Disturbing Times

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Partnered Translation Project

Overview

This is a three-part collaborative project that will conclude at the Midterm. In week 2, you will sign up for a Middle English lyric (or two or more) with a partner, which you will translate into a modern vernacular language together, meet with me together about your translation, and then adapt into a contemporary form (prose or poetry) based on your translation. This project is meant to help you get to know a classmate that you can rely on for notes or support in class as well as foster a sense of collaboration while teaching you about translation, interpretation, and creative adaptation. More importantly, though, this is your chance to play and teach us something about how you interact with language.

Vernacular Translation

To begin this project, you and your randomly assigned partner must translate 27–36 lines of Middle English lyrical poetry (from our anthology, beginning on p. 250) into a modern vernacular language (English, French, or Spanish). You have two options: you may choose to translate one long lyric (listed below) or you may choose to translate two or more short lyrics to reach the 27–36 total. Please be sure to include the titles of the poems you translated in your submitted assignment (remember, the titles should also be translated).

One long lyric:

1. Betwene Mersh and April — 36 lines
2. Lenten is come with love to toune — 36 lines
3. Maiden in the mor lay — 28 lines
4. Bring us in good ale — 27 lines
5. Of all creature women be best — 28 lines
Or two or more short lyrics:

1. *Sumer is icumen in* — 15 lines
2. *Now goth sonne under wod* — 4 lines
3. *Foweles in the frith* — 5 lines
4. *I lovede a child of this cuntree* — 14 lines
5. *Erthe tok of erthe erthe with woh* — 4 lines
6. *The Lady Dame Fortune is both frende and foe* — 4 lines
7. *Adam lay ibounden* — 16 lines
8. *To dy, to dy. What haue I* — 8 lines
9. *My lefe is faren in a lond* — 7 lines
10. *A god and yet a man* — 12 lines

I will be assessing based on accuracy of translation and flow of the modern vernacular (i.e., did you place it into intelligible word order?).

**Creative Poetic Adaptation, Interpretation, or Response**

Per our mandatory brainstorming meeting in Weeks 5 and 6, you and your partner will use the work done on your translation, which is an act of interpretation, to turn your chosen lyric(s) into a whole new creature. As I showed you in class from the few excerpts of Miller Oberman’s *The Unstill Ones*, a creative adaptation can take many shapes.

Remember how in his non-translation of the Old English *Wulf and Eadwacer*, Miller showed us the various interpretations of the short riddling poem in a breathless display of poetic prowess, ending with what was clearly his own interpretation of the poem that began to turn into something else entirely?

Or what about his poem “The Grave” that was influenced by the Early Middle English poem after the same title, but was not about burying someone’s father — instead, the older poem was simply about the inevitability of death, captured in the description of the lonely, worm-ridden grave?

Therefore, in this part of the project, you may take this in whichever direction you’d like: a poetic interpretation of the
source, a literal response to the source in poetic form, a poem influenced by the theme of the source, a reworked translation that mimics the rhyme scheme and/or alliteration, a macaronic poem that uses more than one language for specific effect, and so much more.

I will be assessing based on adherence to the directions of the assignment (e.g., Did you incorporate the original Middle English poem into your new creation in some way, whether that be as an influence, the subject of the response, etc? Did you and your partner work on this together?).