

Strategies of Translation: Unlocking the Secret of 'Locksley Hall'

Authors : Raja Lahiani

Abstract : 'Locksley Hall' is a poem that Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) published in 1842. It is believed to be his first attempt to face as a poet some of the most painful of his experiences, as it is a study of his rising out of sickness into health, conquering his selfish sorrow by faith and hope. So far, in Victorian scholarship as in modern criticism, 'Locksley Hall' has been studied and approached as a canonical Victorian English poem. The aim of this project is to prove that some strategies of translation were used in this poem in such a way as to guarantee its assimilation into the English canon and hence efface to a large extent its Arabic roots. In its relationship with its source text, 'Locksley Hall' is at the same time mimetic and imitative. As part of the terminology used in translation studies, 'imitation' means almost the exact opposite of what it means in ordinary English. By adopting an imitative procedure, a translator would do something totally different from the original author, wandering far and freely from the words and sense of the original text. An imitation is thus aimed at an audience which wants the work of the particular translator rather than the work of the original poet. Hallam Tennyson, the poet's biographer, asserts that 'Locksley Hall' is a simple invention of place, incidents, and people, though he notes that he remembers the poet claiming that Sir William Jones' prose translation of the Mu'allaqat (pre-Islamic poems) gave him the idea of the poem. A comparative work would prove that 'Locksley Hall' mirrors a great deal of Tennyson's biography and hence is not a simple invention of details as asserted by his biographer. It would be challenging to prove that 'Locksley Hall' shares so many details with the Mu'allaqat, as declared by Tennyson himself, that it needs to be studied as an imitation of the Mu'allaqat of Imru' al-Qays and 'Antara in addition to its being a poem in its own right. Thus, the main aim of this work is to unveil the imitative and mimetic strategies used by Tennyson in his composition of 'Locksley Hall.' It is equally important that this project researches the acculturating assimilative tools used by the poet to root his poem in its Victorian English literary, cultural and spatiotemporal settings. This work adopts a comparative methodology. Comparison is done at different levels. The poem will be contextualized in its Victorian English literary framework. Alien details related to structure, socio-spatial setting, imagery and sound effects shall be compared to Arabic poems from the Mu'allaqat collection. This would determine whether the poem is a translation, an adaption, an imitation or a genuine work. The ultimate objective of the project is to unveil in this canonical poem a new dimension that has for long been either marginalized or ignored. By proving that 'Locksley Hall' is an imitation of classical Arabic poetry, the project aspires to consolidate its literary value and open up new gates of accessing it.

Keywords : comparative literature, imitation, Locksley Hall, Lord Alfred Tennyson, translation, Victorian poetry

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