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Literary

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Literary Texts 3.7

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HELLO EVERYONE!

Last time, we covered two poems which are *Jordan* and *To Althea from Prison*. Let's go back to *Jordan by George Herbert*.

Jordan

➤ Meter:

Is it | no verse, | except | enchan | ted groves |

1 2 3 4 5 Five feet =» Pentameter

And sudd | en ar | bors sha | dow coarse | spun lines? |

1 2 3 4 5

Must pur | ling streams | refresh | a lov | er's loves? |

1 2 3 4 5

Must all | be veiled, | while he | that reads, | divines, |

1 2 3 4 5

We have 5 feet. The beat or the stress is on the second syllable of each foot so it is iambic pentameter.

Catching | the sense | at two | removes? |

1 2 3 4 4 feet =» Tetrameter

To Althea from Prison

➤ Meter:

Let's look at the last stanza:

Stone walls | do not | a pri | son make, |

1 2 3 4 4 feet =» Tetrameter

Nor i | ron bars | a cage; |

1 2 3 3 feet =» Trimeter

Minds inn | ocent | and qui | et Take, |

1 2 3 4 4 feet =» Tetrameter

That for | an her | mitage. |

1 2 3 3 feet =» Trimeter

Katherine Philips (1632-1664)

Let's move on to a new poet who is Katherine Phillips. She was born in 1632 and died in 1664. In 1648 at the age of 17, she was married to James Phillips who was 30 years older than her. They lived together for 12 years and had 2 children.

Katherine Phillips was a royalist which means she supported the king despite her puritan family connections. Her son Hector did not live past infancy meaning he died when he was a baby. Hector's death was the subject of some of Katherine Phillips's later poems such as Epitaph on Hector Phillips. Another poem she wrote on the death of her son is On the Death of My First and Dearest Child.

❖ What's the meaning of epitaph?

It means (شاهدة) which is the stone we put on the grave. Another meaning is (مرثية) which is a type of poem we write on the death of someone we love.

Katherine's husband was a member of the parliament. At the Restoration when the monarchy was restored and Charles the 2nd became the new king following the death of the commonwealth, James Phillips barely escaped execution after he was accused of regicide. The word "regicide" means that he was accused of conspiring against the king in order to kill him. As a result, his estates were confiscated and he lost his seat in the parliament. Katherine became a favorite member at the court after she was promoted her friend Sir Charles Cottrell.

The first edition of her poems appeared in 1664; the same year she died of smallpox. Smallpox is a disease that was not curable at that time.

Katherine Philips was a Welsh royalist poet and a translator. "Welsh" means she is from Wales.

Her poem that we are going to study today is quite interesting. Let's have a look at it:

A Married State

By Katherine Philips

A married state affords but little ease
The best of husbands are so hard to please.
This in wives careful faces you may spell
Though they dissemble their misfortunes well.
A virgin state is crowned with much content;
It's always happy as it's innocent.
No blustering husbands to create your fears;
No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears;
No children's cries for to offend your ears;
Few worldly crosses to distract your prayers:
Thus are you freed from all the cares that do
Attend on matrimony and a husband too.

**Therefore Madam, be advised by me
Turn, turn apostate to love's levity,
Suppress wild nature if she dare rebel.
There's no such thing as leading apes in hell.**

Let's start explaining the poem line by line:

- **A married state affords but little ease**

Afford: to deliver, to give.

Ease: to comfort.

Being married gives very little comfort. Actually, the poet was still single when she wrote this poem.

- **The best of husbands are so hard to please.**

It's very difficult to please your husband.

- **This in wives careful faces you may spell
Though they dissemble their misfortunes well.**

Spell: to recognize.

Dissemble: to hide.

If you look at wives' faces, you will find fake happiness. They pretend something they are not. They hide their misfortune.

What do wives hide? They hide their suffering, their pain, their disappointment, and their misery.

The meaning of these two lines: although the faces of the wives look very careful not to reveal what they feel, you can spot and feel the pain once you look at them.

- **A virgin state is crowned with much content;**

No one is as happy as a single woman. A single woman is crowned with happiness.

- **It's always happy as it's innocent.**

Being unmarried is a very happy state because it is innocent and pure.

- **No blustering husbands to create your fears;**

Blustering: aggressive.

She says: why would I live with an aggressive and a violent husband? The source of fear comes from aggression and violence of the husband.

- **No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears;**

Pangs: pain.

Extort: to force, to obtain by force.

She's talking about motherhood and how painful it is to become a mother. It's not an easy task to bear and deliver a child. It's painful and pessimistic for women.

- **No children's cries for to offend your ears;**

A mother would always hear loud noise. There's no serenity. There's no quiet life anymore.

- **Few worldly crosses to distract your prayers:**

Cross: (الصليب).

You don't -as a mother- have a space or a moment of peace to pray. You cannot be on your own. Even when you pray, you will be distracted by the noise made by children.

- There is a **biblical allusion** in this line in "worldly crosses".

What is the symbolic meaning of crosses in this context?

The cross symbolizes pain, suffering, salvation and punishment. Jesus Christ was crucified as a criminal. So, it was a means for punishment for the Romans.

The worldly crosses refer to her misery and disappointment, and to her worries about the future.

The poet is saying that when you are single, it's a happy and innocent state. Not only that but also you have very few crosses to bear.

- **Thus are you freed from all the cares that do
Attend on matrimony and a husband too.**

Cares: responsibilities, worries.

Matrimony: marriage.

When you are a virgin, you are being freed from all the worries.

Let's now look at this conclusion:

- **Therefore Madam, be advised by me
Turn, turn apostate to love's levity,**

Apostate: a person who renounces his religious or political belief or principle. In Arabic it means (المرتد).

Levity: merriment, happiness, joy.

What does she advise us to do?

She advises us not to get married. Do not be illusioned and deceived by love.

- **Suppress wild nature if she dare rebel.**

Suppress: (قمع).

Wild nature refers to sexual energy.

Force yourself not to love anyone. You need to control your sexual energy. If that energy tries to rebel, suppress it.

"She" refers to "wild nature". This is personification.

- **There's no such thing as leading apes in hell.**

Actually, this is the most difficult line in this poem. Let's paraphrase it:

She is saying that in hell there's no sex and there's no husband. She's also saying that being single is a state of heaven so why to choose hell?

The last few lines in this poem show some biblical understanding of being single. Here I will quote Saint Paul from the Bible and this is what he says about sexual desire:

"Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

Saint Paul advises women and men who are single saying that if they can control themselves, they should stay single like him. If they cannot, they should get married.

Back to Katherine Phillips, she is asking us to renounce love and sexual desire. If you dare to rebel, then rebel against marriage. In hell, there's no sex. After death, the sexual desire will no longer control how we choose to live. When you die, you will be free of your wild nature, from the sexual desire that controls your body and mind, and from your need to have a husband.

Actually, the leading apes could have multiple meanings: It could mean being married. It could refer to the energy that we can't control and therefore we choose marriage. It also could simply mean husbands.

In short, the conclusion is: control your nature if you can because it is a blessing to have the ability to control that wild nature.

There is a third interpretation for this line. The footnote in the book says:

An apparent reference to the state of spinsterhood.

"Spinsterhood" is a very negative word that is used to describe women who stay out of marriage. It is a gender-biased term. It means (العانس).

How is spinsterhood connected to the "leading apes in hell"?

Hell is proverbially the fate of spinsters. In other words, she is saying: do not conform to the culture that says you are spinsters or that you are invaluable. Just live your life; you do not need a man to make you happy. This is another interpretation of the last line.

Actually, the last line is open to multiple interpretations. Critics don't seem to agree to one interpretation of it.

➤ **Figures of speech:**

- Alliteration:

- Line 2: (husband, hard). Line 5: (crowned, content). Line 14: (love,

levity).

- Anaphora:

No blustering husbands to create your fears;

No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears;

No children's cries for to offend your ears;

- The repetition of the word "no" is anaphora.

- Personification:

- Line 15: "Suppress wild nature if she dare rebel." Wild nature is personified.

- Anastrophe:

- Line 3: "This in wives careful faces you may spell". It should be "You may spell careful faces in wives".

- Line 11: "Thus are you freed from all the cares that do". It should be "Thus you are freed from all the cares that do".

- Metaphor:

- Line 16: "leading apes ". It could stand for sexual desire or for husbands.

➤ **Rhyme scheme:**

A married state affords but little ease a

The best of husbands are so hard to please. a

This in wives careful faces you may spell b

Though they dissemble their misfortunes well. b

A virgin state is crowned with much content; c

It's always happy as it's innocent. c

- As you see, the poem is written in couplets.

- القصيدة مكتوبة بنظام الثنائية.

A couplet is two lines of poetry that have the same theme and the same rhyme.

➤ **Meter:**

A marr | ied state | affords | but li | ttle ease |

U / U / U / U / U /

1 2 3 4 5

5 feet =» Pentameter

The best | of hus| bands are | so hard | to please. |

U / U / U / U / U /

1 2 3 4 5

5 feet =» Pentameter

This is iambic pentameter.

Now, we're going to translate stanza number 4 from *To Althea from Prison* into Arabic. The rest of the poem is left for you to translate at home as homework.

To Althea from Prison	إلى أثلثيا من السجن
Stone walls do not a prison make,	الجدران الحجرية لا تصنع سجنًا.
Nor iron bars a cage;	ولا القضبان الحديدية قفصًا.
Minds innocent and quiet Take,	لأن العقول البريئة والهادئة تتخذ
That for an hermitage.	من هذا وذلك صومعة.
If I have freedom in my love,	إذا كنت أنعم بالحرية في حبي،
And in my soul am free,	وإذا كانت روحي مطلقة،
Angels alone, that soar above,	فإن الملائكة وحدها التي تحلق في السماء
Enjoy such liberty.	تنعم بمثل هذه الحرية.

Now, we're going to translate a poem by Nizar Qabbani into Arabic.

Oh my sweetest fits of madness, enhance my love	زيديني عشقًا.. زيديني
Or (give me more love)	يا أحلى نوبات جنوني
Oh dagger traveling inside my waist	يا سفر الخنجر في أسجتي
Oh penetrating knife	يا غلغلة السكين..
Drown me more my lady	زيديني غرقًا يا سيدتي
By the sea I'm summoned	إن البحر يناديني
Or (the sea is calling me) Kill me more	زيديني موتًا..
Perhaps being killed, I'll be revived.	عل الموت، إذا يقتلني، يحييني..
Or (Perhaps being killed, I'll find my life)	

Note: the verb "to summon" can be used in different contexts. Look at the following examples:

• I summoned my courage.	• استجمعت شجاعتي.
• The judge summoned me.	• استدعاني القاضي.
• He was summoned for interrogation.	• استدعي للتحقيق.
• To summon up spirits.	• يستحضر الأرواح.



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Thank You