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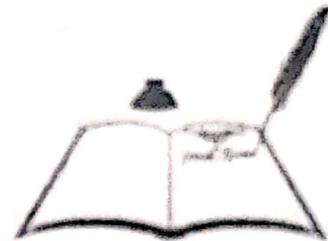
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Literary Texts

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Literary Texts II 3.1

AYDI 2022

HELLO EVERYONE!

Welcome to our first lecture of literary texts!

Our course is about literature. We are going to cover three genres of literature which are *poetry*, *novel*, and *drama*.

I'm sure that you all have enjoyed stories of your mothers or grandmothers. I'm sure that you remember the short story about the rabbit and the turtle where we have a race between them. It was fun and it was educational; there was a lesson or a message that this story has given us.

- What was the message of *The Story of the Rabbit and the Turtle*?

Student: Don't give up; be patient.

Instructor: This is on the part of the turtle. What about the rabbit?

Student: Don't underestimate other people's abilities.

Instructor: Don't be arrogant.

Student: Don't be arrogant of your skills because practice makes perfect.

Literature in general amuses us and gives us messages.

- What is literature? Is it only those tales? Is it only poetry or novels? What is the difference between a novel and a tale or a short story?

Student: There is a difference in the length; short stories are shorter from novels.

- How does literature differ from reality?

Student: Literature can use imagination.

Instructor: Correct, what else?

Student: In classical novels, we have ending. In modern and postmodern novels we have no conclusion.

Student: In 19th century novels, we have a happy ending but not in 20th and 21st century.

Literature is not always reality. Actually, this is the dilemma of literature. The question "is literature reality?" remains the question of all questions. The answer is "not always".

- Can literature be reality indeed?

For example, if your friend wrote a novel and took your name as a character in the novel and this character somehow resembled you in the sense that the writer meant that character to be you but can it be actually you? Of course not. The writer thinks it's you but actually it's not you; it's a representation of you.

Fiction is never 100 percent reality. It's a representation of reality; a replica.

For example, you saw the show (كسر عضم) It's a representation of reality but it is not reality as it is.

This representation is somehow more interesting and more imaginative. Notice that for example watching (كسر عضم) is more amusing than hearing or reading an essay or article in general. You can read about Syrian life in journal but you can see it on series where it is more lively; it makes you more compassionate with the characters, you feel the characters, you engage with all your senses, you may become angry or happy so it engages us more to know about reality from literature than the essay for example.

With regard to the paper that you have, we are told about a 19th century realist novel by **Charles Dickens** that gives us a truthful representation of life. This novel is *Hard Times*. We have a character that asks students to despise literature and to only be concerned with facts. He asks a student to tell us what a horse by definition is. Can you tell me what a horse is? How is your knowledge about horses different from someone who has a more artistic vision of life? What is the horse for you?

Let's read the definition of the horse:

Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely, twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs.

- Quadruped رباعي الأرجل
- Graminivorous مجتر
- Grinders أضراس
- Incisive قواطع
- Marshy countries البلاد الرطبة
- Hoofs حوافر

This is the scientific definition of the horse.

Do you know the Arabic poetry

مكر مفر مقبل مدبر معا كجلمود صخر حطه السيل من عل

This is also a description of the horse. Which one is more beautiful, artistic, and lively?

The poetic description brings the horse before your eyes; you can see the horse coming towards you. But, it's so boring to learn about the horse from a factual sight. This is why literature is so amusing and beautiful.

➤ What is literature?

The definition of literature in the dictionary:

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language offers a number of definitions for the word literature, one of which is

"Imaginative or creative writing, especially of recognized artistic value."

Literature is an imaginative writing.

• What does 'artistic value' mean?

In all times, there is something called the literary canon which means (التراث الأدبي)

• Who are the canon in Arabic poetry?

Al-Mutanabbi for example.

In our schools, we only learn about such poets. But, are they the only good poets in the English literature? No. There are some poets that are not registered in their canon. The canon is inclusive. It only contains certain names of poets and writers such as Shakespeare. But, there are some writers that are not included in their canon. This is what we mean by 'artistic value': they are in their canon.

Nowadays, in the second half of the 20th century, we acknowledge all writers. Literature contains all writers of all types. For example, comic books or comic novels are literature. The Hunger Games and Harry Potter are also literature.

➤ Pragmatic reading and literary reading:

We have to differentiate between pragmatic reading and literary reading. What is the meaning of pragmatic reading? When you read for the exam, what kind of reading is this?

For the exam for example, your reading is pragmatic reading. When you want to solve a problem or invent something or achieve something, then I have to be pragmatic.

For example, I'm teaching you literature not in order to enjoy reading it but because this is a subject that you have to take, study, and the pass the exam of. The purpose of attending this lecture is pragmatic.

When you are on a vacation by the sea, you enjoy your time. That gives you pleasure. This is similar to literature where you enjoy the language, the representation, the diversity, the imagery, etc.

There is something very dangerous about literature; you can make a cause more just. For example, if you read about the Palestinian cause, you will learn about it of course. But when you read **Ghassan Kanafani's** novel **Men in the Sun** and if you are a western citizen that believes in the Zionist cause, you will know the sufferings of the characters that are like me and my uncle and my father. You will become more passionate and you will understand the Palestinian cause from the Palestinian view. Maybe you will search for more truths about the Palestinian cause and get more understanding of such an issue.

One of my friends in the PhD has written a presentation about the Jewish from the Jewish side although she is a Palestinian. She has read the story from the Jewish side and has become more compassionate with the Jewish even though she is Palestinian. A Jewish writer writes about the suffering of the Jews where they were oppressed and hated all around Europe. According to their story, Palestine is their promised land. They believe that God told them to go to Palestine. This presentation is individual; it's not history, it's not documentary. When you see actual characters with names and families suffering, you might become compassionate politically with the enemy. That is why literature is very dangerous; it's not only for amusement.

➤ **What does literature do?**

It expands your perspective; you can see things from other points of view. You become more flexible. You become more tolerant. This helps you in your real life. For example, if I am an employee and I have a good character then I can do well at my job because nowadays they search for good characters not only for the information. You don't need to memorize information anymore; you need to learn how to think out of the box. This is what literature does. This is why in western universities, doctors, engineers, mathematicians, etc. have to take a course in literature because literature teaches you the ways of life. You become more educated in life itself not only in your field of study or work. Literature makes you more acquainted with life and you become a more enlightened person.

- What else do we get benefit from literature?

There is some pragmatic use of literature; literature is a very good source of language. You learn beautiful language from literature; you learn imagery, similes, symbolism, and how to interpret life. For example, in literature the rose is not literally a rose. The imagery of the rose indicates beauty. Literature makes your language richer.

What Does Literature Do?

One quality that may well differentiate stories, poems, and plays from other kinds of writing is that they help us move beyond and probe beneath abstractions by giving us concrete, vivid particulars.

When we read about the Palestinian cause in history and when I read the literature of Mahmoud Darwish, we see examples and hear the names of people.

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For example, if you read about what happened in Syria in the last ten years from the news or from a book, we will see abstracts. But if I follow the suffering of one family, I will have more lively presentation of the Syrian tragedy.

For example, our suffering to come to university every morning with no traffic. I can tell my story. I am a person and I have a name; I'm not an object. You become more tolerant and you understand my suffering when I have a name and a face. When you read *Men in the Sun*, you understand the Palestinian suffering more than when you watch it in the news.

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Rather than talking about things, they bring them to life for us by representing experience, and so they become an experience for us—one that engages our emotions, our imagination, and all of our senses, as well as our intellects.

As the British poet and critic Matthew Arnold put it more than a century ago, "The interpretations of science do not give us this intimate sense of objects as the interpretations of poetry give it; they appeal to a limited faculty, and not to the whole man. It is not Linnaeus who gives us the true sense of animals, or water, or plants, who seizes their secret for us, who makes us participate in their life; it is Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats."

Linnaeus is a scientist specialized in plants.

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To test Arnold's theory, compare the American Heritage Dictionary's rather dry definition of literature with the following poem, in which John Keats describes his first encounter with a specific literary work—George Chapman's translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, two epics by the ancient Greek poet Homer.

John Keats

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Appolo: Greek god of poetry and music.

Serene: Serene atmosphere.

Ken: Range of vision; awareness.

- What is this poem telling us? What is the idea of the poem?

We have defined literature and talked about what literature does. We said that literature is imaginary and it gives us delight. We are going to see what John Keats tells us about literature in poetry. We will see how Keats defined literature and how the dictionary defined literature.

This poem tells us about how John Keats defines literature. He has read Homer who was a Greek poet that wrote epics such The Odyssey and The Iliad. Homer was a very influential Latin poet. All English poets know Homer. He's like Al-Mutanabbi for us.

John Keats tells us when he first read the translation of Homer by the poet Chapman. He is telling us what he felt and experienced reading the poem. Let's see what John Keats says:

- **Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,**
Realms of gold are the realms of literature. I have read literature so many times. John Keats is a romantic poet so of course he read literature.

• **And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;**
I have read for many poets before this translation.

• **Round many western islands have I been**
I have read so many poems by western poets.

• **Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.**

Bards (الشعراء المتنقلين)

Appolo (إله الشعر الإغريقي)

لقد قرأت للكثير من الشعراء المخلصين للإله أبولو.

• **Of of one wide expanse had I been told**
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;

I have heard that Homer is a great poet. He heard that in the past but when he actually read Homer's poetry, what did this experience make him feel?

• **Yet did I never breathe its pure serene**
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

I never know the truthful value until I read Chapman's translation.

• **Then felt I like some watcher of the skies**

When a new planet swims into his ken;

He is like someone who has discovered a new planet in the sky. He has enjoyed the pleasure of this discovery.

• **Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes**

Stout: brave.

Cortez: an explorer who discovered the Pacific Ocean.

• **He stared at the Pacific—and all his men**

Looked at each other with a wild surmise—

Surmise: surprise.

• **Silent, upon a peak, in Darien.**

Darien is the old name for Panama.

When he read the translation of Homer, he felt the pleasure of discovering Panama or discovering a new planet or discovering America. It gives you a new sense when you read literature or a new poem or when you fall in love with a writer.

When you read a poem or a novel, can you taste the beauty of the language? When you translate a literary text, do you enjoy dealing with the language discovering the world? Do you for example enjoy the rhythm of

poetry when you translate a poem?

Actually, language itself is pleasurable and enjoyable in literature.

➤ **The Genres of literature** أجناس الأدب

This is the most important part of our lecture and you will be asked about it in the exam.

Some essential literary terms are common, everyday words used in a special way in the conversation about literature. A case in point, perhaps, is the term literary criticism, as well as the closely related term literary critic. Despite the usual connotations of the word criticism, literary criticism is called criticism not because it is negative or corrective but rather because those who write criticism ask searching, analytical, "critical" questions about the works they read. Literary criticism is both the process of interpreting and commenting on literature and the result of that process. If you write an essay on the play Hamlet, the poetry of John Keats, or the development of the short story in the 1990s, you engage in literary criticism, and by writing the essay, you've become a literary critic.

Like all disciplines, literature has vocabulary, terms, jargons, or terminology that we use in order to write literature.

It's important to have an academic view of literature. We have the poet or the novelist who writes the creative work, and we have the critic; us.

In the next lectures, we will be critics; we will read the novel and analyze it and explain it just as I have explained the previous poem by John Keats for you. When I explain the imagery and say what the poem is about, then I am a critic.

When I say critic, I don't mean I highlight the negative aspects of the literary work. I explain and explicate them and write an essay about them. This is what is called literary criticism.

With the term "genres" come the literary critics. Literary critics are the ones who create the term "genre".

We have the novel or the poem and we have the critic. We read the novel and the criticism; both of them are called literature.

Similarly, when we classify works of literature, we use terms that may be familiar to you but have specific meanings in a literary context. All academic disciplines have systems of classification, or taxonomies, as well as jargon. We generally tend to categorize literary works in two ways: on the basis of contextual factors, especially historical and cultural

context—that is, when, by whom, and where it was produced (as in nineteenth-century literature, the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, American literature, or African American literature).

When we categorize literature, we have two systems of classification:

❖ The first is depending on the historical context where we have the literature of the nineteenth century, the literature of Harlem Renaissance (أدب نهضة السود), American literature, etc.

Harlem is the name of a street in New York where black people live especially writers. This classification such as American literature or African American literature is based on the historical context of the period. Actually, this type of classification is not of our interest; we are not going to study literature based on this classification. Rather, we are going to study literature based on the second classification which is:

—and on the basis of formal textual features. For the latter type of classification, the one we focus on in this book, the key term is genre, which simply means, as the Oxford English Dictionary tells us, “A particular style or category of works of art; especially a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose.”

The formal aspects of the genre are simply fiction and nonfiction. Fiction is the novel, short story, novella, poetry, and drama. So, we have three basic genres of literature: prose fiction (novel, novella, short story) - drama - poetry.

Applied rigorously, genre refers to the largest categories around which this book is organized— fiction, poetry, and drama (as well as nonfiction prose). The word subgenre applies to smaller divisions within a genre, and the word kind to divisions within a subgenre.

- This means that we have a genre which is the largest taxonomy like novel, drama, and poetry.

- The genre is divided into subgenres. Sub-genre is a smaller unit within the genre. For example, we have the realistic novel and the magical realistic novels. These are sub-genres of the novel.

- The term ‘kind’ is not widely used. Actually, it’s only used in this book so we don’t need to know the genre and the subgenre. The smaller types within the novel are subgenres.

Magical realism: (الواقع السحري) For example, when a dead girl continues to bleed all over the jungle for hundreds of years.

What I want from you is just to distinguish the genre and the subgenre.

Subgenres of fiction include the novel, the novella, and the short story. Kinds of novels, in turn, include things like the bildungsroman or the epistolary novel. Similarly, important subgenres of nonfiction include the essay, as well as biography and autobiography; a memoir is a particular kind of autobiography, and so on.

Bildungsroman (رواية تتحدث عن تطور حياة فنان).

Epistolary novel (الرواية المكونة من عدة أجزاء).

Biography and autobiography are nonfiction.

This is the dilemma of fiction; if I read biography or autobiography, I will find them nonfictional. They are literature, but literature is imaginary. Therefore, the definition of literature is not scientific; it's flexible.

The way we classify a work depends on which aspects of its form or style we concentrate on, and categories may overlap. When we divide fiction, for example, into the subgenres novel, novella, and short story, we take the length of the works as the salient aspect. (Novels are much longer than short stories.) But other fictional subgenres—detective fiction, gothic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, and even romance—are based on the types of plots, characters, settings, and so on that are customarily featured in these works. These latter categories may include works from all the other, length-based categories. There are, after all, gothic novels (think Stephenie Meyer), as well as gothic short stories (think Edgar Allan Poe).

This is where things become complicated. I just need you to know that the categories are not rigid; they are flexible. When we classify a novel, we do so depending on its aspects. For example, in the detective novel, it's the plot that matters. There is a crime that is going to be solved. Sometimes, the novel is a romance and a gothic and a pastoral. The genre is not a concert science. This is only for your knowledge; you are going to encounter this issue because you are not specialized in the field. Just know that the categories overlap. There are other types of classification like satire, parody, etc.

Satire means (التهميم). The Syrian famous series Spot Light is a satire; it makes fun of reality. Satire can be a poem or a novel or a play. The classification is not only about the form but also about the function.

Parody is very common in post-modernism. For example, Ulysses is an epic that represents a warrior who goes to an adventure. He has a very faithful wife waiting for him and a very good son who is searching for

him.

Nowadays, we have modern Ulysses; we encounter a man who is defeated, a woman who is unfaithful, and a son who is a loser. This is a parody of the traditional life.

هذا ما يدعى بالتهكم. هذا التهكم يقيس تغير الحياة بين الماضي والحاضر. في الماضي كان هنالك صورة معروفة للرجل والمرأة والعائلة، لكن كل شيء اختلف بعد الحرب العالمية الأولى. الاختلاف الذي حصل بين الماضي والحاضر هو جنس أدبي بذاته يدعى التهكم. قد يكون قصيدة أو مسرحية أو رواية. هذا الجنس الأدبي شائع في مرحلة الحداثة وما بعد الحداثة.

Let me explain the last idea for today.

الأدب تاريخيًا لم يكن مقدراً أو لم يكن له قيمة كبيرة.

Plato is a very famous philosopher. In his book **Republic**, he says that poets are not allowed to live in the city because they tell lies. For him, literature is about lying and it addresses our passion not our reason. It is the cause of our disrespect for the gods. It's immoral to read literature. This view continued until the 19th century.

Nowadays, we know that literature is beneficial for the society because it widens our horizon and makes us more tolerant. When we read a novel about an African man, we can live his experience. We can live the experience of some woman in the Caribbean. We can transcend our reality and learn about others. We can escape our harsh reality by reading literature.

For next time, please get the book of our course. It's entitled *Literary Texts for Translators* by Dr. Nayef al-Yasin.

Thank You

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مؤسسة العائدي للخدمات الطلابية

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