

**THE TRANSLATION OF POETRY:  
AN EXAMPLE FROM NAZIK AL-MALA'IKA**

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Almost everybody agrees that poetry is what gets lost in translation. Poetry is said to be inseparable from the language in which it was originally written. Different languages not only have different prosodic systems, they also have different sound systems whose subtle effect is often difficult to estimate in the source language, let alone transferring that effect to the target language. A prose version of a poem in the same language does not have the same effect, perhaps not even the same meaning (Brooks 1947:192-214; de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981:58). Moreover, literature in general, and poetry in particular, is more or less tied to the source culture, which often makes it difficult to transfer adequately to the target culture without some loss. Finally, the source language may offer, through historically established conventions, metaphoric possibilities that may not be available in the target language. This is obviously a special problem relating to the translatability of metaphoric language in general (see, for example, Newmark 1995:32-33).

These difficulties are real enough, but are they peculiar to poetry? Is wordplay in Joyce more manageable than in Shakespeare? I suggest that the difficulties of translating poetry are not really different in kind from those encountered in translating literary prose, but only in degree. Metaphor is metaphor everywhere, and wordplay requires the same amount of ingenuity on the part of the translator whether he/she is translating a Donne, a Congreve, an Auden, or a Pynchon. According to Northrop Frye (1957: 326-337), all forms of discourse, including non-literary ones, display some degree of literariness. In his words (p. 337), "nothing built out of words can transcend the nature and conditions of words, and... the nature and conditions of ratio, so far as ratio is verbal, are contained in oratio." Mary Louise Pratt goes even further and denies any boundary lines between "poetic" and "ordinary" language, and describes

the "presence of poetic devices in extraliterary utterances" as "irrefutable" (1977:24). I remember once listening to Mrs. Margaret Thatcher in a parliamentary debate reported on the BBC. Someone had apparently suggested that the lady should take aU-turn in her policy. Her answer culminated with the statement: "You turn! The Lady is not for turning!" The wordplay and allusiveness (to the famous play *The Lady Is Not for Burning*) in this political debate is not really different from such linguistic devices in literature. D. J. Enright's poem "The Typeriter's Revultion" (See Allison et al. 1983: 1214) uses a similar wordplay on the U2 incident in Soviet-American relations, in which the incident is debased into a typographical error meaning "you, too."

It is, of course, paradoxical that in spite of all warnings against the difficulties of translating poetry, translators have never been able to resist the temptation to translate their favorite poems. The translation of poetry has been going on for centuries, and it is not likely to stop. No doubt, not all translations of poetry are of equal value, but such is the fate of all translation. Every translation is an approximation of the original. Some are more faithful than beautiful, some more beautiful than faithful. Whether we like it or not, the translation of poetry is as legitimate an activity as the translation of scientific tracts or business reports.

Of the various reasons why translators sometimes undertake to translate poetry, the one that seems to call for the best effort on the part of the translator is genuine admiration for the original poem and a desire to render that poem into a hopefully equally admirable poem in the target language. Of course, it is not always the case that poems are translated into poetry in the target language. In Arabic, most translations of poetic texts, in fact, are rendered into prose, but in this essay I want to concentrate on a translation that offers itself as a poem in the target language in order to study the problems that arise from such an enterprise. The translation in question is Nazik al-Mala'ika's rendering of Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (al-Mala'ika 1960:190-207).

To facilitate the study, I offer a prose version of Gray's poem, which is given in the Appendix together with the original text and al-Mala'ika's rendering. The prose version is not given as an end in itself but as a litmus paper with which to gauge the degree of freedom the beautiful (?) version of Nazik al-Mala'ika has arrogated to itself. The purpose is not to

show that al-Mala'ika's version is unfaithful: that, perhaps, is a foregone conclusion. It is rather to try to account for this unfaithfulness. The prose version sticks fairly closely to the original text except when a too literal rendering is likely to obscure the poet's meaning. Moreover, I have followed the natural structure of the Arabic sentence rather than that of English. This sometimes necessitated a reordering of the lines in the interest of readability. My motto in this endeavor has been Cauer's dictum quoted in *Approaches to Translation*: "the translation should be as literal as possible and as free as is necessary" (Newmark 1995: 12). The motto seems to me a golden rule in all translation as it takes into account the need to be faithful ("literal") and the need to be beautiful ("free"). Only when both needs are met, can the translation be said to be truly successful.

In a brilliant essay entitled "Translation from the Classics" Zoja Pavlovskis (1981:100) remarks that "Ideally, it takes a poet to translate a poet [cf Haskell Block 1981: 119] but as a corollary of this principle we must necessarily add a considerable latitude, indeed license...if the translator's own originality is to remain unimpaired." Pavlovskis goes on to say that "The stronger a poet's individuality, the less likelihood that his translation of another's work will be a mirror reflection. However, common sense suggests that there is a point of no return in the process: past it, the re-creation of a work can no longer be called translation." Nazik al-Mala'ika's "individuality" is perhaps one of her most distinctive personal traits. She is widely recognized as one of the two Iraqi pioneers of an epoch-making movement in modern Arabic poetry which in the late 1940s prepared the way for a decisive break with the tradition (the other being Badr Shakir al-Sayyab) and as the first theoretician of that movement (See her *Qadaya al-Shi'r al-Mu'asir*). Her translation of Gray's *Elegy*, dated 1945, shows that she was searching for models outside the tradition of Arabic poetry. As Haskell M. Block rightly observes the writer's own creations "almost always take precedence over those of others," but when he/she undertakes a translation it is either to

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express admiration for his/her chosen author or as an exercise to perfect the writer's own idiom (Block 1981:116). This, it seems to me, is what al-Mala'ika was doing: trying to perfect her own idiom. Block ends his essay with the view that "Translation in the hands of gifted writers is not reproduction but creation, fully deserving of the same informed critical response as other modes of literary creation" (Block 1981:125). This is

why al-Mala'ika's rendering of Gray's masterpiece has been chosen for scrutiny.

Before examining al-Mala'ika's poem, however, it may be instructive to see how literal my own prose version has been and how much freedom I have allowed myself and why. It goes without saying that by "literal" I do not mean the kind of interlinear translation that is sometimes done in the interest of language teaching. I mean rather the attempt to render all the functions of the original text (expressive, informative, and vocative) into something equivalent in the target language wherever that is possible. But it was impossible sometimes to be both literal and faithful to the text (to say nothing of "beautiful"). In the choice between literalism and faithfulness, I have always veered toward the latter as the choice that is perhaps demanded by the true meaning of the poem. The question of "the true meaning of the poem," however, is always a matter of interpretation. Ben Bennani (1981:135) goes even further and says that "A translation, whatever the genre may be, is always an interpretation. He further remarks that" The interpretive process requires systematic analysis of the text, as well as systematic understanding of its intertextuality. Here it is understood and accepted that a text has not one but several contexts and that it does not exist in some archival vacuum, but rather stands on broad superstructural premises often referred to as the cultural matrices of the text's language" (ibid.). George Steiner's *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975) develops these ideas at greater length and dubs a long chapter on the subject, the first, "Understanding as Translation." And, according to Hans Georg Gadamer, "Every translator is an interpreter" (qtd Barnstone 1993:21).

Take the first line in the poem, for example. The word "curfew" refers to the "medieval regulation for extinction of fires at fixed hour in evening" or "ringing of bell at fixed evening hour, still surviving in some towns" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5th ed.; substantially as in *OED*). Hasan al-Karmi's *Al-Mughni Al-Kabir* gives "كم النار (في العصور الوسطى)" for the first meaning, which, uncontextualized, would probably need another explanation for the Arab reader. *Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit*, perhaps the most accessible modern Arabic dictionary, is not very helpful. The nearest sense it gives to Karmi's phrase is "كم الشيء, غطاه وستره" which is also what we find in *Al-Munjid*. This is not very helpful because "covering" or "hiding" is too vague to mean "extinguish." My rendering جرس الغروب (evening bell) abandons the reference to the "extinction of fires" as

perhaps no longer applicable in Gray's time and keeps the other sense given by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. (One may note in passing that *Al-Mawrid's* definition of "curfew" is wrong, for it states that the bell was rung in the Middle Ages لاشعار الناس بضرورة اطفاء الأنوار i.e., to tell people to put out the light.) The phrase جرس الغروب (or ناقوس الغروب) used in both *Al-Mawrid* and *Al-Qamus Al-'Asri* is obviously more of an explanation than a translation, for no curfews in the medieval sense exist in Arab culture, and consequently there is no equivalent to "curfew" in Arabic. George Percy Badger's *English-Arabic Lexicon* explains the word this way: قرع جرس عند المساء لاطفاء النار في جميع البيوت: which, again, explains the action, the time, and the purpose of ringing the bell but does not give a real equivalent, for no such equivalent exists in Arabic.

As for the other sense of the word, evening time is announced in Muslim countries by the voice of a *mu'ezzin* calling for evening prayer, not by a bell. To use the word *mu'ezzin*, which is the cultural equivalent of "curfew," would create the utterly false impression that we are in a Muslim country, which is contradicted by everything in the poem.

Or take the phrase "parting day" in the same line. A literal rendering would be something like النهار المفارق or النهار المغادر or النهار المودع. But taking the phrase in the context of the poem, and glancing at the word "knell" ("the knell of parting day"), I attempted to recapture the force of the image of "day" as a living being that is described as "dying" ("parting" here means "departing," i.e., dying see *OED*, "part" [7b]). This has suggested to me the word احتضار, which puts all these associations together. In this "interpretation" I am obviously indebted to Northrop Frye, who explains how the theme of death, for example, calls for clusters of images traditionally related to that theme (see especially his discussion of Whitman's poem on the death of President Lincoln in the second essay [Frye 1957: 102]).

In quatrain 5 phrase "The breezy call" could easily have been rendered الدعوة النسيمية, but this rendering sounds translations, for the form نسيمية is possible morphologically but odd idiomatically, and there is nothing in the context to warrant a morphological jolt. An expanded version of the phrase like الدعوة الرقيقة الآتية مع نسيم الصباح both keeps the original sense perfectly and keeps the idiomatic naturalness of the Arabic version. The phrase "incense-breathing Morn" presents a similar problem. It would have been tempting to translate it literally as الصباح

المتنفس بالبخور, but the phrase نفوح انفاسه بالبخور is more idiomatic, for the phrase نفوح انفاسه بالعطور is almost a standard description in Arabic of a lover with a pleasant breath.

In quatrain 7 Gray uses the quaintly poetic word "glebe" for "earth," "land," or "field," and a similarly quaint word like الثرى in Arabic would have been possible but seemed to me insufficiently justified in a more or less homely context of plowing. This, of course, is a matter of interpretation. Even in Gray's poem the word "glebe" seems out of place, used under the influence of eighteenth-century predilection for poetic diction. This is why I have used the more mundane word الارض (land). Gray's "furrow" in the same line is metonymic (the effect for the cause), and I have chosen to use the cause instead of the effect to avoid what would have sounded very odd in Arabic, for التلام for "furrow" would needlessly have sent the reader to an Arabic dictionary while the more familiar term التلم would have sounded too colloquial.

As for word order, there are many examples to choose from. One of the most glaring examples occurs in quatrains 16-18. In quatrain 16 Gray gives us a series of inverted and uninverted phrases which are all complements of a verb that is given at the beginning of the next quatrain. To do the same in Arabic would have been well-nigh impossible. The first line of quatrain. 16 inverts the verb-object order, which is more frequent in English (for rhetorical reasons) than in Arabic. To write تصفيق المجالس المصغية ان يستثيروا dislocates the natural word order of Arabic, and the restoration of the normal word order is unavoidable:

ان يستثيروا تصفيق المجالس المصغية which necessitates a similar reordering of the other lines in the quatrain. And so it is possible to get a rendering that reads as follows:

أن يستثيروا تصفيق المجالس المصغية,  
وأن يحتقروا التهديد بالعذاب والدمار,  
وأن ينشروا الخيرات على أرض باسمه,  
وأن يقرأوا سير حياتهم في أعين شعبهم:  
كل ذلك منعهم قدرهم منه.

But this leaves part of the inversion unnecessarily, and so it was decided to normalize the Arabic sentence and begin with the verb itself.

These examples have been intended to show that even in a prose translation that deliberately attempts to be as close to the original as

possible, some freedom with the text is unavoidable, and some degree of interpretation is necessary. If this is the case in a prose translation, it will be even more so in a verse translation, particularly if the poet chooses a traditional form of verse which requires a specific meter, a specific number of metrical units, and a strict rime scheme. To illustrate, I have chosen a short poem by Robert Frost, "Fire and Ice," which is a favorite anthology piece:

Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.

Here is a prose translation of the poem:

يقول بعضهم إن العالم سوف يفنى بالنار،  
ويقول غيرهم: بل بالجليد  
وأنا أتفق، بسبب ما ذقت من رغبة،  
مع من يميلون للنار.  
ولكن لو تطلّب الأمر فناءه مرتين  
فأظنني عرفت ما يكفي من البغض  
للقول إن الجليد للتدمير ينفع جدا،  
ويؤدي الغرض

Apart from some slight reordering of words to suit the natural structure of the Arabic sentence, the Arabic version sticks fairly closely to Frost's text. The number of words is fewer (41) than in the original (52), but all the ideas in the original poem have been preserved. Here is a verse version :

يقول البعض ان الكون يفنى  
وبرغم بعضهم: بل سوف يفنى  
ولكني لما عاناه قلبي  
على ان الجليد اذا ما كان حتما  
فبعض الناس اعطاني يفينا  
غدا بالنار نحن لها وقود  
اذا ما عاد للكون الجليد  
من النيران احسبها تسود  
فناء الكون ثانية مفيد  
بان الثلج مقتله أكيد

The number of words here is 47, and we have five lines of a classical form of Arabic verse, utilizing a recognized meter, *hazaj*, with the same

rime throughout. The meter necessitated some padding, and the uniform rime required some ingenuity to come up with the appropriate riming words. But the padding, when needed, must not be alien to the spirit of the poem, and the riming words must not appear too forced; otherwise, the translation will cease to be a translation, or, in the case of forced rimes, the verse will fail to be good verse. Padding may be illustrated in the phrase نحن لها وقود (and we [will be] fuel to it [i.e., the fire]). The phrase elaborates on the implied picture of the final conflagration that will consume the world. It also glances unobtrusively at the similar Qur'anic version of the end of the world: وقودها الناس والحجارة (fuelled by people and stones) (II:24). This elaboration adds some resonance to the poem in the Arabic version which enriches the poem without causing any loss and without doing any violation to the original text. The second line elaborates slightly on Frost's "ice" by alluding to the first ice age and the possibility of the recurrence of that age. The allusion is implicit in Frost's choice of ice as the alternative means of the destruction of the world. The use of تسود as the riming word in line 3 is obviously called for by the rime scheme, but the word is still close enough to the idea that fire will "dominate" the scene and cause the destruction of the world. The same may be said for the word يفيد . In it I have attempted the same kind of understatement that Frost achieves in his "And would suffice." The last line perhaps exaggerates the idea that hate, like ice, is "also great" for destruction - an exaggeration perhaps warranted by the slangy expressio'n in the original.

We may compare this with five different translations of a couplet from Ovid, which were used by Shakespeare as his epigraph in *Venus and Adonis*. The Latin original is

Vilia miretur vulgus; mihi flavus Apollo  
Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.

G.B. Harrison's translation is

Let the vulgar admire vile things; for me my golden-haired Apollo  
provide cups full of water from the Castalian springs. (Shakespeare  
1948:1546)

A.L. Rowse's is

Let the populace admire base things, but let Apollo minister to me  
cups filled with water from the purest spring. (Rowse 1973:74)

Another version by Rowse is:

Let the unworthy dazzle the masses; for me, golden Apollo furnish  
full cups from the Castalian Spring. (Rowse 1978: II, 685).



Ben Jonson's verse translation runs as follows:

Kneel hinds to trash : me let bright Apollo swell

With cups flowing from the Muse's well. (Rowse 1973:74)

And finally, here is Marlowe's version:

Let base conceited wits admire vilde things,

Faire Phoebus leade me to the Muses springs. (Marlowe 1973: II, 339)

These translations do not say the same thing, but they are all close enough to the original. Harrison's "golden-haired" and Jonson's "bright" are dropped in two of the other versions, and "Castalian springs" in Harrison's and Rowse's 1978 versions is explained as "purest spring" in Rowse's 1973 version but becomes the Muse's well or spring in Jonson and Marlowe. Jonson's "Kneel hinds to trash" is a bold departure from the literal sense of Ovid's lines, but is really a forceful dramatization of the idea of admiration, and "vile" or "base" things are more graphically represented as "trash." Rowse's 1978 version is quite different from his earlier one in its rendering of the first line, but the idea is still maintained though the situation is seen from a different perspective. The translations clearly illustrate the fact that translators frequently exercise some freedom, but it is a freedom that is controlled by the need to give the best possible expression of the original message in the target language. There is a point beyond which a translation ceases to be a translation and becomes something like an imitation or a recreation. An imitation or a recreation may be good or bad, but it should never present itself as a translation of the original text.

Now al-Mala'ika's مرثية في مقبره ريفية "Marthiya fi Maqbara Rifiyya" offers itself as "a translation of the famous poem An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by the English poet Thomas Gray" (al-Mala'ika 1960: 190), and, read independently of the original, the poem is one more example of the kind of romantic poetry that al-Mala'ika admired in poets like Byron (an excerpt from whose *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* she also translated in the same volume), Keats (to whom she dedicated a poem called "To the Poet Keats" in the same volume, and on whom she wrote a well-known essay on death and poetry in her *Qadaya*), and Ali Mahmud Taha, on whom she wrote her doctoral dissertation. The poem renders Gray's quatrains into mellifluous four-line stanzas utilizing the *khafif* meter, each with its own monorime. The poem tries in places to keep close to the original but almost always fails to be close enough. Careful examination reveals that there are problems that make the appropriateness

of the term "translation" in this case questionable. The omissions, elaborations, and sheer inaccuracies carry the Arabic version far beyond the point where one poem based on another in a different language can still be called a translation. It is instructive to study these problems in some detail and to try to account for them wherever possible.

It will, perhaps, be helpful to discuss the translation under certain headings. I have isolated eight areas in which the Arabic version of Gray's *Elegy* says much more, or much less, or even something other than the original text. No doubt, the deviations are not all equally serious, but, taken together, they create the impression in the minds of those familiar with the original text that calling al-Mala'ika's version a translation is not quite accurate. The areas isolated are: (1) elaboration, (2) omission, (3) change of tense, (4) change of metaphor, (5) avoidance of "unpoetic" terms, (6) cultural difficulties, (7) avoidance of specificity, and (8) errors in understanding.

### 1. Elaboration

Johan Christoph Gottsched defends his expansion of Horace's five-hundred line *Ars Poetica* into a seven-hundred line German version by the claim that he "did not omit or change anything of major importance". He pleads with his readers "not to check too closely whether a complete reproduction of all Horace's letters and syllables has been achieved. A translation of prose," he believes "should be checked more closely in this, but a translator of poetry should be allowed a little leeway because of the restrictions he is writing under, as long as he makes up for this shortcoming by writing a pleasant and easy-flowing style" (Lefevre 1977: 14). Nazik al-Mala'ika did produce "a pleasant and easy-flowing style" and, as far as the number of lines is concerned, she expanded only one quatrain, the 21st into two. What she did more frequently may more properly be called elaboration than expansion.

By elaboration I mean expanding an idea that exists in the original text either explicitly or implicitly. Elaboration may remain within reasonable limits and may be justified by the interests of the rhythm and metrical pattern of the target language, or may go far beyond these limits.

In the first quatrain, for example, the phrases *المساء الكئيب*, *الجرس المحزون*, *المجالى الحزينات* and *القطيع المكود* all contain adjectives that are not in the

original text and that are clearly brought in for the sake of the meter or out of sheer fondness for adjectives, which Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1959:8) recognized as one of the vices of sentimental Arabic poetry, and which he consciously tried to avoid. But the "sadness" of the evening and of the tolling bell is not alien to the atmosphere of the poem, and the "weariness" of the herd may be gathered from the slow movement homeward. And when al-Mala'ika writes that the sad bell announces the death of the day للأجواء (to the atmosphere), that, too, is not in Gray, but pardonable though tautological. Yet we cannot miss the fact that the sadness implicitly suggested in the original is explicitly stressed four times in the Arabic version of the first quatrain. This rather sentimentalizes the carefully controlled tone of Gray's *Elegy*. In fact, there are fourteen more examples of variants on كئيب and in the مرثية (Marthiya), thirteen of which have no explicit equivalent in the *Elegy*.

Similarly, in the second quatrain al-Mala'ika translates "landscape" with six words: في الأفق بعيدا, عن امتداد السهوب. Admittedly, we do not have a standard equivalent to "landscape" in Arabic, and so the translator tried to create the landscape by "painting" an expansive scene of receding plains in the distant horizon. She makes a virtue of necessity. And when in the second line of the same quatrain she says that this "wide expanse" (الفضاء المتمدد) will be "submerged by the night," she makes explicit an unstated idea in Gray's text. But when, later in the same quatrain, she writes .that the pealing of the bells over the meadow will spread the illusion of sleep and the silence of the evening, she definitely goes beyond what Gray's poem can allow. First of all, Gray's "drowsy tinklings" have been transformed into resounding peals (دوي in Arabic is associated with deafening noises such as explosions); secondly, the place where the tinklings originate has been relocated from "the distant folds" to the meadow or lea; thirdly, the drowsiness gradually brought about by the lulling sound of the tinkling bells has been transformed into وهم الكرى (the illusion of sleep); and, finally, the translator has added the vague idea Contained in the phrase صمت الغيوب She obviously wants to suggest the growing stillness of the scene, but in order to do so she exaggerates the loudness of the sounds at the beginning of the line, introduces the puzzling idea of the illusion of sleep, and ends with the vague phrase

صمت الغيوب. This phrase illustrates the tyranny of rimes over the unwary poet. The form علام الغيوب is the plural of غيب (as in علام الغيوب --an attribute of God, Who knows the unknown future), but this sense is incongruous with the context. The poet obviously has in mind something like nocturnal

silence, and a more accurate word would have been *المغيب*, but for some strange reason this word did not occur to her. If she meant what she wrote (the silence of the unknown future), the idea must be condemned as totally unwarranted by Gray's text.

In the fifth quatrain al-Mala'ika imports a verb from the previous quatrain to achieve a smoother rhetorical transition, through anaphora, to the next quatrain and then elaborates on the idea that the churchyard houses the dilapidated graves of the simple villagers:

رقدوا الرقدة الخيرة في الوادي الدجي , وادي الحمام

which, backtranslated, means that "they slept their last sleep in the sad, dark valley, the valley of death." The idea, though not in the original, may still be tolerated as not contrary to the general drift of the poem. But when she says in the last line that "the calls of the horn no longer tempt them, for how can skeletons made of bones be tempted?" the translation verges on the macabre. Gary's text does not suggest that "The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn" can (or cannot) tempt the villagers "from their lowly bed"; it merely states that neither the clarion nor the horn "shall rouse them" from that lowly bed. The simple fact stated is that they cannot hear these calls. Temptation suggests a contrary idea: that they can hear, but are no longer interested. Here the elaboration has gone beyond the semantic limits allowed by the poem.

The next quatrain, to give a final example, once more repeats the initial verb *رقدوا*; (they slept) for transitional purposes, and then elaborates:

رقدوا في العراء , تحت الثلوج البيض: لا موقد ولا نيران  
ومضوا , فالبيوت خاوية منهم وفي قلب اهلها أحزان

A backtranslation of these lines may read something like:

They slept out in the open beneath the white snow, with neither hearth nor fire, and they went away, so that the houses are empty of them, with their owners' hearts filled with sadness.

Except for the hearth and the fire, none of these details is in the original text. The translation has unaccountably omitted the significant reference to the "busy housewife" plying "her evening care." The reference to the children rushing to meet their father is well preserved in the third line, but the beautiful image of the children lisping the news of their "sire's return"


is lost, and so is the image of the children vying to share the father's envied kiss. Instead, we have the bathetic lament:

يا لتهيدة اليتامى! فما يرجع أبؤهم الى ما كانوا

(O, the sigh of the orphans! Their parents will never resume their former state.)

It is exactly this bathos that Gary's controlled tone tries to avoid.

## 2. Omission

As the last example has shown, al-Mala'ika's version sometimes omits important details for reasons that can often be identified. Beginning with the title of the poem, al-Mala'ika drops the reference to writing (not a great loss) and to the churchyard. The place in her title is simply a  (cemetery). The difference may seem slight; but it becomes more significant when we discover that all references to Christianity in the poem have been dropped. In quatrain 21 the reference to the holy texts "strewn" by the "unlettered Muse" over the gravestones has no equivalent in the Arabic version, and the same is true of the reference to the dead poet's body being carried "through the churchway" in quatrain 29. The translator also omitted the reference to the abode of the dead poet, "The bosom of his father and his God" in the last quatrain. The dechristianization of the poem may be explained by the fact that al-Mala'ika's audience is mainly a Muslim audience and by her rejection, on theological grounds, of the idea of God as a Father, which is one of the main differences between Islam and Christianity.

In quatrain 3 the reference to the tower and the kingdom of the owl implied by the word "reign" has been omitted, and this has entailed the loss of the image of the ivy draping the tower. Instead, we have a vague image of something high (قته) on which flowers have climbed and hidden the turtledove's nest in the shadows of the branches. The idea of the Image of "those whose who passed by her world (الذين مروا بدنياها)" in the Arabic version. One possible explanation of this is the translator's wish to avoid the image of the owl, a bird of ill-omen in Arab culture, and her wrong-headed refusal to take the tower in Gray's text literally. The whole idea of an owl resting; or nesting; on an ivy-mantled tower may have seemed foreign to her, and she substituted vaguer imagery and changed the owl into a turtledove. The hooting of the owl suggested by Gray's effectively subdued word "complain" has been changed into فدوى صوتها المحزون (and

her melancholy voice boomed), a phrase appropriate neither to owl nor turtledove.

In quatrain 4 the Arabic version omits the names of the trees (elms, yew) and substitutes pine trees for them. Pine trees are more familiar to Arab readers, and, except for specialists, few Arabs may be able to identify الدردار (elm) or الطقوس (yew). The substitution, however, is really part of a more widespread phenomenon in Arabic poetry which deserves a separate study, but which can only be briefly touched upon here. This phenomenon is the avoidance of specific names of things that have not become part of the poetic lexicon (see further examples of this in section 7 below). The avoidance of the owl in quatrain 4 is only one example in the poem. Other examples include the beetle in quatrain 2, for which the Arabic version gives الطيور (unspecified), the "shed" in quatrain 5, for which we get الأكواخ (huts), "swallows" in the same quatrain, for which we get الطيور (birds) again. The "cock's shrill clarion" (quatrain 5) is dropped altogether, and the "team" driven "afield" is completely changed into أغنام (sheep and goats) being taken home to their shelter (الى المأوى) instead of a pair of cows taken to the field to plough the land. أغنام may have sounded more poetic to al-Mala'ika than the clumsier *i* for sheep have always been associated with the pastoral world. Even in English, shepherds and shepherdesses belong to the world of poetry, but cowboys and cowhands belong to a completely different mythos.

In quatrain 11 the reference to "storied urn" vanishes completely in the Arabic version and the image of the "animated bust" is blurred by the simple plural التماثيل (statues). My guess is that al-Mala'ika found the adjective "storied" too difficult to manage, for the word cannot be translated with a similar adjective in Arabic; a whole line would have been required to explain how the urn had stories painted on it.

But quatrain 21 seems to have been particularly troublesome to al-Mala'ika. A backtranslation of her Arabic counterpart of this quatrain gives an idea how far she has strayed from the text:

"The graves on which the reed of poetry was kind enough to sing a sad uncertain tune / so that the tune became that of an unprolific poet, a tune that has nothing except the wails of a poet, / The graves on which there is an elegiac tune that causes the passer-by

to cry / and that tells the living that life is a dream followed by the silence of the grave."

We notice first that this backtranslation is an incomplete sentence- a fragment. That is because the original Arabic is an incomplete sentence, (جملة غير مفيدة) that begins with a subject (مبتدأ) which gets no predicate. Secondly, the "unlettered Muse" is seen only vestigially in the "reed of poetry," with no suggestion that this "reed" is "unlettered." This reed is kind enough (حنت) to give the graves a sad tune (i.e., poem), and this tune turns out to be that of a singer (شاد)(i.e., poet), who does not write too often, and the tune is full of wailing. All of this is a far cry from the details that "the unlettered Muse" in Gray's poem supplies in place of fame and elegy, details like the name, and the years of the deceased. We know why the reference to the holy texts on the graves has been omitted, but the lesson that these texts teach to "the rustic moralist" is expanded in al-Mala'ika's version into the truism that man's life is a dream followed by the silence of the grave; in the original the holy texts teach a different lesson : they "teach the rustic moralist to die," a much more forceful lesson.

### 3. Change of Tenses

The tense system in Arabic is less complex than that of English, but Arabic has its own resources to express all nuances of meaning conveyed by the various tenses in English. In translation all changes in the tenses of the original text must be justified; if no justification can be found, the change must be condemned as a sign of incompetence or carelessness.

In the Elegy Gray uses the present simple tense in the opening quatrains to depict a scene observed at the time experienced by the speaker of the poem:

;;The curfew *tolls* ...  
 "The lowing herd *wind* slowly ..."  
 " The plowman ...*plods* his weary way,  
 " And *leaves* the world ...  
 "Now *fades* ... "

The Arabic version renders all of this correctly enough: *ينجر/ينساب/ينعى*  
 But the second quatrain suddenly shifts to the future tense: *سوف يخبو النور*

(the light will fade). There is no justification for this shift. The problem may have started earlier, however. Gray's opening quatrain is a complete structural unit consisting of four simple sentences and ending with a full stop. In al-Mala'ika's version, on the other hand, the first quatrain is really a fragment (جملة غير مفيدة). The use of the future tense at the beginning of the next quatrain seems to save the first from dangling in the air unattached to a grammatical sentence and transforms it into an adverbial unit governed by the verb سوف يخبو (will fade). The present tense of this verb would fit more naturally as one of the series of present-tense verbs in the second quatrain, which introduce self-contained grammatical units, and would leave the first quatrain as a fragment.

In quatrain 4 Gray continues his description of the scene using verbs in the present tense: the turf *heaves*; the forefathers *sleep*. The Arabic version keeps the tense of "heaves", faintly retained in the two verbs تعلقو and ينمو in an otherwise erroneous rendering of the sense of the original line, but shifts to the past tense when it comes to the verb "sleep." Two verbs are again used to translate the single verb "sleep": أسلمتهم and رقد. The meaning is not materially affected, for both the past and the present tenses in this context simply state a fact although the present tense would have been more consistent with the other verbs and would have produced a greater sense of immediacy.

A similar situation is found in the next two quatrains, where the Arabic version uses the present tense instead of the future. The loss is only in the forcefulness of Gray's "No more shall rouse" as opposed to the simple statements لا توقظ دنياهم (does not wake up their world) and ليس تغريهم (does not tempt them) in al-Mala'ika's version.

More serious, perhaps, is the use of the past tense for the present in quatrain 14. In this famous quatrain Gray states the recurrent fact that the caves of the ocean "bear" countless gems of the purest ray serene and that many a flower is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness, etc. Apart from the hyperbolic and utterly unwarranted exclamation (يا لظلم الأقدار (0 for the cruelty of the fates!) at the beginning of al-Mala'ika's version, the shift to the past weakens the meaning considerably. The recurrent fact expressed by the use of the present tense in Gray's version becomes limited to the past and so precludes the idea that there are still such gems and such flowers. Gray's lines obviously prepare for the idea that the speaker of the poem, who will be imagined as dead at the end of the poem



and as being carried to his grave in the country churchyard, where his epitaph will be given as the concluding part of the poem, is himself such a gem hidden in the caves of the ocean, or such a flower that has been "born to blush unseen."

#### 4. Change of Image and/or Metaphor

Change of image and/or metaphor may sometimes be necessary for greater communicability in the target language or because the original metaphor cannot, for some reason, be literally translated. Newmark (1995: 158) comments on the translation of the phrase "sots ennemis" as "addle-pated enemies" by asking whether such a translation is ever justified. "Where an adjective has an obvious one-to-one equivalent which is communicatively effective, there is no reason to replace it with a metaphor. However, in 'informative' or 'vocative' texts such a replacement may be valid if it is used as 'compensation' to balance the more common 'metaphor to sense' transition in another part of the text or as a means of enlivening a translation." Elsewhere in the book (p. 50) Newmark rejects Neubert's claim that Shakespeare's sonnet no. 18 "could not be semantically translated into a language spoken in a country where summers are unpleasant" and says that "A communicative translation into a Middle East language would certainly require a different imagery and a new poem."

We have already seen how sense in the lines from Ovid was transformed into a more effective image in Ben Jonson's translation of the idea of admiring vile things into the act of kneeling to trash. An equally effective change occurs in al-Mala'ika's translation of the phrase the "living lyre" in quatrain 12 of Gray's poem. There is no real equivalent in Arabic to this Greek instrument which has become a standard symbol of poetry in several European languages. The Arabic version changes the lyre into ...sL (flute or reed), which is familiar to Arab readers and functions in the same way (cf. Gibran's famous line أعطني الناي وغني [Give me the nay and sing!]).

In the last line of the poem the original wording, as mentioned before, has the Christian idea that the poet's "dread abode" is "The bosom of his Father and his God." The translator gives us a substitute for this idea from the target culture without seeming openly Islamic:

مأمل الخالق الذي ضمه الله الى عدله فأغمض عينا  
 The reason for this change is not that the original line cannot be translated but that al-Mala'ika has decided to dechristianize the poem. Her line is rather vague but it means that the heart of the dead poet has the hope of being "embraced by God's justice" and so it (i.e., the heart--synecdoche for the man) can close its/his eyes in sleep. The idea of collocating justice and sleep is borrowed from a famous incident in the life of Caliph 'Umar

b. al-Khattab, who was found asleep in the open one day with nobody to guard him and so the passer-by said, "Thou hast been just, and so thou hast slept."

But al-Mala'ika's decision to dechristianize the poem is rather inconsistent with her acceptance of the English background in the poem. This background could have been universalized or delocalized by the avoidance of the English names in quatrain 15. The names, though subjected to the tortuous inflections of Arabic and have to be pronounced *humdinon* for Hampden, *miltoni* for Milton, and *cromwilon* for Cromwell, remain foreign, and, for those who do not know English history, obscure name's. Since in Gray's poem the names are used generically to illustrate a theme, they could easily have been dropped without affecting the general drift of the poem. Substitution with Arabic names would have suggested that it was Gray who used the names, which would have given a false impression about him.

But when change of image and/or metaphor is warranted neither by cultural nor linguistic reasons, it must be condemned as either a sign of carelessness or as an exercise of excessive freedom on the part of the translator.

Generally speaking, Gary's *Elegy* is rather poor in metaphoric language. Such metaphors as are used in the poem are hardly original. One possible explanation is the poet's desire to keep the tone low-keyed to suit the "homely" world that he is depicting. This is all the more reason why the translator should preserve the metaphors actually used - as far, that is, as is consistent with communicability and naturalness of expression in the target language.

A phrase like "his weary way" (1.3) is commonplace enough, but the transferred epithet in it enforces the verb "plods," which is used to describe the movement of the plowman and should, therefore, be

preserved. The translator instead used the word "weary" as an adjective qualifying the noun "herd" and so changed the auditory image ("lowing") into a muscular-kinetic one ("weary"). This is made worse by the translator's odd decision to change the "plowman" into الفتى الحارس ("the young guard"), which is totally unjustified. Furthermore, the phrase ينساب المكود (the weary herd) contradicts the import of the verb ينساب which is used to translate the verb "wind." The herd cannot be both weary and capable of smooth movement at the same time, for ينساب denotes easy, effortless, unimpeded movement, such as that of liquids flowing freely.

In quatrain 4, as we have seen, the Arabic version changes the original elms and yew trees into pine trees. But these pine trees, which in the Arabic version shade the graves of the dead villagers, seem to grow in the wrong place, for instead of "turf" we have "sand dunes and rocks." There may not be a satisfactory word for "turf" in Arabic, but sand dunes in an English churchyard are definitely misplaced, and I do not think that pine trees thrive well in sand dunes. Gray's mild metaphor in the same quatrain which transforms the graves into "narrow cells" has also vanished in the translation; instead we have ضيق قبور (the narrowness of graves), which discards the suggestion that the graves are eternal prisons.

But the most interesting aspect of metaphoric transference in the present context is the one connected with Gray's personifications. Personification is not unknown in Arabic poetry. Examples include this line form al-Buhturi:

أتاك الربيع الطلق يخال ضاحكا من الحسن حتى كاد ان يتكلما

(laughing Spring has come to you strutting, so proud of his beauty that he almost spoke) or these two lines by an unknown poet:

سألت الندى والجود: حران انتما؟ فقالا: يقينا اننا لعبيد  
فقلت: ومن مولاكما؟ فتطاولا علي وقالوا: خالد ويزيد

(I asked Munificence and Generosity, "Are you free?" "We are certainly slaves," they said. "Khalid and Yazid!").

But Arabic literary criticism has not come up with a technical term like "personification" for this figure of speech. Instead, such figures are subsumed under the term تشبيه بليغ (effective simile).

In English poetry, however, personification is much more frequent. It is a prominent feature of neoclassical poetry in particular, and even a poet like Shelley was not above employing it (cf. *Adonais*, ll. 109-117) despite the strictures of Wordsworth (1936:735) and Coleridge (1907:1:12). But personification in the eighteenth century was sometimes so mechanically used that it frequently became no more than a noun with a capital letter. Gray's *Elegy* has many such personifications, and it is not always clear whether a capitalized noun in the *Elegy* as printed nowadays is a personification or not. In the Eton College manuscript version printed in the *Norton Anthology* (Abrams et al., eds., 1993: I, 2516-18) Gray capitalizes all nouns, regardless of whether or not a noun is intended to be a personification. In quatrain 8, for example, "Ambition" and "Grandeur" are clearly personifications. The first can mock the useful toil of the dead villagers, and the second can hear with a disdainful smile the annals of the poor. But "Flattery" in quatrain 11 cannot really be distinguished from "flattery" with a small "f." Both can (or cannot) "soothe the dull cold ear of Death." "Knowledge" in quatrain 13 is clearly personified as a female with "ample page" to "unroll" to people, but "Chill Penury" in the same quatrain is less vividly personified. And it really makes no difference whether "Misery" in quatrain 31 and "Fortune" and "Fame" in quatrain 30 are written with capital letters or small ones, for personification there does not come off

In quatrain 8, the Arabic version discards all personification. "Ambition" is replaced by "mockers" who are said to have no right to belittle the villagers' toil and ambition (notice that ambition here is ascribed to the villagers, not the mockers, which contradicts the original meaning). "Grandeur" is transformed into "mocking eyes" and "rich people" who "may not disdain the life of a poor man destined to suffer and groan." "Memory" in quatrain 10 is completely dropped and replaced by *المجد* (glory), which has not erected any statues over the tombs of the dead (awkwardly rendered as *الثوي*). "Honor" in quatrain 11 is also discarded and replaced by *هتاف المديح* (declamations of praise), while "Flattery" is expanded into the "flattery of the living," which robs the original word of all suggestion of personification. A similar process happens to "Knowledge" and "Penury" in quatrain 13, where the first is transformed into a bird fluttering above the villagers with its wings instead of being a lady unrolling her ample page, and the second remains as lifeless as a personification as the original. The phrase "repressed their noble rage" is rendered *اطفاً الفقر فيهم نبع اللهب الواري* where poverty

("Penury") is said to have extinguished the fountainhead of burning flame. This rendering is rather self-contradictory, for the act of extinguishing the fire requires the water issuing from the fountainhead whereas the translation makes the fire originate in the fountainhead itself. It might be possible to think of liquid fire in the form of lava flowing from a volcano, but then we would not speak of a fountainhead.

The "shrine of Luxury and Pride" in quatrain 18 vanishes in the translation as does the "unlettered Muse" in quatrain 21. "Dumb forgetfulness" (22) becomes لجة النسيان (the whirlpool of oblivion), and so can no longer be taken as a personification, and "The voice of Nature" (23) is rendered صوت الزمان (the voice of time). The "lap of Earth" (30) is now simply الأرض (earth). "Fortune" (30) loses all traces of personification by becoming plural (الحظوظ) and "Fame" is expanded into المجد والشهرة (glory and fame), which are clearly mere abstract nouns. "Fair Science" in the Arabic version no longer remains a person who can "frown" but becomes مناهل (sources, fountainheads) of knowledge and art. "Melancholy," which in Gray is a woman who has marked the poet "for her own" is in al-Mala'ika's version الليالي صاغت الحزن (nights that have moulded his youth out of sorrow).

It is clear that al-Mala'ika has failed to translate any of Gray's personifications as personifications and has taken too much liberty in rendering them into Arabic. The fault, however, can sometimes be explained. It may be instructive to consider quatrain 30 once more and to see what has happened in the prose version, which has attempted to be as faithful to the original as possible. "Fortune" and "Fame" are feminine in English when personified, originating in Fortuna and Fama. In Arabic, Fortune (whether we translate it as النصيب or الحظ) is masculine, and to render it القسمة (cf. kismet) to maintain the feminine gender is first of all arbitrary, and, secondly, rather misleading, for القسمة, like fate, always suggests "misfortune" although fate can, theoretically, be positive or negative. Fame (الشهرة) is feminine, but because Arabic has no capital letters that can denote that a word is to be taken as a personification, the word cannot be felt as a personification because it is not distinguished in Gray's text by any deeds or features that can suggest that it is treated as a person. The "lap of Earth" makes it clear that Earth is a female on which the head of the youth can rest, and so حجره الأرض in the prose version renders this idea perfectly. But Science in English has no tradition similar to that of Fortune or Fame to make it specifically feminine. "Fair

Science," however, inclines towards the feminine gender, and so to translate Science as العلم would be to contradict what the poem is suggesting, for العلم is masculine in Arabic. المعرفة (Knowledge), therefore, has been chosen in the prose version partly because it is feminine and partly because it is in fact the real sense of the word "Science," which is used in the old sense of "knowledge". السوداء for "Melancholy" also seems to work quite well. But in quatrain 13 there is no indication of the gender of "Penury" and الفقر which is masculine, can be taken as an accurate rendering. In Arabic الفقر collocates with المدقع (extreme, humiliating), and so this adjective has been chosen in the prose version to replace "Chill" because الفقر البارد would have sounded awkward in Arabic. But although الفقر in the Arabic prose version does what Penury does in Gray's text, there is no indication of personification. In the Arabic version, for الفقر remains simply a phenomenon or power that can repress or freeze the current of the soul, whereas some indication of personification in Gray's text is suggested by the use of the capital letter.

Another interesting case occurs in Lewis 'Awad's translation of Shelley's *Adonais* (Shelley 1974). The first personification in *Adonais* occurs in stanza 7:

To that high Capital, where kingly Death  
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,  
He came...

'Awad renders this as follows:

قصد أدونيس الى الحاضره العليه حيث نشر ملك الموت جمال البلى في رواق الموت البالي...

First of all, this is an inaccurate translation of Shelley's text, but that is not our main concern here. Secondly, the Arabic version, whether accurate or not, is ambiguous. It is not quite clear in the absence of vocalization whether we should read the word ملك : as ملك (King) or ملك (Angel). The context allows both readings: الحاضرة العلية ("that high Capital") encourages the reading of ملك as "King". But the other reading, that which alludes to Azrael as (the angel of death), is supported by the fact that the translator has dropped the reference to "court," and substituted the word رواق (carridor, passageway) for it. Most importantly, however, Shelley's

personification of Death as a "kingly" personage who rules the Capital in its beautiful edifices and decayed places completely disappears whether we read ملك as "King" or "Angel," for personification consists of treating an abstract noun like "Death" as concrete, while the "King of Death" or "the

Angel of Death" presents us with a different being who is the instrument of death, not death personified. The same thing happens to "Invisible Corruption" in stanza 8, where instead of keeping "Corruption" as the name of a "person" who is invisible, 'Awad gave us an image of a "ghost of corruption" ( شبح الفساد ), thereby robbing the original phrase of its suggestion of personification.

In stanza 9 the opening lines read as follows:

... The quick Dreams,  
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,  
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams  
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught  
The love which was its music, wander not ...

'Awad's translation reads:

فالأحلام خفيفة و بنات الفكر التي أعارها الحب أجنحه ترفرف بها كالأملآك لم تتجول قرب جدول روحه الدفاق حيث كان يطعمها بثمرات قريحته ويلقنها الحب وهو من خصائص نفسه الشاعر...

The translation is again inaccurate, but the most significant error for our immediate purposes is 'Awad's misreading of the appositive phrase "The passion-winged Ministers of thought" as if it referred to a set of beings ( بنات الأفكار ) which is distinct from the "quick Dreams." The poem makes it clear that "The passion-winged :Ministers of thought" are "The quick Dreams." Furthermore, some of these dreams are described in the next stanzas as engaged in specific activities. Stanza 13, however, introduces a whole army of them:

And others came .... Desires and Adorations,  
Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,  
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations  
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;  
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,  
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam

Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,  
Came in slow pomp...

Here is 'Awad's version:

وجاءت غيرهن من بنات الفكر: جاءت الأشواق والصبابات. جاءت الرغبات المجنحة والمقادير المثلثة , والجمال جاء,  
والهموم, والمخاوف جاءت والأمال استوت حول جثمانه أطيافا ولمعت في الظلام, كما جاءت أوهام الغروب. والحزن جاء  
تتبعه التتهيدات وهن بناته. والسعادة كذلك جاءت وقد أعمتها دموعها. وما كان لها ان ترى طريقها لولا البصيص الذي بقا من  
بسماتها المتلاشية...

The problems here are many. The phrase بنات الأفكار u which, literally translated, means "the daughters of thought" is a dead metaphor in Arabic meaning little more than ideas originating in somebody's mind. But whether بنات الأفكار is acceptable or not as a translation of "Ministers of thought" (in stanza 9), there is nothing wrong in reviving the dead metaphor if it works. I am not sure that

#### الأشواق والصبابات والرغبات المجنحة والمقادير المثلثة

are accurate renderings of their English counterparts, but they are as alive (or dead) as their counterparts in Shelley as personifications. But since بنات in Arabic is a feminine noun, beings that cannot be called with names that are feminine in gender have to be introduced as masculine. And so we get الجمال (beauty) for "Splendours." There is no plural for الجمال and so the army of Splendours is reduced to one "person." (Another Splendour was mentioned in stanza 12, but 'Awad dropped the name there.) "Sorrow" in Shelley's text is a matron who comes "with her family of Sighs," but her counterpart in 'Awad's version is الحزن a male person who comes with "his family of Sighs."

Personification, then, constitutes a real problem for the translator because Arabic has only two, compared to the English three, grammatical genders, and because it is less distinctly recognized in Arabic as an independent figure of speech in its own right.

### 5. Avoidance of "Unpoetic" Diction

Just as eighteenth-century English poetry often resorted to what it considered to be poetic diction, substituting such phrases as the "finny tribe" for "fish" and the "briny deep" for "sea," and objecting to such



terms as "knife" as a kitchen utensil not fit for poetry, Arabic poetry has also created its own poetic diction and avoided the "unpoetic." "Poetic" and "unpoetic" are obviously fluid terms which are liable to change with the poetic conventions of the times. I suspect that a translation of Yeats's "Nine bean-rows" in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" into 'تسعة أتلام من الفاصولياء' will still sound "unpoetic," if not downright funny, in a poem written after the classical model.

Nazik al-Mala'ika's version of Gray's poem has several examples of omission or substitution which can only be accounted for by her predilection for poetic diction in the decadent sense. She rejects "plowman" (1) in favor of the "young guard" although the poem does not support this interpretation. The "beetle" (2) as "الخنفساء" belongs with الفاصولياء for "beans" as unpoetic, and so is transformed into "birds." The "folds" (2) as الزرائب or الحظائر is also felt to be offensive in a romanticized atmosphere, and so a more poetic word is given: المروج (meadow). The same thing happens to "owl" (3) and "shed" (5). The first becomes a "turtledove" and the second "huts." Dropped with nothing to compensate for them are "cock" (5), "knees" (6), "housewife" (6) "evening care" (6), "sickle" (7), "team" (7) and the "unlettered Niuse" (21). Arabic poetry has still to learn that poeticality is not inherent in the words as such but in their function in the poem in which they are employed.

## 6. Cultural Difficulties

I have already touched upon some ideas (e.g., the dechristianization of the world of the poem) which are connected, directly or indirectly, with this topic, To avoid repetition I shall deal here only with a few example that may escape notice, but which are as significant as the Christian element.

One such example is the word "horn" in quatrain 5. The ;;echoing horn;; in Gray's poem refers to the habit of English hunters of the time of calling on hunters to start their hunting expedition. In the Arabic version by al-Mala'ika no such connotations are felt. The prose version expands the wording to make the implicit meaning explicit.

A hearth (6) in English always recalls the cosiness of "home" and the warmth of family relationships. The prose version tries to capture these associations by the addition of في بيوتهم. (in their homes), but al-Mala'ika's

version oddly links the fire and the hearth with the place in which the dead have been buried: رقدوا في العراء تحت الثلوج البيض: لا موقد ولا نيران (They slept out in the open, beneath the white snow, with neither hearth nor fire.) Now the phrase في العراء (in the open) suggests in Arabic an open, deserted area where the place has no trees or buildings. This, of course, contradicts what the poem says. The graves are in a churchyard. The churchyard is filled with "rugged elms" and at least one yew tree is mentioned. Besides, there is an ivy-mantled tower nearby, and, of course, the church itself.

The reference to "snow" is also out of place because the time of the year, though not specifically stated, can be gathered from certain cumulative details in the poem to be a warm season. These include: (a) "The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn" in quatrain 5 ("breezy" suggests "cool," not "cold"); (b) the swallow (5) is a migratory bird that leaves England to the south in winter; (c) hunting is not carried out in snowy weather; and (d) the land is not plowed in the snowy season.

Heraldry (9) has no real equivalent in Arabic. *Al-Mughni Al-Kabir's* علم الرنوك is as foreign as "heraldry" itself. *Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit* explains الرنك, the singular form, as an emblem or insignia used by the Turkish and Mamluke potentates in Egypt. And I suspect that شعارة, which the Arabic-English *Al-Mawrid* gives as its equivalent (notice that the dictionaries give different words for the same English word) is a recent coinage that very few people will really understand. The nearest equivalent in my view is علم الأنساب (genealogy) although this "science" depended on memory and family trees, not on an elaborate system of symbols that could be "read" by specialists. The prose version of the *Elegy* tries to capture the tenor of the phrase "the boast of heraldry" by using this analogy between genealogy and التبعج بالمحتد النبيل, but al-Mala'ika's version, after beginning quatrain 9 with *twq* rhetorical questions which are unwarranted by the English text, refers to "titles" and "the gifts of glory," which are too remote to suggest heraldry.

One last example must suffice. In quatrain 10 the image created in the English text is that of the tombs of the great housed within the "long-drawn aisle and fretted vault" of the church as opposed to the simple graves of the poor laid outside in "this neglected spot" (12) (i.e., the churchyard). Inside the church "The pealing anthem swells the note of

praise," but not outside in the churchyard. All of this is lost in the verse translation, where instead we have

ها هنا, لا قباب لا قوس نصر,  
ليس الاسر الردى الابدي  
وهو المرقد الأبيد لقوم  
لم يرئم مديهم ادمي

(Here there are no vaults, no triumphal arches--nothing except the eternal secret of death! And this is the eternal resting place of those whose praises no human being has ever sung.) This, clearly, is a far cry from what Gray's poem actually says.

## 7. Avoidance of Specificity

We have already seen that the unpoetic "beetle" is replaced by the supposedly more poetic "birds' wings." We further observe here, however, that these birds are not specified. This is just an example of a widespread phenomenon in Arabic verse which vitiates the present verse version of Gray's poem. The owl's bower in quatrain 3 (or rather the turtledove's in al-Mala'ika's version) becomes her vague "world" when wanderers disturb her. The swallow (5) becomes "birds" again, and the "straw-built shed" is transformed into "huts." The "housewife" of quatrain 6 becomes أهلها (owners, occupants). The "lisp" of the children (6) is less specifically expressed as "a cheerful approach" (تخف جذلي) just as the twittering of the swallow is likewise blurred into مراح (merriment). The recurrent method of avoiding specificity is the use of the plural instead of the singular, which is sometimes used in addition to changing the original image into another. Examples other than those already mentioned include حضارات (civilizations) for "pomp of power" (9); قباب (Valute) for the "fretted vault" (10); التماثيل (statues) for "animated bust" (11); . في المجالي (in the areas) (25); القمم الخضر (green hills) for "upland lawn" (25); التلال الحبيبات (the dear hills) for "the customed hill" (28); الربي (hills) for "lawn" (28); الحقول (the field) for "wood" (28); السهول (the plains) for "the heath" (28); حجارة القبور (the stones of a grave) for "the stone" (29); and الحظوظ (strokes of good luck) for "Fortune" (30).

This tendency to avoid specificity is perhaps the result of mental laxity, which has been the bane of much poetry that cultivates a hazy, dreamy romanticism *a la* Ali Mahmud Taha, who was al-Mala'ika's idol. This haziness is characteristic of most of the poems in عاشقة الليل (Lover of the

.Night ) , the volume of poetry in which al-Mala'ika's verse version of Gray's *Elegy* was published. Her conception of poetry may be gathered from the following e:x.iraqt from a section entitled "The Poet's Voice" in her poem الفيضان (The Flood) (pp. 176-177):

مغرق في خياله، شارد العينين، مستسلم إلى الأحلام  
 يذرع الضفة الجميلة مفتوناً بصوت الأمواج والأنسام  
 ويرى اللجة الرهيبة سحراً وبتأبيح فضي بالإلهام  
 وعلى البعد منظر النخل في النهر ومرآى التلال والآكام  
 هكذا الشاعر الخيالي يقضي يومه في الأوهام والألحان...

(Immersed in his imagination, his eyes straying away, surrendering to his dreams, / the poet walks along the beautiful shore delighted with the sound of the waves and the breezes. / He sees magic in the terrifying flood and fountains overflowing with inspiration. / And in the distance he sees the palm trees, the hills, and thickets reflected in the river. / This is how the dreamy poet spends his day in delusions and melodies, etc.) A poet whose eyes keep straying away from the hard realities confronting him or her cannot be expected to see well and to appreciate the concrete and the specific.

## 8. Errors in Understanding

Erroneous translations are, alas, all too frequent. Even the most cautious of translators are not exempt from it. Professor Nadia Bishai's excellent translation of some selected poems by Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1986) is marred by a few such errors. One of the most interesting misreadings occurs in her rendering of these lines from al-Sayyab's ثعلب الموت (The Fox of Death):

من رآها، دجاجة الريف، اذ يمسي عليها المساء في بستانه؟  
 حين ينسل نحوها الثعلب الفراس، يا للصريف من أسنانه!  
 وهي تختض، شلها الرعب، أبقاها بحيث الردى-  
 كأن الدروب..  
 .. استلها مارداً، كأن النيويا  
 سور بغداد موصل الباب، لا منجى لديه ولا خلاص ينال،  
 هكذا نحن، حينما يقبل الصياد عزريل:  
 رجفه فاغتيال.

(Bishai 1986 : 24)

Here is Professor Bishai's translation:

Who has seen the country chicken  
 In its night garden  
 When the voracious fox creeps towards it?  
 Paralysed, stricken with fear,  
 It stands rooted where death is  
 As it sweeps by like a giant.  
 Like Niobes locked fast  
 Within the walls of Baghdad  
 With no hope of rescue or escape  
 Such are we then  
 When Azrael, the hunter draws near ....  
 Then a tremor, a massacre.  
 (Bishai 1986 : 37)

I do not know why Professor Bishai omitted to translate the phrase  
 يا للصريف من أسنانه (0, the gnashing of his teeth!), and her translation of  
 اغتيال (assassination) by the word "massacre" may or may not be justified.  
 But I think that her translation of النيوب as "Niobes" is a simple mistake  
 of misreading. . She may have been tempted by al-Sayyab's tendency  
 to parade his knowledge of Greek mythology and by the similarity of  
 sounds in the two words. But the simple fact is that النيوب is another form  
 of the plural الأنياب forced upon the poet by the word الدروب in the  
 previous line and by the meter with which he was experimenting here (the  
*khafif* meter employed in a modernist type of  
 verse or what al-Sayyab would erroneously have  
 called "free verse"). This reading of النيوب as the alternative plural  
 form of الأنياب (fangs, canine teeth) is supported by the nature of the  
 image depicted in the poem. The country chicken caught by the fox of  
 death has no chance of escape; the fox's gnashing teeth have closed in  
 upon her very much like the walls of Baghdad in which all the gates  
 have been locked. Professor Bishai should have been alerted to the  
 impossibility of her reading by of the incongruity of comparing the weeping Niobe  
 to a country chicken, and by the fact that Niobe is a proper noun and could not have  
 been preceded by the definite article, and that there is no justification for making the  
 noun plural, let alone the mispronunciation of the name as Nioba.

But if this is a simple case of misreading (cf. Professor Bishai's  
 misreading of the name "al-Chalabi" [Turkish Celebi ] as Galbi, , pp. 11

and 23, note 13 [twice]), there are cases of deliberate departure from the text for reasons that may be stated or implied. A translation of the "Lamb of God" into the "Seal of God" is a good example. Eskimo has no word for lamb, and this animal was changed to seal in the Eskimo Bible (Bamstone 1993: 40). The mistranslation here conveys the tenor of the original message but changes the vehicle.

Nazik al-Mala'ika's version of Gray's *Elegy*, as we have observed, contains many departures from the text. Not all such departures are errors. "Turtledove" for "Owl" cannot be the result of ignorance but deliberate choice. The refusal to take the owl's tower literally but as a metaphor for the owl's nest on some tree is a matter of interpretation, not ignorance of the meaning of the word "tower." But not all departures from Gray's text in al-Mala'ika's version can be accounted for on similar grounds. The following examples must be the result of misunderstanding and, therefore, must be condemned as errors in translation.

In quatrain 7 the peasants are said to feel "jocund" when "they drive their team afield," but the translation transforms the "team" into قطع الأغنام (herd of sheep and/or goats), and this herd is driven إلى المأوى (to the shelter or the fold) عند الأصيل (at nightfall). This must be an error, for there is no reason, cultural, rhetorical, poetic, or otherwise, to reverse the direction of the animals, be they sheep or cows, for the whole tenor of the quatrain is to describe these peasants in their daytime activity: harvesting, plowing, and cutting wood. Their homeward journey has been described in the opening quatrains with a quite different atmosphere, one of fatigue and growing darkness. I am tempted to ascribe this reversal of direction to the tyranny of rimes: الأصيل (nightfall) is irresistible in a quatrain that begins with السهول (plains) and الحقول (farms). And this tyranny is felt even more strongly in the last rhyming word الوحول (mud), which is so far-fetched that it requires a wrenching of the idea of wood-cutting so that it almost becomes a wanton activity in which "the trunk of the felled solid [for "stubborn"] tree" is "thrown in the mud."

In quatrain 8 "Ambition" is a personified abstract noun standing for the entire class of ambitious people. "Let not Ambition," Gray writes, "mock their useful toil." Instead of a straightforward rendering of this simple idea, al-Mala'ika admonishes the "mockers" not to belittle the exertion and ambition of the simple villagers, and ambition becomes attached not

to the class of the Ambitious and the Grand, but to the villagers themselves. This is contrary to Gray's intent.

Quatrains 16 and 17 seem to have been completely misunderstood by al-Mala'ika. A backtranslation of quatrain 16, for example, to compare it with the original text, will show how far she strayed away from that text:

"Their lot deprived them from happiness and their agonies enslaved them. / They are now where there are no senates, no applause, and where life is proper belief and peace. / They are where the agonies of the wretched are not mocked, and where orphans are not despised. / And they are the wretched, whose land is fallow and whose days are filled with hunger and sickness."

It is obvious here that al-Mala'ika has completely lost touch with the original text and that she retained only three words ("lot," "senates," and "applause") of the entire original quatrain and placed them in a completely different context. We can no longer here speak of "translation."

In quatrain 17 Gray says that the villagers' lot "circumscribed" not only their "growing virtues" but "confined" their crimes as well. But the translation neglects the virtues and distorts the idea that their crimes were of the petty kind, not of the grave kind illustrated in wading "through slaughter to a throne" and shutting "the gates of mercy on mankind" and says that "wretchedness extinguished all sin, harm, and arrogance" in their world; in that world there are no crimes and no destruction. There is nothing here to suggest that this distortion is the result of a possible "interpretation." It is simply an error in understanding.

One last example must suffice. In quatrain 30 Gray tells us that "Fair Science frowned not on his [the dead poet's] humble birth. "This means that Lady Science had welcomed the dead poet into her world in spite of his humble birth. In other words, his humble birth did not prevent him from acquiring a good education. But the translation reads:

لم ينل من مناهل العلم سوى كأس ظامىء مغبون

which omits all reference to the poet's humble birth and means that he imbibed from the springs of Science and Art (the last being an elaboration on the text) no more than a defrauded thirsty man's cup. This means that

he was not well-educated. There is no reason for this reversal of meaning, and so it must be condemned as a misunderstanding of the text.

### **Conclusion:**

It is clear, I believe, that al-Mala'ika's "translation" of Gray's *Elegy* is a very unfaithful version of that masterpiece. The difference between the original and the translation is so great that I think that the term "translation" is not applicable to the Arabic version. "Imitation" may be a more accurate appellation of the endeavor. Imitation in the eighteenth-century sense meant a modernization of a classical text in such a way as to retain only a thin umbilical cord with the original text so that we know that the classical original is the progenitor of the neoclassical offspring. But because this model was not available to al-Mala'ika in the 1940s, the umbilical cord she kept between her version and Gray's poem seems to be disconnected in places and too tenacious in others to allow the new baby to breathe freely.

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## Appendix

Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

(1)

'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness artd to me.

جرس الغروب ينعى احتضار النهار،  
والقطيع الثاغي يعود بطيئاً من المرج،  
والحراثت يعود ثقيل الخطى في طريقه المكدود،  
ويترك الدنيا لي وللظلمة.

في المساء الكئيب، والجرس المحزون ينعى النهار للأجواء  
والقطيع المكدود ينساب في المرج بطيء الخطى، كئيب الثغاء  
والفتى الحارس المؤود الى الماوى يجر الخطى من الاعياء  
تاركا هذه المجالي الحزينات لقلبي أنا، وللظلماء

(2)

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

ويخبو الآن المنظر المتلألئ في البصر  
ويعلق بالهواء كله شيء من الصمت المهييب  
إلا حيث تنز أجنحة الخنفساء في طراتها  
وتهدد حنحة الاجراس الناعسة الحظائر البعيدة.

سوف يخبو النور الملألئ في الافق بعيداً، على امتداد السهوب  
والفضاء الممتد يغمره الليل فلا شيء غير صمت رهيب  
ليس إلا حفيف اجنحة الاطيار في جوها الدجي الكئيب  
ودوي الاجراس ينشر، فوق المرج، وهم الكرى وصمت الغيوب

(3)

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower  
The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such, as wandering near the secret bower,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

وإلا إذا شكت البومة الواجمة للقمر  
من ذلك اليرج المكسو بالليلاب  
من المعتدين على مملكتها المنعزلة القديمة  
أثناء تجوالهم قرب عريشتها الخفية.

ليس إلا قمرية يرسل الشكوى الى البدر قلبها المغبون  
عشها قنة تسلقها الزهر وأخفته في الظلال الغصون  
تتشكى الذين مروا بدنياها فلم تدر ما عسى سيكون  
عكروا العزلة القديمة والصمت فدوى هتافها المحزون

(4)

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,  
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,  
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

أجداد القرية البسطاء يرقدون  
تحت اشجار الدردار العجراة تلك، وتحت ظلال شجرة الطقسوس هناك،  
حيث ينتفخ أديم الأرض المعشوشب أكواما مهدمة كثيرة،  
كل ملقى في محبسه الضيق الى الأبد.

ها هنا، في الظلال من شجر السو، وبين الأغصان والاشجار  
حيث تعلق الرمال، والعشب ينمو بين هذي الكثبان والأغوار  
رقد الراحلون من ساكني القرية بين الرمال والاحجار  
اسلمتهم أيدي المنون الى ضيق قبور تحت الثرى المنهار

(5)

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,  
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

لا الدعوة الرقيقة الآتية مع نسيم الصباح الذي تفوح أنفاسه بالبخور  
ولا السنونو الذي يزقزق من السقيفة التي بنيت من التبن  
ولا صور الديك الحاد، ولا البوق الذي تتردد أصداؤه داعية لرحلة الصيد  
لا شيء من ذلك سيوقظهم ليهبو من فراشهم الخفيض

رقدوا، فابتسامة الفجر لا توقظ دنياهم على الأنسام  
ومراح الطيور، في اسقف الأكواخ، ما إن يصحبهم من منام  
رقدوا الرقدة الأخيرة في الوادي الدجي الحزين، وادي الحمام  
ليس تغريهم هتافات بوق. كيف تغرى هياكل من عظام؟

(6)

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
 Or busy housewife ply her evening care;  
 No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
 ·Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share

لن تضطرم نار الموقد العارمة في بيوتهم ابداً  
 أو تنتشغل الزوجة بأعمالها المسائية  
 ولن يركض الأطفال ليلثوا بخير وصول أبيهم  
 أو يتسلقوا ركبتيه لاقتسام القبلة المرجوة

رقدوا في العراء، تحت الثلوج البيض: لا موقد ولا نيران  
 ومضوا، فالبيوت خاوية منهم وفي قلب أهلها أحزان  
 لا صغار تخف جنلى مساء تتلقاهم ولا احضان  
 يا لتهيدة اليتامى! فما يرجع أبواؤهم الى ما كانوا

(7)

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
 Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;  
 How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
 How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

ما أكثر ما أدغنت الغلة لمناجلهم،  
 وانشقت الأرض العنيدة تحت محاريثهم.  
 ولشد ما أسعدهم ان يسوقو قران الحراثة الى الحقل،  
 وما أسرع ما انحنت الأشجار تحت ضرباتهم القوية.

كم تعرت سنابل القمح في أيديهم، كم ترنموا في السهول  
 ولكم شقت الحقول محاريثهم فازدهت زهور الحقول  
 وبأي الافراح ساقوا الى المأوى قطيع الأغنام عند الأصيل  
 ولكم أخضعوا من الشجر الصلد، وألقوا بساقه في الوحول.

(8)

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;  
 Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
 The short and simple annals of the poor.

فليججم الطموح عن الهزء بكدهم المفيد  
وبأفراحهم البسيطة، ومصيرهم المغمور  
ولتترك العظمة بسمه الاحتقار  
عندما تسمع سير الفقراء القصيرة البسيطة.

ليس للهازين أن يحتقروا جهدهم أو طموحهم في الحياة  
أو مسراتهم وذكرهم المغمور بالفقر والشقاء العاتي  
رحمة، لا تكن دموع الحزاني بسمات في العين الساخرات  
ليس للاغنياء ان يحقروا عمر فقير محياه للاهات

(9)

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike the inevitable hour.  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

إن التبحج بالمحتد النبيل والتباهي بالسلطان  
وكل ما أتى به المال أو الجمال  
ينتظر الساعة المحتومة.  
فطرق المجد لا تفضي إلا القبر.

أوليست هذي الحياة سرايا؟ أليس الفناء عقبى سناها؟  
أو تنجي الألقاب أو منح المجد إذا ما الحمام أحنى الجباها؟  
يا لوهم الأحياء، كم حضارات أطاف البلى بها فحماها  
كل ما في الحياة ينهي الى القبر، فما مجدها؟ وما جدواها؟

(10)

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,  
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,  
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault  
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

أيها المغرورون، لا تلوموا هؤلاء  
إن لم تشد الذكرى على قبورهم نصبا يرمز لما حققوه  
حيث يردد النشيد الصداح نغمة المديح  
خلال البهو الطويل والسقف المزخرف.

لا تلمهم، يا ايها الكائن المغرور، إن لم يرق هواك الثوي  
لا تلمهم، إن لم يشد فوقه المجد التماثيل، أيها البشري  
ها هنا لا قباب، لا قوس نصر، ليس إلا سر الردى الأبدى  
وهو المرقد الأبيد لقوم لم يرئم مديحهم أدمي

(11)

Can storied urn or animated bust  
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
 Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust,  
 Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

هل يمكن للمزهريّة التي تروي رسومها قصة، أو للتمثال النصفي  
 الذي يكاد ينطق  
 أن يعيد النفس المفلوظ الي مسكنه؟  
 هل يمكن لصوت المركز الرفيع أن يستثير التراب الصامت  
 أو للنفاق ان يهدىء أذن الموت الصماء الباردة؟

ليث شعري، ماذا تقول التماثيل لميت؟ وما غنى الأتواس؟  
 ألهذا ان ترد للكائن الحي، إذا مات، خامد الأنفاس؟  
 وهتاف المديح، هل هو، يوماً، بالغ مسمع الحمام القاسي؟  
 ونفاق الأحياء هل يمنح الأجداث والموت رعشة الإحساس؟

(12)

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
 Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,  
 Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

ربما سجي في هذه البقعة المهملة  
 قلب كان يوماً عامراً بالنار السماوية  
 أياد كان يمكنها ان تمسك بصولجان الفاتحين  
 أو أن تثير أوتار القيثارة النابضة حتى آخر حدود الطرب.

لست تدري من حل، في هذه البقعة، تحت التراب والأشواك  
 علة كان شاعراً، طاهر الروح، حبته السماء قلب ملاك  
 علة العبقري، لو امهل الموت، لقاد الدنيا الي الأفلاك  
 علة الملهم الذي كان يوقظ الناي فيفتر كل قلب باك

(13)

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
 Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;  
 Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,  
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

لكن المعرفة لم تفتح لا عينهم كتابها الضخم  
المليء بعنائم الزمن  
والفقر المدقع كبح جماحهم النبيل  
وجمد تدفق أرواحهم الطيبة.

عبر باتهم زوتها المآسي ومجت ضوءها يد الأقدار  
فهم الجاهلون، ما رفرق العلم عليهم بجنحه الطيار  
وهم النائسون، أطفأ الفقر فيهم نبع اللهيب الواري  
فاذا عبقرية الروح مجرى جامد السيل راسب التيار

(14)

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean  
bear: Full many a flower is born to blush  
unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

ما أكثر الجواهر التي تشع بأصفي الضياء  
في كهوف المحيط المظلمة التي لا يصلها احد  
وما أكثر الزهور التي تولد لتتضرج دون أن يراها أحد  
وتبدد عطرها في هواء الصحراء.

يا لظلم الأقدار، كم ماسة حسناء ظلت في ظلمة الأعماق  
أخفت اللجة العميقة لألاها فيا ضيعة السنا الألاق  
كم زهور زجي بها القدر الفاسي بعيداً عن أعين العشاق  
تبعث العطر والفتون الى جو الصحاري ودجية الأفاق

(15)

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless  
breast The little tyrant of his fields  
withstood;  
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood .

ولقد يرقد ها هنا هامبدن قوي تصدى  
بصدر لا يخشى الصعاب لطاغية صغير حاول الاعتداء على حقوقه  
أو ملتن قروي صامت لم ينل حظها من الشهرة  
أو كرومول قروي لم يلطخ يديه بدماء وطنه.

ربما كان، تحت هذا الثرى العاري، قلوب شواعر وعقول  
ربما كان، تحتها، (هامدن) ثان زقواه معره المجهول  
أو فتى مثل (ملتن) الشاعر الملهم أخفاه صمته والذهول  
ربما كان تحتها (كرومول) آخر لم يصبه الدم المطول

(16)

The applause of listening senates to command,  
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
 To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
 And read their history in a nation's eyes.

لقد منعهم قدرهم من أن يستثيروا تصفييف المجالس الصاغية  
 وأن يحتقروا التهديد بالعذاب والدمار  
 وأن ينشوا الخيرات على أرض باسمة  
 وأن يقرأوا سير حياتهم في أعين شعبهم.

حرمتمهم أيدي القضاء نعيم العيش واستعبدتهم الآلام  
 فهم حيث لا مجالس، لا تصفيق، حيث المحيا هدى وسلام  
 وهم حيث ليس يهزا بآلام الحزاني وتحقر الأيتام  
 وهم البائسون، أرضهم قفر وأيامهم طوى وسقام

(17)

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone  
 Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;  
 Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

ولم يحصر القدر نزعاتهم المتنامية نحو الفضيلة فقط  
 بل حصر أيضاً نزعاتهم نحو الجريمة.  
 منعهم من الخوض في الدماء طمعاً في عرش  
 ومن إغلاق باب الرحمة على العالمين

غير أن الشقاء أحمد في دنياهم الإثم والأذى والغرورا  
 فإذا هم ولا جرائم تدمي الأرض من حولهم ولا تدميرا  
 لم يخوضوا الحروب سعياً إلى المجد ولم يعرفوا الدم المهذورا  
 والليالي مدت لهم سبل الرحمة فاستعذبوا الشعور الطهورا

(18)

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,  
 To quench the blushes of ingenuous Shame,  
 Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
 With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.



ومن أن يخفوا محاولاتهم الحقيقة الواعية للظهور  
منعهم من كبت احمرار أوجههم خجلاً  
أو من ملء معبد البذخ والكبرياء  
بالبخور الذي أشعل من شعلة ملهمة الشعر

وهو الفقير، رد أنفسهم بيضاً من الشر والأذى والحقود  
فإذا طاف باطل بحماهم فاحمرار الحياء لون الخدود  
ليس فيهم من سخر الشعر والفن عيباً للمطمع المحدود  
ليس فيهم من داس آلهة الفن على مذبح الغنى المنشود

(19)

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

ولم تتعلم رغباتهم غير الجامحة أن تشذ  
ليعدهم عن صراع الجماهير الصاخبة  
بل تابعو مسيرتهم الهادئة  
إزاء وادي الحياة الظليل المعزول.

ولقد أمضوا الحياة بعيدين عن النار واحتدام الصراع  
ملأتهم ألوان أحلامهم نبلاً فلم تغرهم رؤى الأطماع  
عبروا وادي الحياة سكوتاً مغرقي العمر في صفاء الطباع  
لهوهم منبع يفيض على الأرض، وناي نشوان في فم راع

(20)

Yet even these bones from insult to protect  
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,  
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,  
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

غير أنهم، للحفاظ حتى على هذه العظام من الامتها،  
أقاموا قريبا نصيباً ضعيفاً للذكرى  
كتبوا عليه أبياتاً ركيكة وزينوه بمنحوتات عديمة الشكل،  
نصباً يستدر من العابرين زفرة عابرة.

رقدوا، والقبور عارية، إلا من الصمت والهدوء الحزين  
وعلى البعد تلمح العين تمثالاً

(21)

Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered Muse,  
 The place of fame and elegy supply:  
 Arid many a holy text around she strews,  
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.

وحل الاسم والعمر، وقد تهجتها ملهمة شعر جاهلة  
 محل القاب الشهرة وقصائد الرثاء.  
 ونثرت تلك الملهمة العديد من الايات  
 التي تحت الواعظ الفلاح على تقبل الموت.

القبور التي حنت ريشة الشعر عليها بلحن حزن حائر  
 فاذا اللحن لحن شاد مقل ليس فيه الا تفجع شاعر  
 القبور التي على صخرها لحن رثاء يثير دمع العابر  
 وينادي الاحياء ان حياة المرء حلم عقباه صمت المقابر

(22)

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,  
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,  
 Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
 Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

من ذا الذي وقع ضحية للنسيان الأخرس  
 وبسّم هذا الوجود الذي يثير السرور والقلق  
 وترك المواطن الدافئة التي تصاحب اليوم البهيج  
 فلم يلق نظرة تحسر طويلة؟

أي نفس ترى يهون عليها ان توارى في لجة النسيان؟  
 ولتكن هذه الحياة شقاء: من تراه يرتاح للأكفان؟  
 أي قلب يرضى مغادرة الأرض بلا حسرة ولا أحزان  
 وهي أفق الأضواء، والسحر، والأشعار، والقبير، عالم الديدان؟

(23)

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires;  
 Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
 Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.

إن الروح المغادرة تستند على صدر محب،  
والعين المغمضة تطلب دمعة خاشعة.  
وصوت الطبيعة يصرخ حتى من القبر  
ونيرانهم المعهودة تشتعل حتى في رمادنا.

وهي الروح، حين ترحل تهفو لفقود حان وصدر خفوق  
والعيون المودعات بعزيبها أسى مشفق ودمع صديق  
ومن القبر، ذلك المظلم البارد، يعلو صوت الزمان العميق  
أه حتى في شلو أجسادنا الميتة تبقى آثار ذاك البريق

(24)

For thee, who mindful of the unhonored dead  
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;  
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,  
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

أما أنت، يا من تذكر هؤلاء الموتى الذين لا يحتفي بهم أحد  
وتروي بهذه الأبيات قصتهم التي تخلو من صنعة الفنان  
فلربما سيقول راع اشتعل رأسه شيباً  
لسائل روحه شبيهة بروحك، يسأل عن مصيرك

أه يا شاعري، وأنت؟ وقد خلدت ذكرى الأموات والبائسينا  
أنت، يا من قصصت أنباءهم شعراً وذويت قلبك المحونا  
عل روحاً تقوده الوحدة الخرساء يوماً إلى حماك حنيننا  
عله سائل غداً عن أغانيك وما جرت عليك السنينا

(25)

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,  
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn  
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away  
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

وقد فادته الصدفة هو يتأمل وحيداً:  
"كثيراً ما رأيناه عند بزوغ الشمس  
تمسح خطاه السريعة قطرات الندى  
ليلاقي الشمس عند المرح فوق الهضبة

أيها الشاعر الوفي، وقد يهتف قلب ثان يجيب السؤال:  
طالما قبلت خطاه ثرى الوادي صباحاً وجابت الأدغالا  
طالما سار مسرعاً تنفض الأنداء أقدامه وتطوي التلالا  
ليلاقي إشراق الشمس فوق القمم الخضر فتنة وجمالاً

(26)

There at the foot of yonder nodding beech  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,

His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.  
Asfour The Translation of Poetry

هناك، تحت شجرة الزان المتمائلة تلك  
التي تغزل جذورها القديمة الغريبة الى ذلك الارتفاع  
يستلقي عند الظهيرة لا يلوي على شيء  
ويطيل النظر في الساقية التي تثرثر مياهها في جريانها

ها هنا في الظلال من شجر البلوط بين الأغصان والأفياء  
طالما مد جسمه الخائر المكدود مستسلماً لأيدي القضاء  
سابقاً في الخيال، مغرورق العينين، نهب اكتابة خرساء  
أبدأ يرقب السواقي حيران ويصغي الى خرير الماء

(27)

Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,  
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,  
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,  
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

وكان يتجول بجانب تلك الأجمة باسم احتقار أحياناً  
يهيمهم تخيلاته الجامحة  
مطأطء الرأس أحياناً، حزيناً، كمن يعاني من الهجران  
أو من هم أخذ عليه عقله، أو كمن فشل في حب يائس

كم رأيناه شارداً في المجالي وعلى ثغره ابتسامة ساخر  
كم لمحناه حالم القلب، يحتث خطاه بين الروابي النواضر  
تارة ضاحكاً، وأنا حزيناً، شاحب الوجه مغرقاً في الخواطر  
قوست ظهره هموم الليالي وقضت بالأسى عليه المقادر

طالما سار شارد الخطو، مكدوداً، كسار ضلت به قدماه  
أو كمن أخلص الغرام، فلم يلق سوى البغض والجفاء هواه  
أو كمن وشح الشقاء لياليه وماتت أحلامه ورؤاه  
أو كمن عاش حالم الروح بالنور فلم يرحم الظلام مناه

(28)

"One morn I missed him on the customed hill,  
Along the heath and near his favorite tree;  
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,  
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

وقد افتقدته صباح أحد الأيام عند التل المعتاد  
بجنب البقيع قرب شجرته المفضلة.  
وجاء صباح آخر، ولم أره قرب الساقية  
ولا عند مهدة العشب ولا عند الأجمة.

وأني الفجر ذات يوم فلم أعثر على الشاعر الشريد النبيل  
لم أجدته على التلال الحبيبات إلى قلبه ولا في السهول  
ومضى اليوم ثم أقبل ثان والفتى في مقره المجهول  
لا إلى جانب الجدول أليه، ولا في الربى، ولا في الحقول

(29)

"The next with dirges due in sad array  
Slow through the churchway path we saw him borne.  
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,  
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn".

وفي اليوم التالي رأيناه محمولاً في الطريق المفضي الى الكنيسة  
مجللاً بالسواد، ترافقه المراثي التي ينشدها الموكب البطيء.  
اقترب واقرأ هذه القصيدة  
المحفورة على شاهدة القبر تحت شجرة الزعرور المعمرة تلك  
(فأنت قادر على القراءة).

وأتاني الصباح بالنبأ المجهول: فالشاعر الحزين صريع  
حملوه على الأكف وألحان المراثي تفجع وخشوع  
أي يا عابر السبيل اقترب واقرأ رثاه، فذاك ما تستطيع  
كتنوه على حجارة قبر ما بكته غير الدجون دموع

(30)

### The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth  
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.  
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,  
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

التأبين

هنا يريح شاب لم يعرفه الحظ أو الشهرة  
رأسه على حجر الأرض  
المعرفة الجميلة لم يتجهم وجهها له بسبب أصله المتواضع،  
والسوداء اتخذته لنفسها ولداً.

## الكلمات المكتوبة على القبر

ها هنا في التراب في ظللة الشوك وساد لشاعر محزون  
جهلته الحظوظ والمجد والشهرة في ظلمة الزمان الضنين  
لم ينل من مناهل العلم والفن سوى كأس ظمىء مغبون  
والليالي صاغت صباه من الحزن وهزت حياته بالشجون

(31)

Large was his bountry, and his soul sincere,  
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:  
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,  
He gained from heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

كانت أعطيته كبيرة، وكانت روحه مخلصه.  
والسماء أرسلت له ما عوضه  
فأعطى للبؤس كل ما عنده: دمة،  
وحصل من السماء على كل ما تمناه: صديق.

وسع الكون كله قلبه الخفاق بالود والحنان الدفوق  
ولقد كافاته آلهة الشعر على قلبه النبيل الرقيق  
منح البائسين أثنى ما يملكه: عبرة انفعال عميق  
فحبته السماء أنبل ما تمنحه للأحياء: قلب صديق

(32)

No farther seek his merits to disclose,  
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode  
(There they alike in trembling hope repose);  
The bosom of his Father and his God.

لا تسئل عن غير ذلك من مزايا تحلى بها  
ولا تحاول كشف عيوبه من متواها الذي يثير الوجل  
في صدر أبيه وربه  
(فكل منها مستقر هناك يحدوه أمل راعش).

أه يا عابر السبيل دع الشاعر في مرقد الردي مطمئنا  
لا تحاول كشف الستار عن الخيز ودع مقلة المساوىء وسنى  
ف وراء التراب قلب له في رحمة الله مامل ليس يفنى  
مامل الخافق الذي ضمة الله الى عدله فأغمض عيناً.