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Breaking through the Language Barrier

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Despite cultural and ethnic references that divide people, the rhythm and common thread of passion that run through each poem have freely breached borders and found their way to the human heart.

The human experience is also enriched by increasing cross-border interaction as the globe gets shrunken by travel and telecommunications.

This is evident in the realm of literature, which is made possible by the work of translators. Translation enables a bigger audience to feel the passion behind the lines with which renowned poet originally composed their verses.

Translation of every kind of literature has gained supporters. Those who thought that this practice would only «kill» the feelings behind the translated material may be in for a big surprise.

Such is the opinion of Prof. Franco Buffoni, a full professor of comparative literature and head of the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Literature, at the University of Cassino (the fifth University of Rome), in central Italy.

Translation has been an object of great discourse for a long time, he explained. It has its supporters and then there are the «purists», who took a stiff stand against it. «Faithfulness to a translated literature requires deep understanding of the author, his life, culture and meaning intended in each line», he told the *Gazette*.

Buffoni, an editor of a high-quality translation journal: «Testo a fronte» (which, literally, means «parallel text») focusing on the theory and practice of literary translation, has undertaken the challenge of publishing a special issue of the journal entirely devoted to the translation of contemporary Arabic poetry into Italian and vice-versa.

This monographic issue, which will be published next year, demonstrates a growing interest for Arabic culture in Italy. Last but not least, Prof. Buffoni is also a poet in his own right. He belongs to the generation of post-war Italian poets (together with Milo de Angelis, Valerio Magrelli and Roberto Mussapi), who have achieved public recognition for their profound poetic production.

In 1998, Franco Buffoni was awarded the prestigious Montale Prize (named, in fact, after one

or the greatest contemporary Italian poets, Eugenio Montale) with a collection of *Tales in Verse*, which had been published by Guanda in 1997. A valuable anthology of Buffoni's poems is *Adidas, selected poems 1975-1990* (published by Pieraldo Editore, Rome, 1993).

Forthcoming, next year, is a collection of lyrical poems published by Mondadori (one of the most important publishing houses in Italy).

Buffoni's poems have been translated in various European languages, among which French, English, Dutch, Swedish and German.

It is hoped that in the near future we shall have translations of Buffoni's poems into Arabic, too. Buffoni also showed great interest in translating a rich collection of poems from the Arabian Peninsula into Italian.

The most interesting collection of contemporary Italian poetry (which includes a selection of Buffoni's poems) has been published by Dante University Press in a bilingual edition with excellent English translations (*Italian Poetry 1950 to 1990*, translated and edited by Gayle Ridinger, co-edited by Gian Paolo Renello, Dante University Press, 1996).