

Translating Literary Texts

Arabic passage:

فقرة مقتطعة من رواية "موسم الهجرة إلى الشمال" للأديب السوداني الطيب صالح

أما أنا، فإنه يخامرني ذلك الإحساس الذي اعتزاني ليلة سمعته، فجأة وعلى غير استعداد مني، يقرأ شعرا إنجليزيا، وهو ممسك كأس الخمر بيده دافنا قامته في الكرسي، مُمدًّا رجليه، ضوء المصباح ينعكس على وجهه، وعيناه سارحتان كما خُيِّل لي في أفاق داخل نفسه. والظلام حولنا في الخارج كأنه قوى شيطانية تتضافر على خنق ضوء المصباح. أحيانا تخطر لي فجأة تلك الفكرة المزعجة، أن مصطفى سعيد لم يحدث إطلاقا، وأنه فعلا أكذوبة، أو طيف أو حلم، أو كابوس ألم بأهل القرية تلك ذات ليلة داكنة وخائفة، ولما فتحوا أعينهم مع ضوء الشمس لم يروه.

English translation of the teacher:

Now/As for me, I am/was experiencing the same feeling of that night when I suddenly heard him reciting English poetic verses while he was holding a glass of wine and dipping himself in a chair with his legs stretched. The lamplight reflected on his face while his eyes; I saw, were gazing away as if he was wandering in his own fantasies. We were surrounded by darkness. A devilish darkness that was about to absorb the lamplight. I sometimes recall that annoying thought suddenly; that Mustapha Saeed has never been at all, and that he was a lie, a ghost, a dream or a nightmare that passed by/came to the people of this village in one stifling dark night. But the time when they opened their eyes with the sunlight, they did not see him.

English Translation of the British translator:

Season of Migration to the North translated by: Denys Johnson-Davies

As for me, I am sometimes seized by the feeling which came over me that night when, suddenly and without my being at all prepared for it, I had heard him quoting English poetry, a drink in his hand, his body buried deep in his chair, his legs outstretched, the light reflected on his face, his eyes, it seemed to me, abstractedly wandering towards the horizon deep within himself and with darkness all around us outside as though satanic forces were combining to strangle the lamplight. Occasionally the disturbing thought occurs to me that Mustapha Sa'eed never happened, that he was in fact a lie, a phantom, a dream or a nightmare that had come to the people of that village one suffocating dark night, and when they opened their eyes to sunlight, he was nowhere to be seen.