making a distinction between the mother, the sons, and herself. The temptation to translate her expression by the simpler "my brothers" is strong, but ought to be rejected. She makes a distinction that might be of importance for understanding a certain layer of the poem—although we, as translators, can know nothing for certain about it.

This example says something about how questions of "style" and "meaning" are intrinsically interwoven. This brings me back to one of the fundamental problems with the text in our (Christian or Jewish) tradition. It has been interpreted allegorically by tradition, which has had an immense influence in European poetry as a whole; I may recall only the work of St. John of the Cross.

The aim of the new translation is to come as close as possible to the textual source. I fully agree with this aim. But most of us have, if only subconsciously, inherited a loyalty to tradition, and each rupture with tradition in a way impoverishes us, as it cuts our links with a literary heritage. Still, as soon as you try to catch the concept of love in the Song of Songs, you are brought back to the heart of the dualism in western or Christian thought: the dualism between body and soul, the corporal and the spiritual.

Now, does the text speak about human love, the concrete love between a man and a woman? It quite obviously does. Does it speak *only* about human love? If anything, the poem defies and transcends the dualism between the spiritual and the corporal. I myself can see no real contradiction between an allegorical interpretation (love as an outflow from God, be it to his chosen people or his church) or a non-allegorical one, bringing love close to all the shades and nuances of love (longing, passion, desire, despair, fulfilment) that human beings experience.

If there *is* a contradiction, allegory can never have the first claim, if it distorts the richness and complexity of the text. It might even be that the inherent meaning of the text revives a concept of love that is very much needed in the world of today. In modern theology, the contradiction between body and soul is often disputed. To our generation, which is used to a secular and one-dimensional definition of love in the mass media, science and literature, a spiritualisation of the concept is healthy. Thoughts like these have given me a joyous feeling of taking part in an adventure of new discovery and exploration by co-operating in the new translation of the Song of Songs.

Erratum

In the **July 1995 Technical Papers** on page 324, third paragraph, line 5: the Hebrew *hă ʾhaṣṣōʾn* should read as *hălô ʾhaṣṣōʾn.*