



3
السنة



Literary Texts

1ST Semester – 6th Lecture

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6

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نصوص أدبية س3 ف1 م6

شرح قصيدة الشاعر

RICHARD LOVELACE

“TO ALTHEA, FROM PRISON”

وبعض التطبيقات عليها.

Hello everyone...

Last time we were talking about **Richard Lovelace**... “To Althea, From Prison”.

Professor: What does the title indicate?

Student: Althea is the beloved.

Professor: Yes, and Richard is the lover. What else?

Student: She is his ex-fiancée.

Professor: So, the name ‘**Althea**’ is an indication of the poet’s ex-fiancée. What else?

Student: She married another man after his death.

Professor: ok, this is some of his background.

So, Althea here is the protagonist. Protagonist is a name of the heroine in the poetry that we have here, and she is symbolic for Lucasta his ex-fiancée, who married after receiving some false information of his death.

‘Althea’ and the word ‘prison’, what is the relation?

Student: He was imprisoned twice. Because he fought with the French against the Spanish, and for presenting a royalist petition supporting the king.

Professor: So we have prison/ confinement and love. Two things, we don’t say that they go in parallel or they go in the opposite way, we don’t know actually. Let’s go into the poetry.

To Althea, from Prison

When love with unconfined wings

Hovers within my gates,

And my divine Althea brings

To whisper at the grates;

When I lie tangled in her **hair**,

And fettered to her eye,

The gods that wanton in the air

Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round,

With no allaying Thames,

Our careless heads with roses bound,

Our hearts with loyal flames;

When thirsty grief in wine we steep,

When healths and draughts go free,

Fishes that tipple in the deep

Know no such liberty.

When, like committed linnets, I

With shriller throat shall sing

The sweetness, mercy, majesty,

And glories of my king;

When I shall voice aloud how good

He is, how great should be,

Enlarged winds, that curl the flood,

Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quite Take
That for an hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.

First of all, how many parts/ stanzas are there?

Student: Four stanzas.

Professor: We have four stanzas. Each stanza consists of how many lines?

Student: Eight lines.

Professor: So, this is an octave, we have four octave stanzas it means four lines each.

Let's now look at the ending of each line: (wings, gates, brings, grates, eye, eye, air, liberty).

Student: I find the original copy of this poetry; the first 'eye' is 'hair' when he said, "When I lie tangled in her eye".

Professor: "in here hair". So, this is the expression actually. I will explain later why hair is the correct way. So we have (wings, gates, brings, grates, hair, eye, air, liberty). There is a kind of breaking of the meter here:

When love with unconfined wings (a)

Hovers within my gates, (b)

And my divine Althea brings (a)

To whisper at the grates; (b)

When I lie tangled in her hair, (c)

And fettered to her eye, (d)

The gods that wanton in the air (c)

Know no such liberty. (d)

You know what I mean by (a) (b); if you considered the word 'wings' as (a), we have another word taking the same **rhyme** but the line after the next. We have 'wings' 'brings', so the both can be label as (a). If you go to 'gates' 'grates' also they are rhyming words, that's why you can considered them as (b).

Now if we go to the fifth line we have 'hair', it is not rhyming with 'wing' and not even rhyming with 'gates', that's why this is a new rhyme; this is (c).

If you go to the 'eye' this is different, and that's why we say this is (d). And I think 'liberty' is (e) and not (d).

Now; 'round' 'bound' (a), 'Thames' 'flames' (b), 'steep' 'deep'(c), 'free' (d) 'liberty' (e).

Again; 'I' 'majesty' (a), 'sing' 'king' (b), 'good' 'flood'(c), 'be' (d) 'liberty' (e). Almost they rhyming, so there is a kind of breaking of the meters here. Also in the fourth stanza, they almost rhyme; here we have a very typical stanza meter. /(a) (b)/ /(a) (b)/ / (c) (d)/ /(c) (d)/.

The meter actually changes within the other stanzas.

Now let's start with the first stanza: '**when**', the second stanza: '**when**', the third stanza: '**when**', so he makes it connected; if something takes place, something else is closely connected with it. So, let's try to read:

When love with unconfined¹ wings

Hovers within my gates²,

And my divine Althea brings

To whisper at the grates³;

When I lie tangled in her hair⁴,

And fettered to her eye⁵,

The gods that wanton in the air⁶

Know no such liberty⁷.

1. **Love/unconfined** ... free, there is no limits. Love: limitless. But just notice, we have the word 'confined' the root is the word confined, it is similar to 'prison'. And in the title, we have the word 'prison', in the first line we have 'confined', they indicate that we have something caged.
2. **Gates**... they are the door of the opening to, but behind of the opening there is something locked.
3. **The grates**: the bars. So again, we have an indication of prison.
4. **"Tangle in one's hair"** it means: deeply in love with.
5. Very attracted and attached, but fettered. He imprisoned, his love is free with unconfined wings, but he is fettered to her eye, tangled in here hair. So, though he is in a very locked place, his love is hovering and flying above. There is a transcending state. He is locked but his imagination is not locked; he can feel the love, and the love is freedom, and he is free to imagine/ to express what he wants. So just notice within this narrow place he can just fly freely, there is a contradiction. That's why I told you look at the title "Althea" means love, "prison" means confinement, these are exact opposite in the same place. Let's go ahead...
6. **"The gods"** here are not the real gods. He means the birds.
7. It means he is really free in his imagination and his feelings. He is completely free and no one can just experience such freedom even the birds in the sky. So, with his love he can consent to the upper levels, to any place he likes.

Now the second one:

When flowing cups¹ run swiftly round,

With no allaying Thames²,

Our careless heads with roses bound³,

Our hearts with loyal flames;

When thirsty grief in wine we steep⁴,

When healths and draughts go free⁵,

Fishes that tipple in the deep

Know no such liberty⁶.

1. **Cups** of drink, alcohol.
2. **Thames:** is the river in London.
3. Something on the head.
4. “We’re so involved in drink”.
5. This is again drinking.
6. Just notice that he is expressing an image in the bar, where drink is deliver to everyone and wherever you turn you head or your eyes you can see wine and drinks, even the Thames maybe doesn’t have all this flow of wine. But although, all this water that we have/ all this wine that we have, a fish which lives in the Thames cannot experience - though it lives in the water- that freedom, so even if the fish is filled with water, it cannot feel the water itself. But he can feel the water, he can feel the drink and the ecstasy that the drink will bring him out of love again. There is an idiom in English which says “he sleeps like a log” "نائم بلا حراك", it means he is sleep in deep. They say also “he drinks like a fish” it means: the fish is always drinking, but now the states are completely different, just notice that the fish is always drinking, but not feeling that drink, though it is in the same environment, but it cannot reach that ecstasy of being in that water. But that person can feel the ecstasy of the drink, that can even just be richer than the Thames itself. Let’s continue...

When, like committed linnets¹, I

With shriller² throat shall sing

The sweetness, mercy, majesty,

And glories of my king³;

When I shall voice aloud how good

He is, how great should be,

Enlarged winds, that curl the flood,

Know no such liberty.

1. **Linnets:** a kind of birds.
2. **Shrill:** it means, when you have a very thin voice from your throat
3. He is complementing his king, and you know that his king was executed in the same year. Though he was imprisoned for the sake of his king because he is a supporter of the king, he is still praising his king in one of his immortal poems.
4. This is great love, this love now is not for Althea herself, who was a symbol of *lucasta*, this is now another person who is the king himself, so he has change; now he expressing three kinds of love so far; a love for lucasta, a love for drink, a love for his king.

Let's continue...

Stone walls¹ do not a prison make²,
 Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quite Take
That for an hermitage³.
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free⁴,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty⁵.

1. Just notice that this stanza doesn't start with "when", so first, he is linking two states together, one will be dependent on the other. But now he is just informative, he is giving/ asserting/ confirming something.
2. "Even if you just surround me with a lot of high stonewalls, you are not confining my soul. My soul is free with imagination, with drink, with my love. I can just fly unconfined to any place I like, I can just glorify my king in my imagination and in my words, and no one can stop me". So just notice this abundance of freedom "stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage" so there is no repetition of the words.
3. He is speaking about the hermitage people, monks; people of religion who want just to seclude themselves to live isolated from others just for praying to god and be so close to their lord, that's why they go to intended hermitages. I mean intended prisons, they get

into a place within which they locked themselves for a long times just praying god and being so close to their lord. So this is a voluntary cage/prison, they go to that voluntary prison but they don't enjoy those innocent minds and free minds like Richard Lovelace, so he is even freer than them.

4. As you see, this is handy ideas; it means they are reachable. "If I have freedom in my love then my soul is also free, it can just go wherever it likes and just imagine what I like and I will be totally free".
5. Only angels can enjoy such liberty. I will be like angles with my free love, mind, and soul.

So just notice this is really good poem and it expresses a lot of concepts here; the most important concept is **freedom**, though it is express in the title as prison, he is not talking about imprisonment, he is talking about freedom and liberty, he kept repeating the word "liberty". So, there is a propose of repeating it.

Let me focus on something. There is something called "**alliteration**" (الجناس), which is using words with the same beginning letter. Just like when we say "mercy" "majesty" in the same line.

☞ **Alliteration:** is used for musical effect, it is a repetition of the initial sounds of several words.

Student: like "know" "no".

Professor: This is not alliteration actually. This is the first sound, "no" "know"; the same pronunciation but different spelling.

Student: "alone" "above".

Professor: Yes, a kind of alliteration. Partially alliteration, but not for something very great. But when we say "majesty" "mercy" they describe something great, that's why we can say this is real alliteration.

There is a "**simile**" here (التشبيه). "**Like** committed linnets, I": he is just making similarity between him and the birds called linnets. That is what we call "simile".

☞ **Simile:** It is like the metaphor, but we use words like "like, as, so, and resemble".

And also there is the use of the same sounds, let me read for you and you will come to this stanza by stanza... they say: "each of Lovelace's **four** stanzas contains **two quatrains**", (four lines each, and this is what we said (a) (b) (a) (b), (c) (d) (c) (d)).

So “two quatrains made one octave, and a rhyme scheme of (a) (b) (a) (b), (c) (d) (c) (d), with repetition of the word “liberty” as the concluding word”.

So, he insisted on the word **“liberty”** and the liberty of his soul and imagination.

“The first three stanzas open with the word “when”. And in each seventh line, the speaker compare himself to another being”. Let’s see each seventh line:

- First, he says: ‘The gods that wanton in the air, know no such liberty’, he just making similarity and comparing himself to the birds.
- ‘Fishes that tittle in the deep’ he is comparing himself to fish, but he is even freer than fish because he uses the word “liberty”.
- ‘Enlarged winds, that curl the flood, know no such liberty’ he is linking himself to the rough waters.
- ‘Angels alone, that soar above, enjoy such liberty’ this is different; he is not comparing himself, he is making similarity, on the same level of liberty.

They say: “he compares himself to another being over whom he tries in his feelings of liberation”. “Only in the concluding stanza does he know the being who shares his feelings of victory and angel”. So, they share the same liberty.

“He uses imagery that supports his theme of spiritual freedom”, we are always talking about his soul; the freedom of his soul, the liberty of his soul, but not the liberty of his physical body, he is physically imprisoned, but he is spiritually free.

1. “In the first stanza, he describes love with unconfined wings, which hovers within the grates. This is metaphorical prison”, it is physical, but it is again metaphorical, because it cannot bound him to a specific place and he can just go wherever he likes. “He fantasizes that Althea arrives at the prison grates to whisper her love and he notes that he is only fettered/ chained state is when he lies tangled in her hair”, he is only confined with her eyes and her hair (love). **“Even gods that wanton in the air, know no such liberty”**.
2. “The second stanza employs imagery of flowing wine, by reference to cups that flow so freely that maybe compared to the Thames itself, because there was abundance of drink, we can just say that the amount of drinks that delivered in a bar can just be equal to the water of the Thames”.

“He describes a time of celebration **‘our careless heads with roses bound’** it means a victory. So, there is kind of wreath –some kinds of roses put on a circular way on the

head of the victorious- this is called a celebration when our careless head with roses bound”.

‘Our hearts with loyal flames’. “again, the prisoner images drowning his thirsty grief –sorrow, sadness- in wine during a time when all celebrants toast one another’s health”. So, he is filled with grief even when they are just drinking/cheering each other’s health. He concludes that stanza by reflecting on the notion of the flowing river and the drunkenness that a company’s times of joy even the fish in the deep water cannot feel that ecstasy of love even it is deep in the water.

3. “The third stanza features a singing bird, the linnet, to which the speaker compares himself as he sings”. **‘The sweetness, mercy, majesty’** so this is a kind of **alliteration** as we said; the repetition of the number of letters at the beginning of the word. “this helps emphasize the positive aspects of his ruler” but just notice it is a kind of words, he said **‘sweetness, mercy, majesty, glories’** all these words show the positive characteristic of the ruler, he is going to be executed so soon. “Making clear the speaker feels his incarceration –confinement- is a worthy sacrifice”. So even if he is confined, his king is worth the sacrifice that he has done for him. “Not only will he sing, he shall voice aloud the king’s goodness and his potential for greatness with the effect of enlarged winds that curl the flood”. So, he is expressing the majesty and the greatness of his lord – I mean the king-. “The emotions of loyalty and devotion to his cause grant the speaker more freedom than the strongest wings”. Just notice that we have two causes that he is defending; he is just expressing his loyalty, and he is expressing the devotion to his king, in addition to the liberty in expressing all these things.
4. “The imprisoned speaker makes his summery a pronouncement in the final stanza”. The final stanza, which starts with **‘stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage’**. “Stressing that it’s not physical confinement that defeats a man, but rather a lack of mental free”.

So, this is the whole essence of the poem.

“Instead of suffering in prison, **‘minds innocent and quite take, that for an hermitage’**, meaning his prison becomes a refuge allowing him to expand his thoughts and love”. Just notice that even if he is locked in that isolated place, he can just roam freely in every place that he wants, because of his free soul. They say: “Lovelace concludes his poem with four

lines of shining simplicity and summarizes his truth". Just notice that the final four lines are really simple and they are handy, so they are expressed in a very simple way that no one can just be mistaken with. **'If I have freedom in my love, and in my soul am free, Angels alone, that soar above, Enjoy such liberty'**. 'My soul is free, I'm really free' so confinement means nothing, 'I'm like that angle going up to the sky'.

I want to read about the **figures of speech**. Did you notice that the poem is narrated from the "I" point of view? It's "I"; 'if I' 'when I', so he is speaking using his own personality, that's why we say this "I point of view". He is speaking directly with own words. This is one point.

Then they say: "we have four stanzas; each is an octave, which is two quatrains". They run the meter of (a)(b)(a)(b), (c)(d)(c)(d), mostly throughout the whole poem, and then they say: "we have **metaphors**, we have **similes**". A simile is like when he said "**like committed linnets, I**" he is making a similarity between himself and the bird. "Then we have alliteration" it is just like "**mercy, majesty**". "And we have the word **assonance**, which is having the same sound repeated, and it's expressed in the second line of the third stanza "**With shriller throat shall sing**" the sound 'sh' is repeated. If we say "throat" and "shrill" the letter "r" is repeated but in a specific way, so there is a kind of difficulty in expressing/pronouncing these letters, it is not easy, they do not go smoothly unnoticed.

"The **genre** is a lyrical poetry", I think that there is a song; it is put to song, that's why they say it is a lyrical poetry. "The **tone** is hopeful and optimistic and this is expressed in every ending line of each stanza and in the final four lines/ in the final couplet (though it's not a couplet), the last two lines usually form a couplet but this is not a couplet, this is part of an octave. But the last two lines express exactly the optimism that he feels.

"Now actually we have protagonist who is just changing, sometimes he is a beloved, sometimes he is the king, sometimes he is a person celebrating something, sometimes it is the drink itself, every time this love is changing".

"**The climax**": You know that in every kind of the literary work we have the theme, the plot. But actually, when events get more complicated, they reach a climax. After the climax, everything begins to solve. So, this is what we call "the decline". Just notice what is the climax here in the poetry that we have? Where did our poet reach the climax?

Student: When he said, "If I have freedom in my love, and in my soul am free".

Professor: This is a solution; there should be something before it.

Student: In the fourth stanza. When he said “stone walls”.

Professor: Here is the climax, after all this liberty and confinement; stone walls do not make a prison. So, the climax comes at the first line of the last stanza, and starting from this everything become just to be known easily to everyone.

*they say that “birds in the first stanza is sometimes corrected to gods as on the poetry foundation website”. So, this is one of the corrections, but birds make perfect sense given to this stanza talk of wings. They go smoothly and they have just compatibility, when we are talking about birds it means we are talking about wings. But if you are talking about gods and wings then you are not talking about real lords, you are talking about the gods and the goddess on earth but not in the sky. So that’s why they mean the birds but not mean the real gods.

Now if we just move to **Katherine Philips**, is a female poet from that period (the Elizabethan. I think she is a good female poet, and she has written something against men.

Student: She was against marriage.

Professor: Yes, she was against marriage itself.

Shall I leave it to you, Will you just go through the lines and make analyses?

Next time I may give something about her background but you are going to explain the whole poem for me.

I want to focus on something, maybe she was the first poet to write, and she did not intend her poems just to be published. But maybe shortly before her death they published here poems and later on they were prevented from just circulation, but later after two or three years they were republished using the same words, the same letters and nothing was change at all. The same version was adopted three or two years later after her death. She was not cursing marriage, but she was just depicting the miserable state.

Next time we will have these two: Katherine Philips and Alexander pope.

🌸 نكتفي بهذا القدر، نراكم في المحاضرة القادمة بإذن الله

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The end

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