

Project #2

100 pts

Description: A translation plus 2-3 pages of analysis

Due:

Goal: You will work on your ability to understand Middle English by translating a Middle English passage into Modern English, and you will also improve your ability to critically analyze translations by comparing different translations and what effects they have.

Assignment: This assignment asks you to translate and analyze a short passage of Middle English.

Part 1: Translation

Choose from one of the three texts below and write two translations: a literal, word-for-word translation and an adaptation with more literary/aesthetic value. Your second translation should be a critical exercise that carefully considers the Modern English words most appropriate for conveying the meaning and tone of the original Middle English. Things to consider are how to translate closely, how to replicate the form, how to establish the tone, and how to make your translation applicable to a modern audience.

You should be able to translate much of the passage with the knowledge you gained from class about the Middle English language, but some of the vocabulary will still be unfamiliar or ambiguous. Use the *Middle English Dictionary* (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>) to aid in your translation. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- The final translation should demonstrate a solid understanding of basic Middle English, and your word choice should be consistent with the tone and meaning of the original and/or with your interpretation of the text. You can make any changes from your word-for-word version that you would like, but keep the sense intact.
- It is your choice whether to make a prose or a verse translation. Remember, however, that there are many features of a poem, so using comparable line-breaks is not writing a poetic translation; the poem you will translate has rhyme, rhythm, and/or alliteration as well. You may choose any combination of these features, or none at all, in your translation, but be aware of the choice.
- Think about the audience of your translation (you can decide what that audience might be). Is this a popular translation (like Heaney's *Beowulf*)? One for an introductory textbook for middle or high schoolers? One that could go into a collection of poetry for a college course on medieval literature? Try to make your translation appropriate for that group.

Part 2: Translation analysis

After you have written your translation, you will compare it to the other translations that your classmates post.

Thinking about what other options were available can clarify your thinking: explain the major differences between your version and some of the other versions, show what the different effects might be, and analyze how your version creates the sort of effect that you think is particularly important for your audience (or comment on how another version might do the same thing in a different way). Some important things to think about might be the following:

- What is the tone of the poem and what did you do to replicate that tone?
- What audience are you writing for and how are your choices geared toward that audience?
- What form did you choose and why do you think it is most effective for your translation?
- What words were difficult to translate and why did you chose the translation you did? (note that you should NOT discuss words that were difficult to find in the dictionary, but rather words that have a nuanced meaning that is difficult to replicate)

Criteria for Evaluation:

- Translation (two versions):
 - Your translation should be accurate
 - You should try to replicate the tone of the original, thinking about word choice and connotations.
- Discussion of your literary translation:
 - You should discuss why you chose to translate the passage as either poetry or prose and explain the specific effect your choice had (keep all the poetic features in mind here, not just line breaks).
 - You should discuss the tone of the original passage and what specifically you did to replicate that tone.
 - You should discuss any individual words that you found difficult to translate because of its connotations or nuanced meaning and explain why you picked the word that you did.
 - You should compare your version with other versions to highlight your particular choices; pay particular attention to the different ways you chose to vary from your word-for-word version.
 - You should aim for completeness by discussing all the relevant decisions you had to make.
- Finishing: error free writing.

Possible Passages

Option #1:

King Alexander is expanding his empire through conquest. Here, he is in Persia fighting the army of King Darius. Their troops have been arrayed and the battle is about to begin.

Alexander als belyfe es armyd vp Clene,
Bownez hym on hys blonke þe best vnder heuen,
Pat was þe bald Bucyfall as þe buke tellez,
A fole worth fyfty of þat at in þe flude drownyd.
He spedes hym on a grete space fro hys pers all,
Couerys hym full clenly & closys hym in hys gere.
The power of persees when þai þe prince see,
Was ferly frayd of hys forme so ferdfull he semyd.
Nowe er þe batels bowne with braggyng of trompettes,
The breme beeme blast beryd to þe welkyn.
Alexander all-þar first on þaim all settes,
And ayther ward at a wappe wightly enioynez.
Archers & all men asperly shotyn,
þar was Iustyng of Ioy Iopons attamyd;
Seghen downe on ather syde semelych knytes,
Some dasyd, some dede some depe woundytt.
So fell flyght was of flonys as I fynd writtyng,
Of arows & of alblastres þat all þe Ayre blyndyd;
Huger to byhalde þen þe hayle-stormes,
And all þe feld full of folke fyfe myle large.
Als sone as þe son hup soght þe slaughter begynnys,
And to sett was þe same sesytt þai neuer.
Be þat þe barbaryn blode began to desend,
The proudest of þe persyens passyd owte of lyfe.

Option #2

Sir Gawain needed to know what all women want in order to save the life of King Arthur. He made a bargain with a “loathly lady” (really ugly old woman) that she would tell him if he married her. However, it turns out that the loathly lady is really a beautiful young woman who had a spell cast on her by a witch that she will be ugly half the time and beautiful half the time. Gawain gets to pick whether she will be beautiful during the day or at night, but when he says that he will let her decide, the spell is broken. The following scene ensues.

"Garamercy, corteys Knyght," sayd the Lady;
"Of alle ertly knyghtes blyssyd mott thou be,
For now am I worshyppyd.
Thou shalle have me fayre bothe day and nyghte
And evere whyle I lyve as fayre and bryghte;
Therfore be nott grevyd.

"For I was shapen by nygramancy,
With my stepdame, God have on her mercy,
And by enchauntement;
And shold have bene oderwyse understand,
Evyn tylle the best of Englond
Had wedyd me verament,
And also he shold geve me the sovereynté
Of alle his body and goodes, sycurly.
Thus was I disformyd;
And thou, Sir Knyght, curteys Gawen,
Has gevyn me the sovereynté serteyn,
That woll nott wrothe the erly ne late.

"Kysse me, Sir Knyght, evyn now here;
I pray the, be glad and make good chere,
For well is me begon."
Ther they made joye oute of mynde,
So was itt reason and cours of kynde,
They two theymself alone.
She thankyd God and Mary mylde
She was recovered of that that she was defoylyd;
So dyd Sir Gawen.
He made myrthe alle in her boure
And thankyd of alle Oure Savyoure,
I telle you, in certeyn.

With joye and myrthe they wakyd tylle daye
And than wold ryse that fayre maye.

Option #3:
A lyric poem praising the Virgin Mary

(1)
Swete and benygne moder and mayd,
Turtill trew, flowre of women alle,
Aurora bryght, clere as the day,
Noblest of hewe, þus we the calle;
Lyle fragrant eke of the walle;
Ennewid wip bemys of blys,
In whom neuer was founden mys.

(2)
So fayre, so good, was neuer non;
Transcendyng is ther-for þi place
Aungels alle and seyntis echone;
Next vnto god, such is þi grace.
[.....]

(3)
Surmountyng is þin excellencie,
Thou rose of prys, thou flowre of may;
And phebus lyke in his ascencie,
Natyff of blys where þou art ay,
Lady saunzpere, þis is no nay.
Empres of helle also of righte,
In þe is eke owre anker pight

(4)
Stormys ageyne of cruell syn
That puyssauntlye us do assayle;
And while we þis world be yn
Now, lady fayre, þou us not fayle.
Lat neuer vice on us prevayle.
Entrete þi babe, so, quene on hie,
In whom to þe is no denye.

(5)
Sip here is nougat but myserie;
The fende, þe fleish, þe world also,
Assaute us ay wip-oute mercy.
Not comfortles ȝit is owre wo;
Lady, to þe resorte we do,
Euyr tristynge thi grace and ayde,
In whom fully owre trist is layde.