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The Translation of Irony in *Catch-22*

MA thesis

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English Abstract

This study explores the relative success of the translation into Hebrew, of irony in the literary text *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller, considering the cultural differences and the limitations of translation itself, in order to discover the implications on the general message conveyed by the text.

Irony is accounted for in terms of Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and Sperber & Wilson's Echoic Mention theory (1981, Wilson & Sperber 1992). The analysis is based on the model of text understanding postulated by Dascal and Weizman (1987, 1990, 1991) and applied to literary and non-literary discourse. For a better understanding of the notion of irony, we suggest a few criteria to distinguish irony from humor, based on research done by Raskin and Attardo (1994, 2002).

The multiple layers of irony in the book come through as dialogues between various addressers and addressees. Our goal was to identify the different ironists amongst the author, the implied author (as defined by Booth 1961), the narrator, the characters, and the victims of the irony both inside and outside the text, so as to arrive at the global meaning and intentionality of the text.

The analysis focuses on the textual features that create the ironic and humoristic effects, such as register shifts, revived metaphors, the given-new continuum and aspects of politeness. Since the interpretation of irony is crucial for an understanding of the social criticism that permeates the text, it is important to appreciate whether the ironic effect is successfully passed on to another culture. We have reached the optimistic conclusion that even though some of the nuances are lost in the process of translation, the general ironic effect has nevertheless passed the barrier of translation and of intercultural differences.