

**Translation of Shakespearean apothegms  
in Enani's works**  
ترجمة الأقوال المأثورة لشكسبير فى أعمال عنانى  
**Dr. Mona Naeim Ahmed Ahmed**  
**Lecturer in English Linguistics**  
**Department of English**  
**Language Higher Institute "Heliopolis", Cairo**

**Abstract.** This article explores Enani's translation of apothegms, with a special reference to his translation of *Hamlet*. A general background on apothegms, their relations to proverbs, idioms and aphorisms, their discourse functions, their omnipresence in the Arabic tradition and their trans-linguistic affinities is given. Illustrative examples from Enani's translation – published and in draft form - of Shakespeare's play are discussed. The study shows that apothegm as a culture- based concept can be translated effectively reflecting the original message as Enani did— using cultural equivalence. The translation of apothegms is not problematic if there is a universal meaning to it. However, in many cases translator has to use adaptation in order to make the meaning close to the target cultural without affecting the source meaning. Enani manages to create this balance in all of his translation as he has the hugest mental lexicon and structure patterns I have ever heard. He masters English language the same as he masters Arabic and this the most crucial skill translator from and into Arabic must have.

**Keywords:** apothegm – *Enani*— Shakespeare –cultural equivalence

### المستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث موضوعاً من المواضيع الهامة في سياق الترجمة ألا وهو ترجمة "الحكمة" أو "الأقوال المأثورة" بشكل عام، والواردة ضمن النصوص الأدبية على وجه الخصوص. فيرتبط هذا النمط ارتباطاً وثيقاً بثقافة اللغة المصدر، ولنقله للغة الهدف لابد من مراعاة الدقة والأمانة في النقل، فالترجمة هي وسيلة نقل اللغة والثقافة معا. والذي يطالع ترجمات عنانى لتلك الأقوال يلاحظ ميله الى ترجمة الشعر الى شعر والى البحث عن المقابل الثقافى المناسب من مختلف مستويات اللغة العربية من لغة التراث الى لغة أهل مصر الدراجة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأقوال المأثورة- عنانى – ترجمة الأقوال المأثورة – شكسبير – المقابل الثقافى

## Introduction: Apothegms

Usually known by the informal ‘quip’, an apothegm (short for apophthegm, derived from Greek, and pronounced *apothem*) is a pithy saying expressing a witty comment on human life or common experience. A writer or a speaker may use it as a shorthand expression of an idea which may require a longer statement, apart from being proverbial and consequently well known. If one says he has rejected a job for reasons you believe to be false, you may jeer at him with the quip "sour grapes" which in Arabic is قصر ديل. When someone tells you that he'll donate a million pounds to charity, when you know he is fibbing, you may say "That'll be the day!" ابقى قابلني / في المشمش!

Such quips are regarded as idioms in both languages. However, in literature one can come across apothegms or quips that are either **well-known** but used in special contexts or **newly-created** by the author. In both cases, the apothegms will only gain popularity (perhaps turning into idioms) if the work they are used in is popular enough. Naturally, the more popular a text, the more apothegms it will contain and become current, especially if an apothegm is based on a poetic image.

Classical Arabic poetry and the Qur'an contain the most frequently quoted apothegms. To express the idea that someone is vainly trying to obtain something, one may cite the Qur'anic verse:

كباسط كفيه إلى الماء ليبلغ فاه وما هو ببالغه (الرعد – ١٤)

[As someone who, with both palms joined, reaches out for a drink of water, but in vain.]

In cases like this, synecdoche is common, that is, the speaker may only use the first part of the verse, though the translator may opt for rendering the whole proverb. One normally says "too many cooks..." omitting the rest, "spoil the broth". The same thing applies to its Arabic counterpart, ريسين في المركب, the rest being تغرق. Or take the amusing, الكتكوت الفصيح م البيضة يصيح "It is a forward chick that cries in the shell"

Rhyming apothegms are closer to proverbs, and may have more than one counterpart in other languages, but not strictly *equivalent* ones. This is one of the problems a translator always encounters. If looking like a *sententia* (plural *sententiae*), an apothegm may have similarly highly-wrought counterparts giving the substance rather than the form of the other one.

The adage "Man proposes; God disposes" may mean much the same as *وتقدرون فتضحك الأقدار* or the variant *العبد في التفكير والرب في التدبير*. On the other hand, a one-line quip may defy imitation: if one's expectation is realized, one may say, after Hamlet, "Oh my prophetic soul!" In Arabic one may say *صدق حدسي* ("my intuition was right") but not *صدقت* ("my prediction was right") or *صدق وعدي* ("my promise was right") because of religious connotations. Another idiomatic quip by Hamlet is "in my mind's eye", that is, *بعين الخيال*.

In the Arabic tradition, original quips are often in verse. Prose quips abound as well, but verse is easily committed to memory and has therefore better chances of spreading and survival. A famous Latin aphorism, rarely translated into an English usage, is *Fortis Fortuna Adjuvat*, which means that Fortune (the Roman goddess) favors strength and courage. Another version of the adage occurs in Virgil's *Aenid*, as *Audentes Fortuna iuvat*, which means that fortune favors the valiant. The former may have a pithy Arabic counterpart *الجدُّ في الجدِّ* *al-jadd fi al-jidd*. This is part of the opening lines of a poem by Khalil ibn Aybak al-Safadi (AD 1296-1363) which says:

الجد في الجد والحرمان في الكسل      فانصب تصب عن قريب غاية الأمل

*al-jadd* means 'fortune', and *majduud* means 'fortunate.' On the other hand, *al-jidd* may generally mean hard work or strife, serious fighting. In Al-Hajjaj's (AD 660-714) famous speech on being appointed governor of Iraq, people are urged to fight in these terms:

آن أوان الجد بكم فجدوا

The same sense is implied in Abu Tammam's (AD 803-845)

السيف أصدق أنباء من الكتب      في حده الحد بين الجد واللعب

The ‘serious endeavor’ contrasted with ‘playing around’ acquires a sense of valiant fighting from the fore-grounded ‘sword’; hence, the association with the Latin *Fortis*. The link may be tenuous, but the tone of both apothegms is the same. Virgil’s adaptation of the adage in *The Aenid* to *Audentis Fortuna iuvat* has a closer Arabic counterpart, namely وفاز باللذة الجسور. One is reminded of Dryden’s refrain in his *Alexander’s Feast*, “none but the brave deserve the fair,” or Shakespeare’s opening line of his *Midsummer Night’s Dream* where Theseus tells his bride,

Hippolyta, I woo’d thee with my sword  
And won thy love, doing three injuries; (I.i.16-17)

هيبوليتا! إني بحد السيف قد خطبت وذاك  
وقد جرحت مرّاتٍ ثلاثاً قبل أن أنال حبّك

The other Latin dictum which is rarely, if ever, translated into English but which has a counterpart in Arabic is *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. The Arabic is انكروا محاسن موتاكم. More commonly, genuine Arabic quips are in verse, however modified in diachronic transmission. Unwittingly, many people use a quip by al-Mutanabbi (AD 915-965), both in speech and in writing, which says, تجري الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفن "the wind may blow against the ship’s wishes." This is the second monostich of an Arabic distich, the first of which says, "One cannot have all one’s wishes."

Sometimes a verse from the Qur’an is adapted for use as a quip. When the King of Egypt in Pharaonic times discovers the unlawful amorous advances of his wife to Joseph the patriarch, he addresses her saying, "...it is your evil designs: *Your* evil designs are great." However, the quip in wide currency is “the evil designs of *them* [women] are great.” A quip may be used ironically in jeering at a loquacious speaker by quoting Polonius’ famous proverb “Brevity is the soul of wit” in *Hamlet*. When you address a dirty-looking man saying "cleanliness is next to Godliness", the irony is obvious. If you

say to somebody who believes he has made a remarkable achievement, “every dog will have his day,” you’ll be scoffing at his presumed achievement. From *Hamlet* too comes the famous “method in his madness”, which in the play refers to Hamlet’s feigned madness (or antic disposition) but outside the play may refer to a feigned imbecility or moral deficiency.

### **Apothegms and Most Closely-related Terms**

Sometimes an apothegm is a catchphrase, especially valued for its applicability in certain situations. When Hamlet hears the noise of his uncle’s fanfare and carousing, and is told it is a custom, he says that is a custom "more honored in the breach than the observance." The phrase seems to have lost its association with excessive drinking, but it has not lost its significance in referring to a socially objectionable custom or practice.

One may describe the phrase as proverbial or aphoristic. However, technically analyzed it is neither a proverb nor an aphorism proper. The reason is that a proverb or an aphorism must be synonyms of the apothegm [adage, dictum, maxim, saw, sentential, epigram]. For the purposes of this research, an apothegm differs from such synonyms, not in *kind*, but in the *degree* of their applicability. This may be due, in part, to their provenance. The apothegm may be a fragment of a historical or literary speech, retraceable or not.

When a writer says, "Thereby hangs a tale," the reference must be to Shakespeare. It has a tale of its own. When in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate falls off her horse, the horse’s tail is muddied; whereupon Grumio, the groom, says, "thereby hangs a tail." Never losing the chance for a potential pun, Shakespeare changes the last word into a *tale*, using the same expression again in *Othello*. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *As You Like It*. Weak as it is, the pun survives and Enani gives us the near-Egyptian والحكاية لها ديل.

### **Enani – a Partial Outline of his *Habitus***

Enani (personal communication) tells the story of how, as a schoolboy, his father called him and solemnly broke the news that two

more subjects would be added to the regular school load: Arabic composition الإنشاء and English. Suzy, his cousin, was spending the holidays at the family home, away from her boarding school (the old Victoria College, Alexandria). Having helped him to study the school books in the summer, she left him with a strange present, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Though heavily annotated, the book was an enigma, pure and simple. The other subject, composition, was no less bewildering. At the Qur'anic teaching school (*al-Kuttab*) where little Muhammad spent his kindergarten years, he had to learn certain texts by rote. However, there were no texts to learn by heart in either of the two new subjects. His father stepped in to provide whatever was to be learnt: Arabic verse. A small book entitled السحر الحلال في الحكم والأمثال – that is, *Lawful Magic: Aphorisms and Proverbs*.

This slim volume contained a thousand lines of traditional Arabic verse, arranged alphabetically according to the rhyme words in the lines. Enani recounts how his Arabic teacher at al-Abbasia Secondary School in Alexandria was impressed when the first-year student could cite lines of verse to highlight a point in the course of an Arabic essay. The lines of verse quoted were often aphoristic, making use of irony or paradox. It was many years later that Enani realized that a good poet's work gains in excellence in as much as it contains apothegmatic lines. Such lines are valued by the poet's readers and by posterity. Distichs are cited in speech and writing, sometimes without mentioning (or even knowing) the name of the author. As mentioned above, the lines may be cited in whole or in part. Abul-Alaa' al-Ma'arri (AD 973-1057) says:

Tread lightly, for in my mind's eye,  
This clod of earth is made of human bodies.

خفف الوطء ما أظن أديم الأرض إلا من هذه الأجساد

which looks forward to Shakespeare's

Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;  
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe



Should patch a wall to expel the winter's thaw!  
(*Hamlet*, V.i.206-9)

قيصر الجبار مات... أصبح اليوم ترابًا  
قد يسد ثغرة... قد تقي لذع الهواء  
ذلك الطين الذي... ملأ الدنيا ارتعابا  
رّم الجائط حتى... ينتفي برد الشتاء

Both passages speak of the universal theme of man's mortality as exhibited in the earth or dust into which dead bodies turn. The first citation is from a poem, lyrical as opposed to dramatic. The second comes from a Shakespearean play and should be regarded as dramatic. It is not. It is as contemplative as the former, and its only claim to being part of a dramatic text derives from its revelation of the depths of the character of Prince Hamlet.

Much admired by theatre-goers and readers, he is supposed to be a university student, shocked to the point of obsession by the murder of his father, but unable to carry out his revenge. The irony expressed in the above-quoted lines show that he is clever. And clever he is, having been directly or indirectly responsible for the death of seven characters (personae) in the play, not including himself! Therefore, only to the extent that those lines deal with this side of his character, they may be regarded as dramatic.

## Discursive Functions

In Arabic, the inclusion of apothegms and aphorisms in any kind of discourse is traditionally commendable. One reason, which is possibly peculiar to Arabic, is to establish one's belonging to a rich and glorious literary tradition. Sometimes the aphorism is too well-known to require acknowledgement of the source, such as verses from the Qur'an or pithy statements from the Prophet's Hadith. An example of the latter is to condemn a hesitant person who never advances but keeps going to and fro until his horse is dead *مثل المُنْبَتِّ، لا أرضًا قطع ولا ظهرًا أبقى*. A writer may cite only part of the aphorism, if expecting the reader to have heard the complete apothegm. Sometimes the image invoked in the

aphorism is too well-known or universal, but recognizable in its new context. Thus Shawqi (AD 1868-1932) addresses the Prophet, saying:

شعوبك في شرق البلاد وغربها كأصحاب كهفٍ في عميق سباتٍ

The "cave sleepers" occurs in the Qur'an:

ان أصحاب الكهف والرقيم كانوا من آياتنا عجا (الكهف – ٩)

And John Donne, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century English poet, says in "The Good-Morrow", "or snorted we in the *seven sleepers' den*?"

Another image turned proverbial concerns Egypt as representing Paradise. The oldest verifiable source is the letter sent by Amr Ibn al-Aas to Caliph Omar in al-Madinah, in Arabia, describing Egypt in glowing terms. The letter can be found in *النجوم الزاهرة في ملوك مصر والقاهرة* (*Bright Stars: The Kings of Misr and Cairo*, by Jamal al-Din Abou al-Mahasen, Ibn Taghry Bardi al-Atabki – AD 1411-1470). Shawqi uses the name *al-khuld* (immortality) in referring both to Paradise and to Egypt. Using the word metaphorically is taken to be allusive, on the assumption that this is the figurative-cum-aphoristic use in the Qur'an. The literal meaning of the word occurs in the Qur'an more than once, but is otherwise qualified to mean either paradise or fire. One reads first "We have not granted immortality to any human being before you; so if you die, will they grow immortal?" (24 – *al-Anbiya'a*). Then there is "immortal torture" عذاب الخلد (52 *Younis*) and *al-Sajdah* 14. There is also the "tree of immortality" شجرة الخلد (120, *Taha*) then "the Garden of immortality" جنة الخلد (15 – *Al-Furqan*) and, finally, "this is where the enemies of God are punished: hellfire. It is to be their house of immortality" (28 – *Fussilat*).

The idea that the use of periphrastic allusions, as an apothegmatic embellishment of a text, as Robert Andrews (2006) claims, is not universally valid. Apart from the need to establish the precise meaning of the words used (and in the Qur'an this is not easy) there is the other feature of grasping the intention of the apothegm (illocution). This may be subject to having a distant, forgotten context, or to the change of the audience. A famous example is the line in which Omar Ibn Abi Rabee'ah (AD 644-712) objects to allowing women to fight, or merely



to take up arms in whatever circumstance. He rejects this, and insists that all women should wear long dresses with 'tails':

كتب القتل والقتال علينا وعلى الغانيات جر الذبول

It is our lot, men, to fight and be killed;  
Pretty women should only flaunt their farthingales.

As quoted today in the Arabic press, this distich is given the opposite meaning. It is though the poet is complaining of not recruiting women soldiers. A patriarchal tone has taken over. Another apothegm says:

عوى الذئب فاستأنست بالذئب إذ عوى وصوت إنسان فكدت أطيّر

A wolf howled, comforting me with apt company.  
When a human voice sounded, I nearly flew away.  
(author unknown)

The distich is quoted in two opposite senses, though Enani's rendering above suggests the darker one; the other one could be

A howling wolf gave me a sense of company,  
But a human voice made me almost jump for joy.

Defined only in aesthetic terms, the function of using such quips would be limited indeed. The aesthetic aspect is not confined to "ornamenting one's speech with other people's jewels", as Robertson Davies, the Canadian novelist (1913-1995) says in one of his early books (*The World of Wonders*, 1975). It may involve the provenance of the quip and its cultural context. When World War II broke out, the Allies wanted Egypt to take part in fighting the Axis powers, but Shaykh Mustafa Abdul-Raziq (AD 1885-1947), then rector of Al-Azhar, opposed this. He used the ancient Arab apothegmatic phrase, literally: "We have neither a she-camel nor a camel in this war"

[هذه حرب] لا ناقة لنا فيها ولا جمل

The English counterpart would be "We have no stakes in this war." The Arabic apothegm dates as far back as pre-Islamic times (AD 496) but it keeps reappearing in a variety of contexts, thanks to its exotic terms, raising the risk of being quoted frivolously. Enani (personal communication) recounts that in Cairo in the 1960s, especially among the young, a formula was common in which a reference to camels الإبل meant "extremely". It all began when it said that opposers of the regime, so called prisoners of conscience/ those imprisoned for speaking out *سجناء الرأي* were "beaten... up like camels" *يُضْرَبُونَ ضَرْبَ الإِبِلِ*. Thence 'camels' became ubiquitous: "they ran like camels" (not wind); "they ate like camels" (not pigs); "they slept like camels" (not cats or bats). The 'beating up' image comes, as Arabists will reveal, from Al-Hajjaj's speech on being appointed governor of Iraq. He made the following threats:

لأحزمنكم حزم السلمة، ولأضربنكم ضرب غرائب الإبل [وفي رواية أخرى:  
لأعصبنكم عصب السلمة]

(I will bind you together like bundles of branches of a thorn tree, and I will beat you the way newly acquired camels are disciplined [that is, at the water holes])

### Enani's Translation of Apothegms

How to explore the way in which apothegms are translated, or even if it is advisable for them to be translated in the first place, one should be reasonably certain about the difference between two cases. In the first case, a writer seeks to "ornament his speech with other men's jewels" (see Robertson Davies above). In the second, a writer creates, in the usual course of their writing, outstanding "segments of speech" of whatever category (as linguists point out) which are so perceptive, original and pithy that they easily stick in one's mind.

Writers in the second case are divided into two types. If a dramatist or a novelist, the writer may have many characters, some of whom may be capable of producing the memorable quips which are thought to be pearls of wisdom, or unparalleled expressions of universal truths. If a

poet, the writer should supply the image-based apothegmatic lines expected.

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies  
(Lord Byron)

تسير في جمال مثل ليلة  
غاب الغمام عن أجوائها  
ولاحت النجوم في سمائها

In Enani's drafts, there are two deleted alternatives for some words, such as *تسير في جمالها* and *تسير في ركب الجمال*. Also crossed out is *صفت سماؤها*. When asked, he said he only wanted to contrast Byron's lines with Ibrahim Nagi's:

أين من عيني حبيب ساحر فيه عز وجلال وحياء  
وائق الخطوة يمشي ملكا ظالم الحسن شجي الكبرياء

Could I but see my charming girl,  
So haughty, lofty and beautiful;  
She walks in confidence like an angel,  
With enchanting pride and beauty so cruel.

While Byron's lines deal with a universal theme, and the objects used in the simile are common and concrete, nothing in them suggests any borrowing or, according to Enani's note, a deliberate attempt at being aphoristic. Not so Nagi's lines. There is a plethora of abstractions, as in the other romantic Arabic poets of the Apollo school of the 1930s, to which he belonged. While formally liberating their verse from the classical tradition, they still envied Ahmad Shawqi for his ability to create apothegms, either short enough to be living quips, or long enough to pass for epigrams. Shawqi has invented aphorisms which have survived into our present time. A monostich like "a difference of opinion does not ruin friendship" *اختلاف الرأي لا يفسد للود قضية* occurs in his play *Majnoun Leila*, translated by Jeanette Attiya as

*Qais and Leila* (GEBO, 1990 and 2015). Another one from his play *The Death of Cleopatra*, also translated by Attiya (2015), is "Parrot-like, the people have their minds in their ears." يا له من بيغاء عقله في أذنيه." In the same play, Cleopatra welcomes death by poison, saying, "some poisons are the antidote of others: One incurable illness may be the cure of another"

وبعض السمّ ترياق لبعض وقد يشفي العضال من العضال

This is similar to Shakespeare's

...Diseases desperate grown  
By desperate appliance are relieved  
Or not at all.  
(*Hamlet*, IV. Iii. 10-11)

Enani's translation is

إن يبلغ العليل حد اليأس حقًا  
عليه أن يلقي علاج اليائسين  
أو لن يكون له شفاء  
(ص ٢٥٦ هاملت عناني ٢٠٠٤)

Enani could have used Shawqi's words in translating the Shakespearean lines, which he often does, but he apparently wanted to keep the word 'desperate' in use, so as to remind the reader of the famous "Desperate times call for desperate measures". This is an aphorism which is impossible to translate into Arabic, unless one uses Shawqi's distich, quoted above. As the aphorism has a medical implication, someone has suggested that Hippocrates, the Greek scientist, was its originator. This, however, has not been confirmed. The quip deals more frequently today with desperate economic measures, as the times are indeed economically desperate.

## Some Explanations

How Enani translates quips or apothegms in Shakespeare is part of the general issue of cultural adaptation, insofar as this question comprises (1) modern research into the purpose of translation (Skopos

theory) and (2) a specific exploration of using aphoristic structures in a literary work. A study of aphorisms in translation may require an initial recognition of such 'segments of speech' in the source language, which is a critical and interpretative task. Some are easily recognized in ordinary people's writing, such as the use of Qur'anic verses in Arabic literature, especially in verse, and the use of famous Shakespearean quips in English essays, especially in press stories and articles. Sound-bites have been shown to include such aphorisms. Sound bites, the brief statements made by eminent figures in radio or press interviews, have even occasionally been turned into quotable maxims.

Following the 1967 victory of Israel over some Arab armies, Abba Eban, on his way to Israel to become foreign minister, was asked by a BBC broadcaster about his view of the situation, and he quickly said "magnanimity in victory." No Arabic translation has so far been acceptable. Harry Levin's article in the London *Times*, soon after the war, was "Will the Jew Be Merciful", a pungent Shakespeare-inspired sentential, never translated into Arabic. As the language of the press (or current affairs language) began to include quotations for major writers, at random, learned classicists such as F. R. Lucas gave a series of lectures to students of English at Cambridge University on good prose and how to use aphorisms properly. The lectures were collected in a book later published entitled *Style* (1955). It was preceded by *Plain Words* by Sir Ernest Gowers in 1948, followed by an enlarged edition, containing another book, and entitled *The Complete Plain Words* (1955). Enani, who possesses both versions, says that they constitute a complement to Henry W. Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 1926 (reprinted in 1965) which is where one should look for the earliest argument about using apothegms in writing. The problem of 'Usage and Abuse' (the title of Eric Partridge's book on the use of good English, 1947) arose in post-WWI years, and in Enani's view it applies to Arabic as well.

Logically approached, translated apothegms may hope to produce the same impression in the source language, if these are properly used. When the idea is general, or universal, corresponding versions will be found in both languages. This is, however, difficult if the translator's capacities in both languages are not equal. This discrepancy is what Enani calls "lexical limitation" in his *On Translating Arabic*, 2000, and

such a deficiency in one language, even one's own, may explain the rampant misuse by semi-literate writers of apothegms. It is what Henry W. Fowler laments in his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, (1963, p. 498) referred to above. Writing about "literary or decorative" quotations, he says that a writer expresses themselves in words that have been used before because they give

his meaning better than he can give it himself, or because they are beautiful or witty, or because he expects them to touch a chord of association in his reader, or because he wishes to show that he is learned or well read. Quotations due to the last motive are invariably ill advised; the discerning reader detects it & is contemptuous; the undiscerning is perhaps impressed, but even then is at the same time repelled, pretentious quotations being the surest road to tedium.

As Question (1) above, namely the purpose of translation or Skopos theory is fully explored elsewhere, one may focus on the use of aphorisms in a work of art, especially in Shakespeare's drama. To establish the function and the nature of apothegms in a Shakespearean text, focus has been put, for reasons of space, on the lines – single lines or a group of lines – most quoted by other writers from *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's longest and arguably richest play. It naturally includes the most quoted lines by other poets, dramatists and prose writers. One has to be grateful to these editors (of the old Signet series) for including the aphorisms or epigrams quoted elsewhere. Dictionaries of quotations and Shakespearean language, including glossaries, include most image-based quips. The *New Penguin Dictionary of Quotations*, edited by Robert Andrews, 2006, seems to be the most comprehensive (1,369 pages). Of the 160 quotations given from *Hamlet*, the hundred most challenging to the translator and representing the variety of Shakespearean apothegms have been picked. Enani has helped by stating his method of handling, in the introductions to his translations he says that when reading Shakespeare, he is sometimes reminded of a



word or a phrase borrowed by another poet or writer. Reading Horatio's description of the ghost (of Hamlet's father):

And then it started like a guilty thing  
Upon a fearful summons  
(I.il 149-150)

he was reminded of Wordsworth's

High instincts, before which our mortal nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised  
(The Immortality Ode)

Hence the translation:

ثم انطلق بفرع مثل المذنب إذ يطلبه من يخشاه

This has meant that the translator of apothegms should stick to their wording, as they, more than other linguistic structures, are cultural mediators. If a translator resorts to cultural adaptation, the power of the source quip will lose part of its immediacy. When Francisco says "not a mouse stirring" (I.i.10) it is rendered لم يتحرك من مكمه فأر. When Horatio says "This bode some strange eruption to our state" (I.i.69) it is rendered:

هذا نذير بانفصام ذي غرابة في صلب دولتنا

As this is the meaning of 'eruption' here, the translator has to adhere to illocution, without doing injustice to locution. When Marcellus says, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I:iv.90) the temptation to say فساد/يفسد فاسد is irresistible. The fact is that the Arabic verb فسد/يفسد can mean 'to rot', and the physical meaning (thought to be the original) is to decompose, as one says this apple is 'rotten to the core'. As it happens, the figurative sense of the English word has superseded the physical one and, if applied to humans, should mean immoral or corrupt.

If a state suffers from *corruption*, as a translation of فساد the *modern meaning* is that of breaking the ethical codes of work, especially for the government. It can refer to any behavior described as ‘bad’, to dishonesty, cheating and the like, especially sowing one’s wild oats. However, in the Qur’an, the verb and cognates are used scores of times to indicate the opposite of righteous work and piety. It is allied phonetically with *fisq* فسق and most commentators and exegetes interpret one in terms of the other (cf. verse 41 of *Surat al-Roum* and verse 15 of *Surat al-Israa*’). As the rottenness in the state of Denmark is unspecified, the physical sense of the term should be kept alive. The job of the translator of the adage is not to convey the allegedly intended meaning but the cluster of meanings included in the adjective عفن (rotten). The Arabic formula should reflect the pithy structure and semantic vagueness of the source text.

في دولة الدنمرك شيء عفن

This does not mean that when a common quotation acquires the power of an aphorism, owing to its complex imagery, the translator may deal illocutionarily with it. On the contrary, most translators tend to convey the rich metrical lines in equally metrical lines:

The morn in russet mantle clad  
Walks o’er the dew of yon high eastward hill  
I/i/167-8

ها هو ذا صبح اليوم يسير على  
أنداء التل الشرقي العالي، متشحاً بوشاح وردي.

In structure, as shown above, a Shakespearean quotation may be an epigram. Used apothegmatically, the Shakespearean lines are sometimes adapted to the new context. In Michael Dobbs’ *House of Cards* (1989), one feels the presence of Shakespeare’s themes, both in the plot which echoes parts of *Macbeth* and in language which is

enriched by quotations from *Hamlet*. At one point, the protagonist Francis Urquhart quotes Hamlet as saying

What is a man  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Is but to sleep and feed. A beast no more  
A beast that wants discourse of reason.

However, the first three lines in this passage occur in IV.iv.33-35 and the last line occurs at I.ii.50. In Enani's translation, each part of the passage is kept in its original place. In fact, Enani does not object to such adaptation as the idea of human discourse occurs in the rest of Hamlet's later speech:

Sure He that made us with such large discourse  
Looking before and after, gave us not  
That capability and godlike reason  
To fust in us unused.  
IV.iv.34-39

The equation of 'large discourse' with 'reason' points to the essential human quality, which is speech. It is an *equation* of both terms with *logos* (λόγος), the Greek word which, the dictionary will tell you, means word, thought, principle of speech. In simplified handling it may refer to those things pertaining to *men*, and to the divine intelligence immanent in the universe. In the penultimate line of the passage cited above, the last qualification of reason as *godlike* joins both human and divine intelligence meant by the Greek word which gives us *logic* المنطق. The Arabic word equally combines *speech*, as in the Qur'an, with the *intelligence* behind speech. The use of the Arabic word in conveying the meaning in both Shakespearean quotations is therefore apt and proper.

An idea from a later play, say *Antony and Cleopatra*, may have reappeared in a different form, and the change is instructive. In *Hamlet*,

1600, the prince describes his mother's love for his father in a remarkable image, often quoted apothegmatically. It says the more his mother was satisfied by his love, the more she wanted satisfaction.

Why, she would hang on him  
As if increase of appetite had grown  
By what it fed on  
(*Hamlet*, I.ii.142-5)

Enani's translation is:

لشد ما تعلقت به كأن عذبَ منهلَهُ  
يُطغِي لهيبَ غلَّةٍ لا تنطفئُ

The phraseology is based on Ahmad Shawqi's image in *Majnoun Leila* which says

إذا طاف قلبي حولها جنَّ شوقُهُ  
إذ لم يُطغِي الغلَّةَ المنهلُ العذبُ

In *Antony and Cleopatra*:

Other women cloy  
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry  
Where most she satisfies.  
(II.ii. 240-2)

إن سواها يُنخَمَنَ شهيةً من يُشبعنهُ  
أما من تطعمه فيجوع إذا زاد الشبع عن الحد.

In translating Hamlet's image, Enani obviously breaks his own rule of refraining from cultural adaptation. He substitutes an image of thirst

and water for the one of hunger and food. He is more faithful to the source image in rendering the lines from *Antony and Cleopatra*, however, he says, they lived with him since his teenage years. A typical example of cultural adaptation at which Enani will not scowl is the change from what Wilson Knight calls "bare" style to a target-oriented phraseology. This is what Hamlet says, in response to Rosencrantz's denial that Denmark is a prison:

Rosencrantz: We think not so, my lord.

Hamlet: Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.

II.ii. 243-9

Enani's published translation reads:

روزنكرانتس: لا نرى ذلك يا مولاي.  
هاملت: إذن ليست كذلك في نظركما! فالحسن ما نراه حسنًا، والسوء ما نراه سيئًا!  
أما أنا فإنني أراها سجنًا!

As the long conversation between Hamlet and his guests, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, is in prose, the Arabic wording had to be as 'bare' as the English. In Enani's drafts, one will find try-out lines especially translating the aphoristic statement. A point may be made of copying them as they represent the way in which a translator known for his devotion to Arabic literary traditions can reject a typically Arabic traditional mold in preference for the simple, bare MSA version. The main alternative version, in verse, is

فما الخير إلا ما توسمته خيرًا      وما الشر إلا ما بدا لك شرًا

This imitates the old adage

فما الخوف إلا ما تخوفه الفتى      وما الأمن إلا ما رآه الفتى آمنًا

Any other version, in prose or verse, using the Arabic word 'thinking' or 'thought' is outright rejected as beginner's drivel, to use a

slang term. As for translating good and bad as الخير والشر, Enani has had a great deal to say in their defense, although he does not use them in this particular instance.

### Concluding Remarks

A funny quip from the talkative Prime Minister, Polonius, may encapsulate some aspects of apothegms. Having stressed that "brevity is the soul of wit", he says

I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.  
 Mad call I it. For to define true madness  
 What is't but to be nothing else but mad?  
 (II.ii.92-4)

This tautology is what we call in Arabic تعريف الماء بالماء. An absurd line of Arabic verse shows how tautology can be so ludicrous as to pass for a joke:

كأننا والماء من حولنا      قوم جلوس حولهم ماء

Because of his vast knowledge of the Arabic tradition, Enani has many options in rendering Shakespeare's apothegms in *Hamlet* into Arabic, as aptly and deftly as could be. A glance at the translator's *habitus* reveals a solid background in the Qur'an and the classical Arabic tradition. Mindful of the *skopos* of the translation, and well-equipped with knowledge of English literature, Enani has no problem finding a relevant equivalent in each case, especially when the apothegm seems to express a universal meaning. He has no problem adapting the text to its new audience, either. His tendency to translate verse into verse is also remarkable here.

### Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to Professor M. Enani for the many hours he gave me in face-to-face as well as telephone conversations, for giving me access to his valuable drafts of the translation of *Hamlet* and other texts and for the valuable comments he made on my manuscript.



## References

- Andrews, R.** (2006). (ed.) *The New Penguin Dictionary of Quotations*. London: Penguin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2010). *The Works of Virgil, Englished*. Gale: ECCO.
- Davies, R..** (1975). *The World of Wonders*. Canada: Macmillan.
- Dobbs, M.** (1989). *House of Cards*. London: Harper Collins.
- Enani, M. M.** (2000). *On Translating Arabic*. Cairo: GEBO.
- Fowler, H. W.** (1963). *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gowers, E.** (1948). *Plain Words*. London: Penguin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1954). *The Complete Plain Words*. London: Penguin.
- Hussein, T.** (2021). *Marginalia on the Prophet's Biography*. Trans. Muhammad Enani. Cairo: Cairo University Press.
- Koller, W.** (1995). The concept of equivalence and the object of translation studies. *Target*, 7(2), 191-222.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1979/2004) *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*, Heidelberg & Wiesbaden: Quelle und Meyer.
- Lucas, F. R.** (1955). *Style*. London: Cassell & Company.
- Muttar, Yasir A.** (2006). Idiomatic uses of prepositions in Arabic with special reference to translating the Holy Quran. *Anbar University Journal* 1, 1-20.
- Paltridge, E.** (1997). *Usage and Abusage: A Guide to Good English*. New York: W.W. Norton, Inc.
- Searle, J. R.** (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shakespeare, W.** (2004). *Hamlet – Prince of Denmark*. (M. M. Enani Trans.). Cairo: GEBO.
- Shawki, A.** (1995). *Majnoun Leila*. (Jeanette Attiya Trans.). Cairo: GEBO.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2015). *The Death of Cleopatra*. (Jeanette Attiya Trans.). Cairo: GEBO.