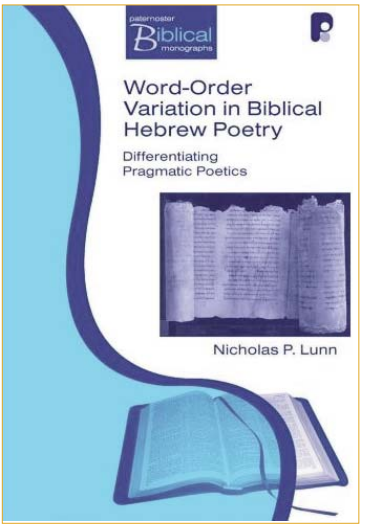
Silviu Tatu

Nicholas P. Lunn
Word-Order Variation in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: Differentiating Pragmatics and Poetics.
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Lecturer Silviu Tatu, PhD
Pentecostal Theological Institute Bucharest.
Author of the books:
Profetismul israelit în documentele biblice: între fals şi authentic (2007), Interpretarea naraţiunilor biblice: analiza literară a Judecătorilor (2004). Co-author of: Curs de ebraică biblică, (1999), Ebraică biblică (2001).
E-mail:
silviuntatu@gmail.com

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In his 2004 Brunel Ph.D. thesis, Lunn employs pragmatics, more specifically the theory of information structure, in order to account for the large number of defamiliarised clauses (non-canonical word order) found in Hebrew poetry. Deriving from the linguistic tradition of Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), Lunn embarks on a long-awaited study. He is not aware, though, that on the other side of the Atlantic, in a similar theoretical context, S.L. Fariss approached the question of word order in Hebrew poetry producing prima facie opposite results.[1] One cannot wait to see how these two works will get along together.

Lunn praises Knud Lambrecht's theory of information as a more refined one and criticises Rosenbaum and Walter Gross for preferring a more traditional approach (pp. 255-273). He also argues that none of them was able to differentiate objectively between variation, which is purely poetic and that which is pragmatically marked. Although restricted to a particular group of texts or samples, none of the afore-mentioned authors attempted a more integrated analysis of the phenomena. Hence, Lunn prefers an extended database to accommodate many texts from Hebrew poetry and his interpretation of the data is very detailed and tabular. Exactly in this lies the deficiency of Lunn's method, because the texts in his database are too varied in terms of genre and date, and this is a matter that he never addresses.

Lunn noticed that Hebrew poetry displays a higher degree of deviation from the regular VSO word order than BH prose. Lunn's database included 1190 verbal clauses from Hebrew prose and 1243 verbal clauses from Hebrew poetry, with a higher percentage of verbal clauses in Hebrew poetry preferring a marked word order (34 per cent)

than in Hebrew prose (only 14.5 per cent) (p. 8). The database of verbal clauses from Hebrew poetry included, though, more than 7400 samples, drawn from more than 4000 verses of Hebrew poetry, including Psalms, Isaiah 40-66, Job 3-14, Proverbs 1-9, Song of Songs, and Numbers 23-24 (cf. Appendix 2).

As becomes apparent from the ninth chapter (pp. 195-254), the equivalent proportions produced after studying a corpus of 112 verbal clauses confirmed the more general results. Here Lunn discusses only those verses with verbal clauses that display non-canonical word order derived from a database that includes Psalm 1 and 103, Job 12, Song of Songs 1, and Num 23.7-10. Seventy-four (66 per cent) of those clauses displayed a canonical (regular) word order, whereas the rest (34 per cent) displayed a non-canonical one.

After criticising Buth (1992) for the insufficiency of his explanations and Shimasaki for his ignorance (rather unfairly picking a fight with him), Lunn concludes 'as a general rule in Hebrew poetry that the ordering of clause constituents in B-lines of parallel cola is not something governed by linguistic rules relating to pragmatic functions.' (p. 105)

Alternatively, he maintains that the word order variation is purely poetical, the technique thus being readily branded as 'poetic freedom'. This conclusion is based on the indecisive results of marked word order against the regular word order (330 vs. 360), on the degree of variation (one or more preverbal constituents) and on the diversity of variations found in line B (various permutations of the constituents) (p. 106). As a result, one should look for poetic devices that influence a certain preference with respect to word order. Among the possible options, Lunn includes chiasm (pp. 107-108) and parallelism (pp. 110-111).

Following Lambrecht, Lunn promotes 'Setting' as pragmatically unmarked (pp. 55-59). Particles gam, 'ap, raq, and 'ak are interpreted as focus particles that accompany marked clauses, the first two expanding the focus, the last two restricting it (pp. 64-71). Chapter 4 (pp. 61-95) argues for the usage of marked constituent order in Hebrew poetry following the model of Hebrew prose. 'Variation in word order figures prominently within the context of parallelism.' (p. 96). Lunn advocates a distinction between a defamiliarised line structure (DEF) for poetical reasons and a Marked line structure (MKD) for pragmatic reasons (pp. 110-112).

He also proposes several factors that serve to distinguish defamiliarised word order from that which is pragmatically marked. First, the literary environment (whether line B, text-boundary, or peak); second, the presence/absence of pragmatic connotations which require an explanation of word order with reference to topicality or focality; third, the presence of a focus particle hinting at a pragmatic function of the pre-verb structure; and fourth, the extent of the variation, since the more divergent the word order is, the more likely it is to be the product of defamiliarisation (pp. 229-230). Pragmatic markedness is employed when introducing a new topic, contrast, replacing focus, specifying focus and other categories of focus (p. 230).

Secondary lines of poetic units are said to display the highest level of freedom in terms of word order. The B-line paralleling a regular A-line is considered the typical place where defamiliarisation occurs (CAN//DEF) and is, therefore, called the 'common environment'. Its counterpart (DEF//CAN) is rarer, therefore labelled 'limited environment' (p. 115). Occasionally, pragmatic marking co-occurs with poetic defamiliarisation. Since most samples come from Isaiah (44.16; 61.11; 64.9; 65.25a; 66.3-4 and Ps 44.9), Lunn explains this particular type of marked parallelism as a matter of style. Constituents that

index setting or pronominal subject/object in the primary line regularly, do not appear in the secondary line (pp. 151-155).

Lunn defends the priority of line A over line B by underlining the dependence of the secondary line on its antecedent in terms of topical reference, gapping, gender parallelism, even tense-shifting, pragmatic dependence (pp. 115-119). In this context, Lunn endorses even Buth (1986, 26) for describing tense-shifting as a purely poetic device, the verbal form of the secondary line being just a variation of its counterpart in the primary line. The verb in line-A establishes the temporal component of meaning that the verb in line-B follows. 'This phenomenon is therefore simply another manifestation of defamiliar language characteristic of poetic genre' (p. 118).

It is obvious that Lunn promotes the priority of poeticality over pragmatic markedness in Hebrew poetry. Chiasmus (a rhetorical pattern) needs to be distinguished from contrast (a semantic relationship) since chiasm exists in Hebrew poetry predominantly in synonymous relationships. Even the traditional category of antithetic parallelism, as defined by Lowth, becomes obsolete, because the construction of the secondary line in such a case is motivated pragmatically not semantically (pp. 129-30).

The probability that the secondary line will be marked is higher when the primary line displays a pragmatically marked word order too (pp. 132-150). In the case of a Marked A-line, defamiliarisation of B-line does not function freely anymore. The constrictive force of markedness constrains the author to draw attention to the equivalent constituent in the secondary line as well (p. 156-157).

Although the majority of samples in Lunn's database, constituting what he calls the 'universal distribution', follow the above rules, he also noticed some exceptions, including verse-lines with initial defamiliarised, Marked, or gapped structures. They are interpreted as playing other roles, such as signalling aperture, closure, and peak (pp. 160-194).

Surprisingly, although he deals primarily with word order, Lunn delves into the study of clause relationships at the level of poetic verses, noting three main possibilities. Some verses link together two independent clauses (HEAD1 + HEAD2), others connect a subordinate clause by its regent (HEAD + Subordinate),2 or even have the units of the same clause extended over two lines (HEAD [Phrase1 + Phrase2]. When poetic verses extend the couplet, various structures are noted (pp. 21-25).

The greatest contribution of this work resides in the clear distinction promoted between poetic defamiliarisation and pragmatic marking. Lunn succeeded in convincingly applying a modern version of the theory of information structure to texts from Hebrew poetry and proving the connection between parallelism and word order variation in Hebrew poetry. His main thesis is that word order variation appears usually in line B of a verse. Defamiliarisation appears in line B of a verse given an unmarked line A and is by no means uniform. A marked line A prompts a marked line B as well. Gapping appears in line B, given that the correspondent constituent in line A is not marked.

Envisaged as a domain of freedom in creativity, poetry was considered to escape the limitations enforced on language through grammar. To the relationship between stylistics and pragmatics, a more recent embodiment of the traditional debate between form and content, Lunn advocates a middle way, according to which, in poetry, word order serves entirely aesthetic purposes.

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Notes:

1 Working under the supervision of Longacre, under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Fariss (2003) engaged in a study that sprang out of the Herring and Hock survey of word order and syntax in old Tamil poetry and early Indo-European poetry, respectively (Susan C. Herring, Poeticality and word order in Old Tamil (pp. 197-236) and Hans H. Hock, Genre, Discourse, and Syntax in Early Indo-European, with Emphasis on Sanskrit (pp. 163-96), both in the volume Textual Parameters in Older Languages, edited by S.C. Herring, P. van Reenen and L. Schosler (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000)). She was inspired to conduct her research on HPy by the lack of interest towards this particular type of discourse. In order to discover word order choice and variation, Fariss selected thirty texts, of five different types of texts (speaking in textlinguistics terminology), and analysed them from the perspective of poeticality and transitivity. It appears that the probability for word order variation grows proportional to transitivity.

2 It should be stated here that there are situations when the subordinate precedes its regent clause.