hebrew term is alternated with the transliterated one. Both usages appear to arise partly from the writer's deficient knowledge of the Hebrew lexicon but also from an undeniable influence of the local vernacular language. This indicates that the compiler and the possible readers, even when they knew the Hebrew term, were perhaps more familiar with the Romance use and preferred it for that reason. Some examples are:

> Garlic: Heb. שום; transliteration, אל [᾿al] (Cat. *all*) (133).
>
> Citron: Heb. אתרוג; transliteration, סיטרי [siṭri] (Rom. *cidra*, Lat. *pomum citrinum*) (149).
>
> Rind, peel: Heb. קליפה; transliteration, קורטיצי [qorṭiṣi] (Rom. *corteza*) (149).
>
> Honey: Heb. דבש; transliterations, מלי,מליץ,מיאל [meli, meliṣ, mi᾿el] (Rom. *mel*, *miel*) (133, 149).
>
> Cupping glasses: Heb. כוסות / כלי / קרני מציצה; transliteration, ונטוזא [wenṭoza] (Rom. *ventosa*) (157).

Among the *aljamiado* terms are to be found, mainly, words relating to medicinal products and therapeutic procedures, units of measurement (most of Greek and Latin origin) and, occasionally, organs and parts of the body. But also words of daily life taken more directly from the language spoken in the compiler's or copyist's background. For example,

> ארמושא [᾿ermoś᾿a]: Cat. *hermosa* (beautiful) (111).
>
> קורנללא [qornel.l᾿a]: Cat./Old Occ. *cornella/cornelha* (raven) (143).
>
> קטורטיס [qaṭorṭes]: Cat./Old Occ. *catorze* (fourteen) (139).

Another feature I have found interesting, it is the substitution of the preposition של (of) by the transliteration of the Romance preposition de – ד and די – prefixing or preceding the word, in transliterated phrases. Although the use of the preposition די is found in Rabbinic literature – due to Aramaic influence (Pérez Fernández, 27) – I believe that in this context it is the result of the influence of the vernacular. For example:

> בייש דאידרשטירישטי [bayyaś de᾿idraśṭereśṭe]: berries of ground ivy (133).

---

[18] Precisely in the above-mentioned Castilian version of Bernard de Gordon's *Lilium medicinae*. Also in other vernacular treatises, as the Catalan called *Tròtula,* of which only one 14th-century manuscript is preserved; and the French treatise, *Des aides de la maire et de ses medicines*, of which three 15th-century manuscript copies from the south of France are known to us. See Cabré i Pairet, and Caballero-Navas (2004, 14, 22, 27-31).

קנדיקטי דישטריון [qondiqṭi de-śaṭiryon]: *condito* of satyrion (151).

גומא די גרגן [gom'a de gargan]: gum dragant (129).

אלום די פלומא ['alum de plum'a]: feathered alum (125).

Many of the transliterations are of terms which origin is Greek, Latin or, in a lesser degree, Arabic, but which have been already integrated into Romance languages. This seems to be reflected in the pronunciation, which as a reading of many of them shows, it is very close to the form found in the medieval stage of Romance languages and, even, at times, today. In the same way, plural endings frequently take a sibilant as a desinence of number, a sibilant that does not always appear in the plural of Latin declensions. As I will discuss below, this sibilant is often preceded by the Hebrew letter yod (י), which I have interpreted as the Catalan ending -es- for the feminine plural (Caballero-Navas, 2004, 29).

Nevertheless, the question as to which Romance language is hidden behind the transliterations and influences the book's grammar is still difficult to answer with absolute certainty. The level of linguistic homogeneity found in various treatises (at least those that I have consulted) [19] written or translated into Hebrew in different regions of the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula and Southern France, makes it difficult to identify the Romance language that has influenced this work.[20] When an attempt is made to ascribe to a particular Romance language the origin of a transliterated word, one discovers that this spelling or pronunciation has been found in, or is even common to, several of these languages. The reason for this similarity among technical words in Romance languages is that most scientific, technical and pharmacological terms came to them largely through Latin, which in turn took them from Greek or, at some extent, from Arabic, and many are learned expressions acquired from translations of scientific works. As a result, they lack an evolutionary process, which could produce differences. All the same, I believe I have identified in this text a number of terms that seem to have been transliterated from Catalan and/or Occitan, languages that until the 13th century shared lexicon and grammatical structures. Yet, and despite the strong lexicographical similarities between both languages, the actual spelling of these terms seems, in general, to be closer to Catalan:

אורפימנט ['orpiment]: Cat. and Old Occ. *orpiment* (orpiment) (121, 123).

אל ['al]: Cat./Old Occ. *all/alh* (garlic)[21] (133).

אנשינץ ['enśenṣ]: Cat. and Old Occ. *encens* (incense) (155).

אסקומא ['esqum'a]: Cat. and Old Occ. *escuma* (foam) (139).

אשקורול ['eśqurol]: Cat./Occ. *esquirol/escurol* (esquirol) (127).

אליסנדרי ['alesandre]: Cat. *aleixandre* (alexanders) (155).

בוריש [boriś]: Old Cat. *borraix, boraix*; Old. Occ. *borrais* (borax) (129, 163.

---

[19] Apart from the medical texts cited above in note 2, I have also consulted the following medieval dictionaries and published glossaries: Sáenz-Badillos (1987), Olmo & Magdalena, Díaz Esteban, Feliu, Magdalena, and Baum.

[20] Bos and Mesching also point to the lack vowels as a factor for ambiguity in the identification of the language to which a Romance word belongs (2000, 52).

[21] According to Diaz Esteban, a single letter *lamed* is used to reproduce the final "ll" in Catalan (1983, 76).

171).

גיניברי [genibre]: Cat. and Old Occ. *genibre* (ginger) (147).

דיאמנט [di'amanṭ]: Cat. *diamant* (diamond) (173).

ויאליש [wi'oleś]: Cat. *violes*; Old Occ. *violas/violetas* (violets) (131, 161).

מברילא [mabrel'a]: Cat. *maurella*; Occ. *maurela/morela* (deadly nightshade) (161).

מגניט [magneṭ]: Cat./Old Occ. *magnet/magneta* (magnet) (143)

מנא גרנדה [man'a granadah]: Cat. *magrana, mangrana*; Old Occ. *milgrana* (pomegranate) (167).

מרובי [marubi]: Cat.?Old Occ. *marrubi/marrubium* (horehound) (151, 173).

ניאילא, נייאילא, ניילא [ni'el'a, nii'el'a, niel'a]: Cat./Occ. *niella/niela* (black cumin) (159, 161, 163).

נקרא [naqr'a]: Cat. *nacre, nacra* (mother of pearl) (173).

פוליאול [poli'ol]: Cat. *poliol*; Old Occ. *pulegi* (pennyroyal) (157, 159, 173)

פיניון, פיניוש [pinyon, pinyoś]: Cat. *pinyó, pinyons*; Occ. *pinho* (pine nuts) (143, 149).

פשטנגש [paśṭanagaś]: Cat. and Old Occ. *pastenaga, pastanaga* (parsnip) (141)

רוזט [rozaṭ]: Cat./Old Occ. *rosat/rozat* (of roses) (167)

רוזֶש, רוזיש [roześ]: Cat./Old Occ. *roses/rozas* (roses) (109, 147, 167)

רומני [romani]: Cat. *romaní/romanill*; Occ. *romanim* (rosemary) (145, 147, 149,151, 153, 163, 171).

2.3. Spelling and phonetics

The spelling in the manuscript is quite heterogeneous due, principally, to the large number of words transliterated from other languages. The diversity of the spellings used for one particular term, which produces a great number of variants, is the result of several factors but the most obvious, because it occurs so frequently in the manuscript, is the difficulty of transliterating the phonemes of those other languages into Hebrew characters. That is to say, the difficulty of adapting the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to the phonemes it is trying to reproduce. This is due in part, to the ambiguous phonetic value of some Hebrew characters and to the confusion produced by the similarity between the sound of some Latin and Hebrew letters. But it is due also to the alternation of Hebrew whole of defective writing, and to the transliteration of the same term from two different languages (Garbell, Diaz Esteban). Some examples are:

a. Similar phonetic value of some Hebrew letters:

Birthwort: אריסטולוגיאה, ארישטולוגיאה ['arisṭology'ah, 'ariśṭology'ah] (159, 163, 171)

Camphor: כמפרא, קמפורא [kamfor'a, qamfor'a] (125, 129, 167)

Marjoram: מגורנה, מיוראנא [magoranah, mayor'an'a] (139, 163, 167).

Mastic: מצטיק, משטיק: [masṭiq, maśṭiq] (125, 129, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 147, 149, 151, 157, 161, 165, 167, 169).

b. Alternation of whole or defective writing:

Spiquenard: אשפיק נרד, אשפיק נרדי: ['eśpiq nard, 'eśpiq nardi] (119, 133, 139, 145, 147, 149, 153, 155, 159, 162, 165).

Storax calamita: אישטורק קלמיטי, אשטורק קלמיטי: ['ēśṭoraq qalamiti, 'eśṭoraq qalamiti] (147, 153, 155).

Camomile: קאמאמילא, קאממילא, קממילא [q'am'amil'a, q'amamil'a, qamamil'a] (123, 155, 163).

c. Transliteration of a same term from two different languages:

Lee: פורסי, פראסי [fursi, pr'asi]: Ar. *furasiyyūm*; Lat. *prasium* (161).

Pennyroyal: פוליאול, פוליגי [poli'ol, pulegi]: Cat. *poliol*; Old. Occ. *pulegi*; Lat. *pulegium*.(133, 139, 145, 149, 151, 163, 171)

Violet: ויאוליטא, ויאוליש [wi'oleṭ'a, wi'oleś]: Cat. *violes*; Lat. *violeta*. (145, 159, 161, 165).

Rosmary: רוזמרין, רומני, רוש מרין [rozmarin, romani, roś marin]: Cat. *romaní/romanill*; Lat. *ros marinus* (145, 147, 149,151, 153, 163, 171).

In my view, the heterogeneity of the spelling of the transliterated words is, on the one hand, a reflection of the use of these terms in vernacular languages, in which also a wide range of variants of many of them are found, and on the other, the phonetic evolution of Hebrew in contact with the languages surrounding it. It was precisely this diversity of variants, together with a study of some vernacular glossaries[22] that made me consider the possibility that the transliterations were based on sounds, on the actual pronunciation of the language spoken in the social environment. The pronunciation of many of the transliterated terms that appear in the treatise is very close to the documented spelling of these words in Romance languages. The manuscript itself contains certain indications that prove the influence of the spoken Romance language on the text written in Hebrew. That is, the oral influence of local languages upon written Hebrew. Often, when a synonym is added to a certain word the compiler – or the copyist – puts before it the phrases "which they call ... ", "called ... ", and even on one occasion he writes specifically "in the foreign language *cornella*, which I have *heard* is a small raven" (my emphasis), *cornella* being a Catalan term. Moreover, I would like to point out that the spelling of the transliterated words in the *Book of women's love* shares strong correspondences with Catalan spelling, which strengthen the argument in favour of being the Catalan the language that influences this book. I particularly note the use of *yod* (י) and the sibilant *šin/śin* (ש) as morphemes of the feminine plural, which I have interpreted as the Catalan ending -*es*- for that grammatical gender and number [ויאוליש, *violes*; רוזיש, *roses*] (Caballero-Navas 2004, 20; Bos-Mesching 2011, 53). It is also

---

[22] See above note 19.

significant the use of *nun-yod* (ני) to represent the Catalan sound *ny* [פיניון, *pinyó*], which in old Occitan is represented by *nh*; and the use of double *lamed*, to represent Catalan *ll* [קורנללא, *cornella*], which in old Occitan is *lh*.

3. Conclusion

I have argued at the beginning of this paper that, what appears to be the compiler's incorrect use of Hebrew could be a consequence of a number of factors deriving from contemporary usage, a male-centred view of the world, and even the man's own limited knowledge of Hebrew grammar. Nevertheless, I believe that the influence of the Romance language of the area in which the book was written or compiled provides the work with some of its more relevant features. The weight of the Catalan (or Occitan) upon the book has contributed to certain deviations from the Hebrew grammar and has provided the text with a wide range of non-Hebrew terminology. Either features, though in different degrees, are present in a considerable number of Hebrew medical treatises written or translated at this period.

It is worth remembering here that similar to the usage of Arabic by the Jewish communities in Islamic countries, Romance languages had become the mother languages of Jews in the West. Actually, the expertise in the use of the vernacular enhanced learned Jews' access to works written or translated into the Romance languages, whose use for scientific purposes had experienced a shift from the 13th century onwards (Cifuentes; Alberni, Badia, Cifuentes & Fidora).

The *Book of women's love* provides us of another instance of the close contact between Jewish and vernacular production on healthcare. This contact, perceived in its linguistic features, is also shown by the important parallels this compilation shares with the Catalan treatise called *Tròtula* and the French treatise known as *Des aides de la maire et de ses medicines* (Cabré; Caballero-Navas 2004, 14, 22, 27-31). .In my view, such works as the Book of women's love are a key for the better understanding of the links between Latin and Hebrew medical traditions in the Middle Ages. We can trace textual influence in them and, at the same time, they are a mirror of the interaction between people of Christian and Jewish communities.

Cited works

Alberni, Anna & Badia, Lola & Cifuentes, Lluís & Fidora, Alexander eds. *El saber i les llengües vernacles a l'època de Llull i Eiximenis /Knowledge and Vernacular languages in the age of Llull and Eiximenis.* Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2012.

Assis, Yom Tov & Magdalena Nom de Déu, José Ramón. *Aljamía romance en los documentos hebraiconavarros (siglo XIV)*, Barcelona, 1992.

Barkai, Ron. *Les infortunes de Dinah, ou la gynécologie juive au Moyen Âge.* Paris: Cerf, 1991.

---. *A History of Gynaecological Hebrew Texts in the Middle Ages.* Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Baum, Ilil. "Judeo-Catalan, Jewish Multilingualism and Linguistic Contact in Late Medieval Catalonia", PhD Disertation. Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2018.

Bernard of Gordon, *Lilio de Medicina. Un manual básico de medicina medieval.* Critical Edition of the Spanish Version of 1495, by John Cull and Brian Dutton. Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1991.

Blasco Orellana, Meritxell. "Un Séfer refu'ot hebraicocatalán del siglo XIV: edición, traducción y estudio del Ms Firkovitch I Heb 338 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Rusia." PhD Dissertation, Universitat de Barcelona, 2006.

Bos, Gerrit, "The Creation and Innovation of Medieval Hebrew medical terminology: Shem Tov Ben Isaac, Sefer ha-Shimmush." In Anna Akasoy & Wim Raven eds. *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages. Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber.* Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008. 195-218.

---. *Novel Medical and General Hebrew Terminology from the 13th Century. Translations by Hillel Ben Samuel of Verona, Moses Ben Samuel Ibn Tibbon, Shem Tov Ben Isaac of Tortosa, and Zeraḥyah Ben Isaac Ben She'altiel Ḥen.* Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 27. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

---. *Novel Medical and General Hebrew Terminology from the 13th Century*, Vol. 2. Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 30. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

---. *Novel Medical and General Hebrew Terminology. Hippocrates' Aphorisms in the Hebrew Tradition.* Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 37. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Bos, Gerrit & Ferre, Lola & Mensching, Guido. "Textos médicos Hebreos medievales con elementos Romances y Latinos: Edición y análisis del "Sefer ha-Shimmush" y otras listas de sinónimos." IANUA 1 (2000): 32-42.

Bos, Gerrit & Mensching, Guido. "Macer Floridus. A Middle Hebrew Fragment with Romance Elements." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 91 (2000): 17-51.

---."The Black Death in Hebrew Literature: Abraham Bben Solomon Ḥen's *Tractatulus de pestilentia*." Jewish Studies Quarterly 18/1 (2011): 32-63.

---. "Arabic-Romance medico-botanical synonym lists in Hebrew manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula and Italy (Vatican Library, fourteenth–fifteenth century)." *Aleph* 15/1 (2015): 9-61.

Caballero-Navas, Carmen. "Asuntos de mujeres: Transmisión y recepción de ideas sobre salud femenina en la producción textual hebrea medieval." *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 52 (2003): 135-162.

---. *Sefer Ahavat Nashim. The Book of Women's Love and Jewish Medieval Medical Literature on Women.* London: Kegan Paul, 2004.

---. "Algunos *secretos de mujeres* revelados: el *Še'ar yašub* y la recepción y transmisión

del *Trotula* en hebreo." *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 55 (2006): 381-425.

---. "Las lenguas científicas de las comunidades judías catalanas." In Anna Alberni, Lola Badia & Lluís Cifuentes & Alexander Fidora eds., *El saber i les llengües vernacles a l'època de Llull i Eiximenis /Knowledge and Vernacular languages in the age of Llull and Eiximenis.* Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2012. 331-345.

Cabré i Pairet, Montserrat. "From a Master to a Laywoman: a Women's Manual of Self-Help." *Dynamis* 20 (2000): 371-393.

Cifuentes, Lluis. "'Translatar sciència en romans catalanesch': la difusió de la medicina en catalá a la Baixa Edad Mitjana i el Renaixement." *Lengua i Literatura* 8 (1997): 7-42.

Díaz Esteban, Fernando. "Catalanismos en documentos hebreos medievales." *Anuario de Filología* 9 (1983): 69-86.

Feliu, Eduard. "Mots catalans en textos hebreus: els dictàmens de Salomó ben Adret." *Calls* 3 (1988-89): 53-73.

Ferre, Lola. "La terminología médica en las versiones hebreas de textos latinos." *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 40/2 (1991): 87-107.

---."Hebrew Translations from Medieval Treatises of Montpellier." *Koroth* 13 (1998-99), 21-36

Green, Monica. *The Trotula: a Medieval Compendium of Women's Health*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Grupo NOMBRA, *Nombra: La representación del femenino y el masculino en el lenguaje*. Madrid: Instituto de la Mujer, 1995.

Leibowitz, J.O. & Marcus, S. *The Book of Medical Experiences Attributed to Abraham ibn Ezra.* Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984.

Magdalena Nom de Déu, José Ramón. *Un glosario hebraicoaljamiado trilingüe y doce "aqrabadin" de origen catalán (siglo XV)*. Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1993.

Martí de Riquer & Antoni Comas, *Història de la literatura catalana*, vol I. Barcelona: Ariel, 1980 [1a ed. 1964].

Mcvaugh, Michael & Ferre, Lola. *The Tabula Antidotarii of Armengaud Blaise and its Hebrew Translations*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2000.

Morag, Shelomo. "Hebrew in Medieval Spain: Aspects of Evolution and Transmission" *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 44 (1995): 3-21.

Nadal, Josep M. & Prats, Modest. *Història de la llengua catalana, vol I (dels inicis fins al segle XV)*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1982. 194-205.

Olmo Lete, Gregorio del and Magdalena Nom de Deu, José Ramón. "Documento hebreo-catalán de farmacopea medieval." *Anuario de Filología* 6 (1980): 159-187.

Paden, William D. *An Introduction to Old Occitan*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1998.

Pérez Fernández, Miguel. *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*. Leiden: Brill, 1997 [original ed., *La lengua de los sabios*. Valencia, 1992].

Rivera Garretas, María-Milagros. *Textos y espacios de mujeres. Europa, siglos IV-XV*. Barcelona: Icaria, 1990.

Sáenz-Badillos, Ángel. *Un diccionario hebreo de Provenza (siglo XIII). Edición del manuscrito Vaticano Ebr. 413*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1987.

---. *A History of Hebrew Language*. Cambridge - New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Violi, Patrizia. *El infinito singular*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1991.