

AYDI EST.

Open Learning & Translation

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1+2



Literary Texts

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HELLO EVERYONE!

I'm here to help you with literary translation focusing on poetry. Our book is a very interesting book by Dr. Waddah al-Khatib entitled *Literary Texts for Translators*. The book is divided into three sections. It starts with an introduction about the definition of the origin of poetry. Then we have a brief historical overview of what poetry is and the evolution of poetry. The main part of the book is about the eras like the Renaissance and Romanticism. We will have an introduction to the era, an introduction to the poet, and then the actual poem. Following the poem we will have a couple of questions that will help you understand the poem and analyze it. The book ends with a glossary or an index in which you can find brief and short definitions of literary terms that can help you understand and analyze the poem and then translate it in a smooth and easy way.

Before we start our course, I have two translation exercises for you.

Peabody and Sherman

Now, can we have some cake?

Mais, oui.

Oh, yeah, sorry. "May we" have some cake?

Mais, oui!

Maybe she can't hear me through the hair.

Sherman, what the queen means is...

Ah! Let them eat cake

When the queen heard the poor of Paris could not even buy bread...she said, "Let them eat cake.

"No! I heard it myself.

It's a scandal! It's an outrage! Down with the queen! Down with the monarchy! Wait!

What kind of cake?

The second line is in French. There is a *pun* (a play on words) because "mais oui" is pronounced the same as "may we". This is the

job of the translator; you have to know that this is French and you have to translate it according to this context.

The speaker agrees to have some cake saying "mais, oui" which means "of course." On the other hand, "may we" is a form of politeness in asking. There is a gap in understanding.

Student:

الآن هل يمكننا أن نحصل على بعض من الحلوى؟

Student:

هل أستطيع أن أحظى بقطعة من الحلوى الآن؟

نعم تستطيع.

أسف هل تستطيع أن نحظى بقطعة من الحلوى؟

نعم تستطيع.

ربما لم تتمكن من سماعي بسبب شعرك.

شيرمان ما الذي تعنيه الملكة ...

دعهم يأكلون الحلوى.

عندما سمعت الملكة أن فقراء باريس لا يستطيعون شراء الخبز تقول دعهم يأكلون

الحلوى.

لا أنا سمعتها بنفسي.

هذه فتية! هذا عار عند الحكومة الملكية.

انتظر ما هو نوع الحلوى؟

Instructor: you dealt with the text in a way that shows the Arabic reader that there is no misunderstanding. You didn't mention the French words.

The second exercise is a poem by Lord Byron.

She Walks in Beauty

BY LORD BYRON (GEORGE GORDON)

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

- Clime: مطقس
- Mellowed: اخفقت

Instructor:

The literal meaning of the words is not sufficient to translate the poem. We have to look up new words in the dictionary. But sometimes the dictionary doesn't have the hidden meaning of words. The context of the poem gives new meanings of the words.

How is literary translation different from scientific translation?

Translating a poem is different from translating a scientific work because scientific works are direct and clear, and they use simple and straightforward language.

In literary translation, you have the room to be creative; you can use elaborate language.

How about the meter?

Meter: A regular pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables in poetry. English meter therefore differs greatly from Arabic meter. The interplay of stressed and unstressed syllabus will make it very difficult for many speakers to scan English poetry properly, since rules that explain stress patterns in English are incomprehensive, and difficult to remember.

When we translate a poem, we have to consider the structure and the way the lines break.

☞ We have to consider the *figurative language* as well.

☞ We also have to consider the *sound devices* like meter, rhythm, and rhyme, and how these sound devices play a role in understanding the poem and how they change the way we are going to translate it.

☞ The *imagery* is also to be considered. The images that the poet is trying to deliver in the poem are important, and we have to consider the way we are going to deliver these images to the reader in the target language.

تلتقي في جمال كالشمس في الليل
من أجواء صفائية وسماء ملبئة بالنجوم
وكل ما هو أفضل من الظلام والنور
يلتقي في ملامحها وعيونها
مختلماً إلى ذلك الضوء الرقيق
الذي يدرمه السماء من يوم مبهر.

تلتقي في جمال كالشمس في الليل

☞ When you translate a poem, sometimes you have to acknowledge the poet, the era, the style of the poet, etc.

In *She Walks in Beauty*, the poet chose the word "night" to break the line. How would this affect the understanding and translation of the poem? Sometimes the shape of the poem would convey a different meaning from the actual poem. A poem may be written in the shape of a wing or a tree. This affects the meaning and therefore the translation of the poem.

Instructor:

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

تلتقي في جمال كالشمس في الليل
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يلتقي في ملامحها وعيونها
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The whole poem is about a woman's beauty and the contrast between her beauty and the night that is clear with no clouds. Her beauty (or her complexion) is clear. The best mixture of darkness and brightness meets in her aspect. This mixture gives a charming atmosphere to the face of this woman. Heaven here refers to God. We can translate heaven as (السماء). She is so beautiful and shiny to the extent that even the brightest sky wouldn't give such a light.

Thank You

HELLO EVERYONE!

Note: The exam questions are going to be theoretical. There will not be any translation questions.

What is the difference between prose and poetry?

In poetry, there is a musical element. Rhyme and rhythm are found in poetry. Prose is more straightforward and more elaborate. Poetry is condensed and compacted with meaning. Poetry is short.

Example:

- The cat is on the mat.
- The cat sat on the mat as silent as a bat.

The first line is straightforward.

The second line has music. There is an image in which there is a comparison between the cat and the bat. When you read it, you imagine it and you create an image in your mind.

The definition of poetry by Robert Frost:

Poetry is what gets lost in translation.

Any text that is translated from one language to another is not the exact copy of the original text. Poetry as a genre is difficult to translate and it loses some of its emotions when it is translated because it depends on the intended meaning. Furthermore, there is a cultural reference in poetry; a translator has to transfer the idiomatic expressions from one language to another.

Poetry often relies on the precise choice of words which evoke specific emotions and images. Sounds, images, music, and choice of words are elements that are deeply rooted in the

original language. When you read a poem, you have to understand it in order to be able to translate it. In translation, the exact emotional impact may not carry over because the translator must prioritize either meaning or form, and rarely both. We have to balance between meaning and form when translating a poem.

Cultural Context

Poems frequently draw upon cultural references idiomatic expressions and symbolic meanings that might not exist or have the same significance in another language. There are some idiomatic expressions in English that are difficult to translate into Arabic. How would you translate the word **الوضوء** into English? How would a native English speaker understand this word? There is no word-to-word translation for it. Here you have to explain the religious connotation of this word by giving a two-line sentence translation of the word **وضوء**.

In English there are things that should be explained because they don't have equivalent in Arabic. We need to understand the cultural context in order to fully comprehend the idea.

Poetry is difficult to grasp and understand because it relies heavily on elements like rhyme, meter, alliteration, etc. which create musical qualities. In the sentence "the cat sat on the mat as silent as a bat" there is music. The repetition of the letter "t" creates musicality; this is called *alliteration* in poetry. These features are often lost or altered in translation because the translator focuses on preserving the meaning rather than the sound.

She sells seashells by the sea shore.

Student:

تبيع صنف المحار على شاطئ البحر.

Instructor: you transferred the meaning without *preserving* the form.

These difficulties are more apparent in the case of poetry than they are in prose or drama, since a poem, in its very nature, "conveys heightened forms of perception, experience, [and] meaning."

The compactness of meaning and the intense emotions given in the poem make it a higher form of literature. Prose is easier than poetry.

In other words, poetic production is more condensed, more intense than prosaic language.

- Condensed: compact

☞ Prosaic language is the language of prose.

It often attempts to relay an understanding of an experience or an explication of an idea with a sense of urgency in terms of space (the compactness of the text) and time (the compactness of the meaning).

Why is poetry urgent in terms of time and space?

Why is space the compactness of the text? It is because we have short lines in poetry, so there is urgency in terms of space.

Why is time the compactness of the meaning?

It is because the poet has to compact meaning in few words.

THE ORIGIN OF POETRY

The beginnings of poetry in most cultures are found in the quintessential human need, individual, or collective, to communicate in memorable words the widest spectrum of human activities.

This is why the beginning of poetry is often associated with singing and music.

Before the invention of writing as a way to record and preserve

for posterity the annals of a given culture or society, oral poetry with its rhythms, rhymes and repetitive sound patterns prevailed as a vehicle for collective consciousness and identity.

Poetry preserved culture, ideas, emotions, experiences, and civilization.

Why does poetry communicate in memorable words?

We can nowadays know about people who lived in the past through poetry associated with singing and music.

Poetry had to be memorable because it was oral. It is a way to preserve culture.

It is safe to presume that poetic production at one stage acquired an important religious status in many cultures where the lines between the sacred and the artistic were not as clearly defined as they are in many literary traditions of the world today.

Poetry started as a way of signing and preserving culture. How did poetry evolve later on?

Poems acquired a religious status because of Christianity and the anthems and rituals done in the church.

ENGLISH POETRY: Historical Overview

The story of the evolution of English poetry is closely related to the history of the English language itself. Unlike Arabic for example, the English language has undergone tremendous changes in its syntax, morphology, and spelling over the last millennium.

- Evolution: development

- Tremendous: huge, massive

Poetry is related to the history of English language. The English language evolved throughout history. It evolved in terms of syntax, morphology, and spelling.

☞ Syntax is the study of grammar.

Morphology is the study of the word formation.

This is why scholars of the history of the English language speak of Old English (ca. 650-1066), Middle English (ca. 1066-1500) and Modern English (ca. 1500-present day).

The evolution of English is divided into three sections: old, middle, and modern.

1. OLD ENGLISH

Old English traces its beginnings to the Anglo-Saxon conquest of the Southern parts of Britain. The Angles and the Saxons were Germanic tribes that poured into Britain successive waves of conquest and migration.

- Conquest: invasion

- Tribes: قبائل

The Anglo-Saxon (the Germanic tribes) conquered the southern part of Britain.

What does the word Germanic mean?

It means the countries behind the river in northern Europe like Germany, Norway, and Scandinavian countries.

The origin of these tribes explains why Old English "displays its kinship with other Germanic languages more than ... much more clearly than does contemporary British and American English."

These tribes came with their own language to England and made the language there Germanic.

To ears and eyes of the native speaker of Modern English, Old English sounds and reads like every foreign language.

Old English poetry survived "thanks to the early Christian conversions of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the literacy associated with monastic culture".

- Literacy: the ability to read and write

- Monastic: relating to the monasteries
- Monastery: the building where the Monks live
- Conversions: religious transformation

How did Old English survive?

The connection between the spread of literacy and the Advent of Christianity in Britain explains the religious themes and subject matter of Old English poetry, although strong secular pre-Christian themes and motifs continued to manifest themselves in the literary production of that era.

- Literacy: the ability to read and write

- Secular: علماني، دنيوي

When you read old English poetry, you can detect religious themes.

Back in the day, Britain used to be pagan. The Germanic tribes came and spread Christianity. Through the spread of Christianity, the old language was preserved. However, secular pre-Christian themes continued to manifest. So we had both the religious (sacred) and the profane (secular).

2. Middle English

In 1066 the French-speaking Normans conquered Britain. Within a few years of the decisive battle of Hastings that sealed the fate of the British Islands, the predominantly Anglo-Saxon population of Britain found itself under the control of a French-speaking ruling class.

The English language evolved with the conquest of the Normans who conquered Britain after the Anglo-Saxons conquered it. The Normans are French-speaking people.

Old English had to gradually give way to what we call today Middle English, a new variety of English that was greatly and

increasingly exhibiting marked French influences.

Old English gradually gave way to what is called today Middle English. Middle English is a mixture of Latin, French, and Germanic.

Added to influence already exerted by Latin, the sacred language of the Catholic Church, the transmutation of French vocabulary, idioms and grammatical structures into Old English meant that by the 13 century we see examples of poems mixing French, English and Latin (NPE, 335).

Have you ever noticed how French and English are closely related?

This rich inter-linguistic exchange and cross-cultural fertilization resulted not only in the emergence of novel venues for poetic expression, but also in superb works of literature.

- Exchange: تبادل
- Novel: new
- Cross-cultural fertilization: تخصيب ثقافي متعدد

Unarguably the most notable contributions are those of Geoffrey Chaucer in the 14th Century whose life and work exhibit marked French influences (OCEL, 188).

Chaucer's most celebrated work is The Canterbury Tales, a collection of stories narrated by pilgrims on their way to visit the shrine of the famous English Saint Thomas a Becket.

- Exhibit: to display, to show
- Pilgrims: الحجاج
- Shrine: ضريح، مزار

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories narrated by pilgrimages on their way to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas a Beckett. In these tales, Chaucer discussed the sacred and the profane. From these tales, we can know how these people used

to live or speak and what they used to wear. Religious and social norms are also preserved in these stories. The Canterbury Tales is poetry but it is narrative at the same time.

This conflation of the sacred (the Christians, or the dogmatic) with the secular or profane (the non-Christian or the anti-Christian) becomes an important trend to follow throughout the history of not only English literature, European literature and arts in general, even to present day.

Because of The Canterbury Tales, the themes of the profane and the sacred in the Middle English are preserved until this day and they continue to influence the production of literature.

For example, if you read poetry of the modern era, you can find classical allusions to Middle English.

Allusion: a literary reference taken from history, religion, literature, or mythology.

3. Modern English

Unlike the circumstances that led to the emergence of Middle-English language and literature, no sudden or singular traumatic event leads to the next stage of transformation that resulted in the birth of Modern English. A host of factors contributed to the surfacing of the English that we know today, which was founded on the dialect of the East Midlands in Middle English (OCEL, 319). This is the language of such great poets in the English literary tradition as Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Wordsworth, and T.S. Eliot. It is a language that had undergone, and continues to undergo tremendous changes through time.

- The emergence: to rise, to begin
- Traumatic: shocking and painful
- Dialect: اللهجة

Unlike the old and the Middle English, there are no traumatic factors that led to the emergence of modern English. However,

there are factors that contributed to the surfacing of the English language that we know today.

- Most of the expressions and idioms that we know today are based on Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, T. S. Eliot, Wordsworth, etc.

T. S. Eliot is the poet who wrote the very famous poem *The Waste Land*.

With time, even until now, English is evolving. It is becoming more condensed and there are a lot of abbreviations.

Although we speak of Modern English as a language that begins roughly around the beginning of the 16th century, the first serious attempt at standardizing the spelling of this language, and canonizing the usage of its vocabulary did not come until the 18th century in the monumental work of Samuel Johnson.

In 1755, Johnson published his Dictionary of the English Language, which contained "definitions of over 40,000 words, illustrating them with about 114,000 quotations drawn from every field of learning and literature from the time of Sidney onwards.

Modern English began roughly at the beginning of the 16th century (the time when William Shakespeare lived). The first attempt at standardizing the spelling and vocabs of it was in the 18th century by Samuel Johnson. Samuel Johnson standardized the Modern English vocabs and spelling by writing down 40,000 words in a dictionary.

Success in defining the beginning of modern English poetry may appear to be as elusive as the attempt to define all the factors that led to the birth of the Modern English language. For all intents and purposes, however, it is generally agreed upon that we can consider as a starting point those poets whose works exhibit a genuine impact of renaissance style, and sensibilities, and a marked departure from medieval spirit.

- Elusive: slippery, can't be caught

- Exhibit: to show

- Sensibility: an understanding of or the ability to decide what is good and valuable, especially in connection to artistic or social activities

The factors that led to the birth of the Modern English language are as elusive as the modern age itself; you cannot give one single definition of it.

The departure from the medieval spirit is considered a way to define the modern era. Why? The medieval people mostly focused on religion and religious themes. The departure from religious themes into secular themes is the departure into the modern era.

The first such poet to consistently reflect such a shift is Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42). The editors of the New Princeton Encyclopedia of poetry and poetics explain the significance of Wyatt's precursory work.

Sir Thomas Wyatt is considered the first reformer of the English meter and style. He is a very famous English poet who wrote well-structured poems with rhyme and meter. Before him, there were no exact rhymes and meters; there was only blank verse (free verse) which has no rhyme or meter.

Technically, Wyatt is important for the musical quality of his lyrics.

His poems are lyrics. His style may reflect either the ignorance of the 16th century pronunciation or a deliberate departure from regularity in the interests of artistic expressiveness. The reforming of style, meter, and the musical quality of poetry made him depart from the medieval spirit that used to use free verse.

The impact of the poets of that period appears, therefore, to be multifaceted. Modern English poetry, and by extension literature, began with shifts in meter and style.

These changes reflected influences from the Italian tradition, and were enhanced by a departure from Middle English forms and themes. The Elizabethan period marks the beginning of these changes, and of Modern poetry.

There are no strict rules in the modern period; you can write the way you like in modern English.

The Elizabethan period was in the 16th century which was the age of Shakespeare and Milton. This period is the marker of the beginning of modern poetry.

Thank You

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