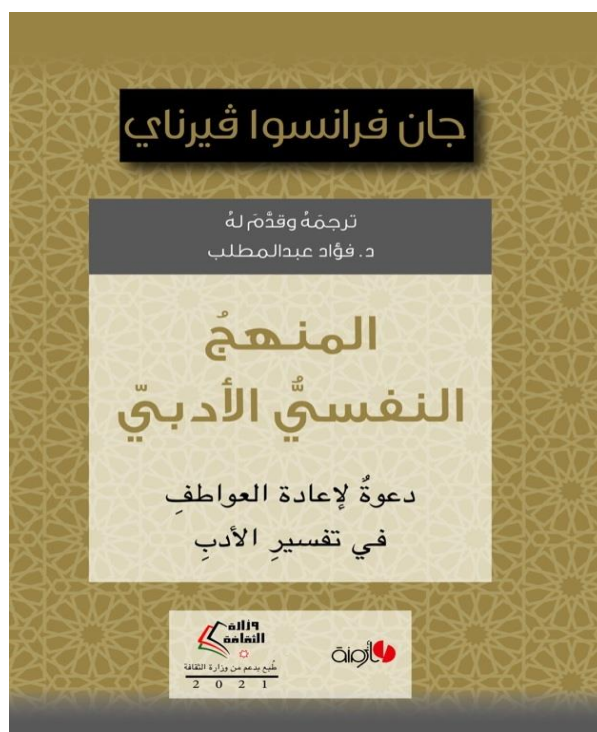


Book Review

Fuad Abdul Muttaleb's Translation of *The Seduction of Fiction* by Jean-François Vernay (Amman, 2022) Receives a Review



Author: Jean François Vernay

Translator: Fuad Abdul Muttaleb

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Literature and psychology, particularly psychoanalysis, have reached the stage of recognizing their shared ground in the twenty-first century. Both are fascinated by human motivations, internal drives, and capacity for creating stories and employing symbols, suggestions, and revelations. They became deeply involved in the study of the inner world of human through this process. Since the days of Aristotle, through the neo-classical epochs as well as the Romantic Movements, and specifically in relation to the works of Rousseau, Schlegel, and Coleridge, and finally Freud, literature has found itself on a continuous journey through the knowledge resulting from the

discoveries of scholars, writers, and critics. Psychoanalysis is the study of the unconscious with the symbols and suggestions it creates. Beginning with the twentieth century, it started when Freud's book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Since then, literary historians have started to comprehend the connection between a writer's actual creativity and his/her dreams, feelings, and goals on the one hand, and vice versa. Any study of literature and psychology should share a comparable interest in how psychoanalysis can directly improve imaginative and creative writing, as well as how to use psychological and psychoanalytic techniques to literary criticism, biography, and character analysis. One important way of supplying the Arabic library with the necessary relevant material in this area is through the translation of important books into Arabic like the book under consideration. In this sense, our current book serves as a reminder that the traditional "Literary Psychoanalytic Method" is in the process of interpreting literary works through new perspectives and data.

The author of the original book is not widely-known in the Arab World; simultaneously, the Arab literary students, professional readers, and critics are pertinently interested in his work. Thus, we provide a brief synopsis of the book and its author, Jean Francois Vernay, for Arabic readers who are unfamiliar with him and his works. Professor Jean-François Vernay is a French and Australian researcher, professor, translator, educator and author based in Melbourne. He also holds a Ph.D. from Toulouse, France, and has written books and conducted research in the fields of psychology, language, philosophy, and Australian literature in both French and English.

A careful evaluation indicates that Vernay's book is important and useful in at least two ways: first, by offering a comprehensive perspective on a subject that is often treated in fragmented form (literature and its critical theories, and conferences dealing with individual lectures, theories and criticisms, etc.) unable to present a unified argument of this topic. Furthermore, several of the books published on the subject are anthologies, and as such do not develop a full-length discussion. And secondly, as a research effort, the book not only brought non-English-speaking theory to the world, but also opened the door to both non-English-speaking traditions and English advocating academic criticism. The author thus write a basic introduction commenting on the latest developments in this field from his diverse experience.

It should be pointed out in advance that imagination, dreams and longings are virtually basic driving force of human life. Because these create an inner world to make up for the daily losses and achieve mental balance, especially if a person lives in unusual or inhuman conditions and in daily practice. Because of this, we had the gift of creating and telling stories that tickled our pains, our dreams, and our hopes. There is no earth and no final stop other than the death of man; more specifically, feeling amazingly full or satisfied after a meal, fulfilling the marital obligations, reading a great book, having a pleasant conversation, or completing a task inevitably lasts a short time and then ends. We naturally want things the way we desire them, and when our inner workings die, we assign content to that emptiness. For better or worse, we find a single meaning that is inevitably shaped by language, culture, and the personal and public experiences we live with. The beauty and magnificence of the human soul lies in the dreams, imaginations, longings and hopes. And meaning itself forms the ultimate human temptation. Literary texts, therefore, are capable of representing all of these things, much more than utterances or explicit messages or even expressions of any kind, and thus offer a very rich range of possibilities when reading them. There is a useful reference, in the introduction, to a statement the scientist Albert Einstein once said in relation to this: "Logic moves from point A to point B, but imagination has access

everywhere.” Logic (scientific method) and imagination (emotional method) are opposite but complementary human faculties. So we approach each text, topic, problem or concern in a practical way, logically or intuitively. While the first path has been carefully studied and calculated and has a beginning and an end, the second includes dreams, visions, fantasies, desires and aspirations, the inner and outer aspects of the human subconscious. Therefore, they are boundless components because they reach everywhere, and the word “everywhere” is likely to be “all the places” that the human subconscious mind (imagination) can reach, and that is why its space was infinite. However, these two approaches are interrelated and affect one and the other in mutually exclusive ways.

As an illustration, art and science are often spoken of as two very different things, as if there is no intrinsic connection between them. People believe that artists are emotional, imaginative, and use only intuition. A human being sees everything at once and is not interested in reasons or explanations. People think that scientists are callous beings who use only their heads, discuss topics step-by-step, and don't need imagination, emotion, or intuition in this discussion. However, human daily practice proves that these impressions are sometimes wrong. A true artist is emotional and imaginative, but also rational. He knows what he's doing and what he stands for. Otherwise, his art will be incomplete and he will suffer. A true scientist is perfectly creative and rational. Sometimes his emotions and imagination lead him to a solution where his mind goes through this process surprisingly slowly. Otherwise, his knowledge will decline and he will suffer as a result. The relationship between rationality and imagination is complementary, one cannot fully function without the other, and the other cannot be fully dependent.

Below is an extended overview of the current book that came out under the literal title *Psychological Literary Approach: A call for the Return of Emotions in Literary Interpretation*. Professor Caroline Lee translated it from French into English, and then the book was translated from English into Arabic from the manuscript completed by the abovementioned translator. The book falls within literature in general and its theory, philosophy, psychology, criticism, education. The French edition of the book was published in Paris in March 2013, when French theorists and professors questioned the feasibility of academic training in literature and criticism over the past two decades, and expressed concern about the fate of literature and criticism and clarified the two areas of research. According to this critical view, students are forced to read the text passively rather than being encouraged to become more active and curious readers. This is where this book comes in, offering the first tools to explore new ways and highlight the value of literature in our time. The book thus articulates three main components of literary interaction: writing process, author personality, and literary criticism.

Today, Vernay thinks, it makes more sense to explain how novels are useful to modern readers, rather than asking in vain those who are interested in literature, especially novels. He argues that psychologists and neuroscientists who have explored the social value of literature may hold some key to this new field of research. Intelligence greatly improves social and emotional awareness.

And when it seems the time has come to reconsider the various advantages and benefits of reading fiction, it is perhaps more important to find ways to make stories more appealing to modern readers. The book tackles these issues in a particularly interesting and exciting way. Many Arabic and English readers, are generally fascinated by the French language, and even more fascinated by this emotive statement, written from the perspective of French literature, but visibly steeped in

European philosophy in the course of fully accessible translation by English translators and others. If the book attracts a broad literary audience, especially readers of the novel, it is because of its literary analysis that will gain critical acclaim among Arab professional readers, as happened in France. It consists of an introduction, nine chapters, and a conclusion. These appear in the table of contents respectively with titles such as: Multiple Possibilities of Reading, Interpretation as Art, Problems of Context, The Captivating Power of the Writer, the Symbiosis of Psychoanalysis and Literature, the Art of Storytelling, the Novel as Bad Faith, the Impossibility of Seeking Truth, and Psycholiterary Approaches to literary research; these in addition to the introduction, conclusion, and bibliography.

Reading books in general is interesting, but feelings make the literary text understandable. This two-pronged hypothesis underpins Jean-François Vernay's thesis in this book, who argues that literary scholars should bring emotional components back into literary analysis in order to shed some new light on fiction and attract more literary readers. Special attention is to be given to issues such as “the attractiveness of literature,” “the philosophical dimensions of literary interpretation,” “the psychological and literary method,” “the cognitive process and the creativity of literary imagination,” “pluralism and flexibility in literary interpretation,” and other issues raised by the French researchers in their “strange gradual departure” from literary studies. The book was completed in 2011 and was first published in French in 2013, with an English translation in 2016 by Caroline Lee and the current Arabic translation, which is no less important today in the field of literary studies. With the humanities still beleaguered and artificial intelligence taking on more analytic capabilities—in order to restore the value of reading and studying literature, professional readers must conduct new neuroscientific research on the body, mind, and emotions that has implications for understanding of “the uniqueness of literature” and enhancing its benefits and virtues.

The themes and ideas contained in this book make it possible to add some other Arabic themes because of the subject's historical and profound significance. It virtually satisfies the needs of university professors, doctoral students, critics, and anyone interested in the field of literary studies in general who has some knowledge of Arabic literary criticism and theory. It therefore makes sense to return to the arguments, terms and principles circulating in the Arabic language in order to understand current issues in academic and cultural debates open to the public. Such studies will succeed in dispelling doubts of their unacceptability, as they are not directly related to our literature and lead to unhelpful conceptual and fundamental questions.

Other recent studies on the history of emotions, such as those of the historians Jan Plamper's *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015), and Rob Boddice's *The History of Emotions: Historical Approaches* (University of Manchester Press, 2018) are distinct works on psychology and cognitive science that talk about the interrelationships of cognitive and affective processes in the brain, and Vernay links these models to the formation of literary fiction. Vernay thus calls for literary self-interpretation and synthesis, and the assessment of the creative roles of authors and readers in literary fiction. Although Vernay directs his arguments mainly to both the readers and literary scholars, his aim is to stimulate the interest of both professional and lay readers in reading important works. It's actually about connecting professional readers with the general readers.

Each of the nine short chapters, previously mentioned, begins with a summary and key words, after which the chapters are built in succession to arrive at a final, extended conclusion that

explains Vernay's analysis. As such, this format is more suitable for the use of individual chapters in advanced undergraduate classes and postgraduate courses that focus on new critical works that take into account the context of psychological and literary analysis (1-3), the psychoanalytical literary approach (Chapters 4-6) and the creative role of authors and readers (Chapters 7-8). Rather than convey a prescriptive analysis, Vernay challenges professional readers to activate the emotional experience of reading and to convey their impressions of the text as negotiable perspectives or suggestions to others.

Vernay identifies the salient features of his proposed theory of literary psychology: assessing the unconscious, especially the psychology of writers and readers, and acknowledging subjectivity with flexibility in literary interpretation - nutritional-critical, philosophical, erotic, interpretive, and myth-making functions and what they produce Examines aesthetic pleasures (possible techniques in the imagination, and how does the mind deal with them?). In assessing the unconscious, theories must find parallels with the psychological models of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and cognitive science. Researchers must use psychological theory to arrive at an understanding of the mutual influence of the writer's shared internal processes on the reader's invention.

Vernay's return to pluralism and flexibility in literary interpretation has a pronounced effect on publishing, education, and the vitality of readers. Vernay argues that critics who assume their interpretations to be intellectual, emotional, general, and subjective can convey to publishers the value of publishing books that are not easy to read. However, the charm of style that appeals to the individual reader, or simply to the more personal reader, draws the individual to professional reading. Vernay welcomes the steps taken by the French Ministry of Education to recognize the role of emotions in reading and interpreting literature. He encourages a greater deviation from rigorous objectivity and emotional repression in the literary analysis practiced in schools. He points out that readers can influence the models and possibilities of the world and the unprofessional ways of understanding themselves. The literary imagination has an "elusive expressiveness", and literary expression is a ruse in the sense that it is a "very subjective evocation of reality", and is a ruse in various thought patterns, and it can affect society through behaviors, livelihoods, etc. Recognizing that the literary novel is the joint invention of the intellectual and emotional processes of the author and the reader, and that it is an expression, the reader can understand how literary meanings and experiences are shaped by personal context. Readers will be able to better understand the way in which the literary meaning and experience are formed in the personal context, for instance, gender, race, sexuality, politics, and truth. How does literature motivate us, whether we are professional readers or not, when we recognize the imagination of literature and become acquainted with possible techniques, which is the main purpose of psychoanalysis.

The themes and ideas contained in the book also make it possible to add other Arabic issues due to its historical, wide and deep subject matter. And it satisfies the needs of those who have some knowledge of Arabic criticism and general critical and literary theory within this framework, and who are interested in the literary studies in general. In order to understand the current issues in open academic and cultural discourse, it makes sense to return to the arguments, terms, and principles circulating in Arabic. There is no doubt that the discussion succeeds in overcoming "the notion" of unacceptability, as it leads to conceptual and policy questions that are not directly relevant to our literature and are unhelpful. Such principles and concepts are still raised and prevalent in European literary studies.

The translator obviously did his best in this translation as much as possible to achieve the highest level of honesty and clarity in the transmission of the English text, and he did not compromise except in certain places that could not easily be spotted. Perhaps, one main difficulty lies in the fact that the text was originally translated from French, so in the process of reading the text it was necessary for us to evoke the image of the French text as a basis for the text that we are wrestling with in its vocabulary, terms, names and titles that were originally written in different languages. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a process of reviewing and checking the text from time to time in order to achieve a clear and readable formulation of entire words and phrases. The word 'Fiction', for example, is often synonymous with words such as: 'Novel', 'Literature', and 'Imagination', which required scrutiny, in each spot it occurred, so as to reach the specific meaning. There are new or unfamiliar terms and vocabulary in the book that require additional search and diligence in finding Arabic equations for them, such as: hypotext (base text), hypertext (hypertext), hypoconstruction (base structure) and hyperconstruction (hyperconstruction) i.e. (the material in the critical text); and certain words appear like 'Theme' and 'Thematic' that do not have clear and specific equations in Arabic; in addition to new medical, psychiatric or neuroscience terms that need care and accuracy in finding their equivalents. There are too many references to European names, book titles and places. It clearly took a great deal of efforts on the part of translator to render it satisfactorily into Arabic. The translator strived to provide acceptable and readable Arabic formulas for many new and unfamiliar words in the text, and provide clear and concise footnotes for terms that require annotations. The references, of course, in this work have not been translated into Arabic. The original form of references is more useful for critics and researchers. The ultimate goal of translator, as declared in his introduction, was to provide a clear and readable translation into Arabic. Overall, his work represent one of the excellent additions to the Arabic library in its field: an accurate, readable and fine-tuned translation recently published in Amman- Jordan.

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