

# THE UNTRANSLATABILITY OF SHAKESPEARE'S POETRY ON LOVE

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Translating Shakespeare's poetry has been one of the most arduous questions that has pained many translators, researchers and academics worldwide. As this poetry involves many rhetorical devices, alternating between the use of keen imagery and intertextuality, it not only lends itself to ambiguity but also to untranslatability; moreover, the use of figures of speech such as similes, synecdoche and metaphors accord this poetry a discursive power that does not recede despite the evolution of the English language and the death of the poet many centuries ago. And while this poetry addresses a whole galaxy of themes, it projects Shakespeare himself as a cosmopolitan figure not limited to time or even space. The present study seeks to assess and evaluate the translation solutions given as concerns Shakespeare's poetry on the theme of "love". To achieve this aim, I suggest employing a contrastive analysis between the English and Arabic poetic text, with a view to exploring whether or not the core of this poetry has been preserved. My assumption is that the stylistic aspects and aesthetic properties of the original poetic text are lost due to the intentional or unintentional intervention of the translator.

## INTRODUCTION

The translation of poetry has always evoked different reactions from scholars and specialists of the field. Its impossibility and difficulty have been stressed by Allen Tate (1899–1979), who once claimed that "translation is forever impossible and forever necessary" (Humphries 1999, 59). While some critics might argue that poetry – just like the Bible or the Koran – is untranslatable, others believe that it is possible or inevitable. Apologists of this latter claim hold that a poet should translate a poet because he or she is endowed with plenty of skills, sensitivity, and the same artistic spirit as the creator of the poetic text – the poet. This view not only reiterates that "poetry is the hardest to translate and [that] poetry translation, therefore, should be left to poets" (Sin-wai, Wong 2013), but it also explains why some great poets like Dante (1265–1321), Shakespeare (1564–1616),

Goethe (1749–1832), Rumi (1207–1273), Tagore (1861–1941), who have impressed readers profoundly and managed to create a literary ethos, have not remained confined to their own cultures and language communities; instead, they crossed all literary and poetic borders thanks to translation as a literary, cultural and civilizational practice. Within the Elizabethan age, Shakespeare, for instance, would have virtually remained unknown had he not been translated into other languages like Arabic, French, Urdu, Dutch, etc.

In the present article, I endeavour is to explore the translation solutions and choices offered for Shakespeare's poetry addressing the theme of love as introduced by Ibrahim (2012). The latter's translation has been chosen since it has not only been eclectic in terms of the expressions allotted to love, but it has also never been studied before; accordingly, the author will examine the stylistic and aesthetic dimension of this poetry as regards metaphors and similes by contrasting the Arabic poetic text with the English original. Central to this framework of analysis are the different forms, thematizations and representations that the theme of love takes in Shakespeare's poetry, or, more precisely, his sonnets.

To achieve this aforementioned goal, I deploy the Contrastive Analysis Method (and henceforth, CAM). Baker (2001) assumes that CAM is "a linguistic study of two languages, aiming at identifying differences between them in general or in selected areas." Within the field of translation studies, CAM "would entail comparing any two texts with regard to textually and linguistically related aspects" (Mushayabasa 2015, 13). The analysis of the points of divergence and convergence relating to the two languages are then often made. In a similar vein, Leonardi (2007) claims that the relationship between Contrastive Analysis (CA) and translation is bidirectional. On the one hand, the translation of specific pieces of text may provide the data for CA. On the other, CA may provide explanations of difficulties encountered in translation. The following problematic queries are fully addressed and researched in this paper:

- 1) Is Shakespeare's poetry on "love" translatable into Arabic or not?
- 2) How are metaphors and similes rendered in the Arabic poetic text?
- 3) To what extent are the translation solutions and choices in conformity with the original one?
- 4) Is Shakespeare's poetry outside English still poetry?

Before answering these respective questions and innumerable others, it seems vitally important to provide the background of the study and the methodology used.

## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study departs from the view that claims that “poetry is untranslatable: it cannot be paraphrased in ordinary language and remain poetry” (Hamilton 1983, 149). Because it involves symbolic imagery, ambiguity and metaphors, poetry is arguably the most daunting literary genre to translate. The Shakespearean sonnets, which know no boundaries, are prone to give birth to “feelings of taste, touch and smell” (Sartre 1988, 49). This implies that Shakespeare, almost like any other well-established poet of the time, is keen on selecting words echoing feelings, thoughts and perceptions of things and people around him; in fact, several critics (e.g. Bassnett 1980; Kennedy 2004; Green 2010; Hasegawa 2012) have claimed that Shakespeare's sonnets are impossible to define, label or even delimit owing to their rhetorical, stylistic and aesthetical power.

Though various schools of literary theory have introduced multiple answers to the question, ‘What is poetry?’ There is little agreement on its definition. Robert Frost (1874–1963) was probably aware of the great risk in daring to translate poetry. He once declared that “poetry is what gets lost in translation” (Wechsler 1998, 51). What he has meant was that poetry, although constructed in language, cannot be transposed across languages. Following the same frame of mind, Blakesley (2014, 82) holds that “poetry is individual and inimitable to such a degree that it is untranslatable”; likewise, Elsom (1989) contends that Shakespeare's poetry does not translate. How can the musical softness of a line such as ‘How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank’ be translated into French – or into any other language – in which the ‘sweet, sleep’ assonance is lost and where the long-drawn-out sounds do not exist?

In the introduction to his collection of essays on *Shakespeare in Translation*, Kennedy (2004, 22) wrote the following:

“Everyone knows that a good and faithful translation of Shakespeare's text into another language is an impossibility. Vocabulary, syntax, word-order, idiom, phrasing, pointing, texture, weight, rhythm, tempo have no exact counterparts in other languages. Changes in those who speak the text must be also reckoned with: class, dialect, mentality, tradition, individual histories will all be unfamiliar in foreign Shakespeare. While the translation of prose raises multiple problems, that of verse compounds the difficulties; any change in sound, nuance, resonance is the more shattering for its disturbance of the finely tuned music of the original. At best only approximations can be assembled or an alternative poetry substituted.”

However, the literature abounds with a huge reservoir of attempts to translate Shakespeare's poetry, the most prominent of which is the 748-page critical anthology with a title that harks back to the 69-page quarto of 1609: *William Shakespeare's Sonnets*

*for the First Time Globally Reprinted: A Quartercentenary Anthology with a DVD*. This posthumous anthology of Shakespeare's poetry included samples of the sonnets translated, performed, or parodied in more than seventy languages and dialects (Burnett et al 2011, 72). Some years ago, Abdel-Hafez (2014) embarked on the rendering of metaphors into Arabic as used by Shakespeare in his sonnets. He has compared two dissimilar translations: one by Tawfeeq and the other by Ibrahim Jabra (1919–1994), with the aim of identifying their frequencies and the procedures utilized in their translations. Inaccuracies and poetic infelicities have often been overlooked throughout.

Although Shakespeare's sonnets have been translated into several languages other than English for over 407 years – first in Europe and later further afield – there has long been a sense that the core of his sonnets was lost in translation. Barnstorff (1862, 157) believes that Shakespeare's sonnets are somehow identical to his dramas. In this respect, he argues that, their "inmost depths and beauties cannot be perceived and appreciated but by a spirit, wholly, or at any rate in some degree, equal to Shakespeare's." Hoenselaars (2012, x) admits that "the translation of Shakespeare is an art in itself." This projects Shakespeare as a text of multi-layered meanings, which while it opens to different readings and interpretations, it "makes nonsense of the notion of a homogenized, authenticated Shakespeare in British England" (Burnett et al 2011, 72).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology that I use to explore the accuracy of the translational solutions and choices given by Ibrahim (2012) for Shakespeare's poetry finds its culmination in CAM, which is occasionally "bound to resort to ideas of translation equivalence in the testing of its hypotheses, at least at the syntactic and semantic levels" (Palumbo 2009, 25). CAM can help us focus more specifically on the differences in grammatical structures between one language and another (Leonardi 2007, 66). This research method enables the author to go into a more detailed analysis through which he can compare the grammatical structures and lexical items of both texts chosen for this inquiry. The special quality of this analytical instrument is that it reveals and unveils how the same thing can be said in different languages, and it stresses the importance of analyzing the translated product from a more grammatical perspective. Nevertheless, certain factors ought to be considered when comparing or contrasting two languages in terms of translation. Particular attention should be accorded to languages that are not closely related, such as English and Arabic. I meanwhile, dwell on Newmark's (1981) seven strategies or procedures of translation:

- (1) reproducing the same image in the TL;
- (2) replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image;

- (3) translation of metaphor by simile; retaining the image;
- (4) translation of metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense;
- (5) conversion of metaphor to sense;
- (6) deletion; and
- (7) same metaphor combined with sense (see also Schaffner, Wiesmann 2001, 43).

Initially, I have both examined and counted Shakespeare's poems in Ibrahim (2012); I have found 152 poems, most of which refer to love, the object of this empirical analysis. Strikingly, this reference takes place at the beginning, the middle, and sometimes the end of the poems. Even more, the word love sometimes is written with an upper case letter and sometimes with a lower case one in the ST; indeed, all of the poems are sonnets (they contain 14 lines) and rhymed in a particular pattern (ABAB-CD-CD-EFEF-GG). They are written as one bloc with the figure of Shakespeare placed at the top of the page and some exotic shapes at the bottom. With respect to the Arabic version of the poems, it is divided by two little squares, and it is framed as quatrains. What is more, they are enumerated and devoid of those exotic shapes already mentioned. The same figure of Shakespeare also seems to be positioned above the Arabic version of the poems.

After a careful and attentive reading of the sonnets in question, I have tried to cut the sonnets into pieces, highlight the use of metaphors and similes in both texts: the English and the Arabic. It has been argued that metaphors are a primary device in Shakespeare's poetry. Along with similes, metaphors prove to be the most reliable technique for provoking thought and feelings in the reader. Other tropes and rhetorical devices such as personification, intertextuality, and polysemy will be highlighted as the analysis unfolds. The next subsection provides an evaluative analysis and an insight into the translated Shakespearean sonnets on love as done by Ibrahim (2012).

### 3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

When approaching Shakespeare's sonnets on love, one is more likely to find that these sonnets address serious issues and deep concerns about life, such as honesty, faith, betrayal, cruelty, to mention but a handful. Love is decidedly the most eye-catching theme that recurs throughout the collection of the translated sonnets in Ibrahim (2012); it appears in different manifestations and multi-faceted images. A wide range of terminologies are, consequently, deployed and employed by Shakespeare to designate and refer to this love: it is "silent love" (72); "self-love" (36); "ruined love" (268); "eternal love" (246); "new love" (334); "dear love" (274 and 332); "dearest love" (264); "cunning love" (326); "your

love” (258); and it is also “my love” (246). Such appellations demonstrate that “love”, as a concept, not only bewilders Shakespeare, but it also intrigues him, and it transforms his whole being as regards a number of issues at other times.

In almost all of the sonnets selected for this analysis, Shakespeare has presented love in its broader perspectives and with divergent facets. Blades (2007, 20) assumes that Shakespeare’s sonnets “treat of a great range and complexity of loves and perspectives on love.” This love sentiment, according to certain critics, is shared by both the “Fair Youth” and “The Dark Lady.” Starker (1998) notes that “the Fair Youth and the dark Lady are the two persons to whom Shakespeare addresses his Sonnets, the first and the central theme of the 154 Sonnets is Love.” In its broader sense, love is meant to be between a man and a woman, yet Shakespeare’s love for the “Fair Youth” could be seen as a novelty, an invention, or say, a sort of creation meant to fulfill certain emotional or spiritual gains. It is not driven by homosexual impulses, but it is purely Platonic and common in antique civilizations (Starker 1998, 72).

In ancient Greece, it was believed that pure love or friendship is possible only between two persons of the same sex, where there is no desire for non-spiritual gains. Thus, it is believed that such love existed between Socrates (c.470-399 B.C.) and his disciple, Plato (428/27 – c. 347 BC). It is almost the same love that bewildered and unified Rumi with his close friend, Shams e-Tabrizi (1185–1248). Shakespeare has experienced such a love in the “Fair Youth” Sonnets (1–126), and thereby widened the scope of love for his readers. The latter is more likely to find a disarrangement of ups and downs, happiness and madness, love and hate, acceptance and decline in most of the sonnets. While his relation with the “Fair Youth” is a spiritual attachment, Shakespeare’s relation with the “Dark Lady” in the later sonnets (127–152) is both mental and physical. By this, Shakespeare has shown the reader both facets of love: the spiritual and the sensual. The sonnets on the “Dark Lady” are stark examples of this sensual love. Consider the following verses that appeared in sonnet 130:

1)  
*My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun*  
*Coral is far more red than her lips red:*  
*If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun*  
*If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head*  
*I have seen roses damasked, red and white,*  
*But no such roses see I in her cheeks;*  
*And in some perfumes is there more delight*  
*Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks. (290)*

When examining the previous lines, one notes that the poet is physically attracted to and baffled by the "Dark Lady's" corporeal traits, which are less appealing, yet he reveals that he loves her more than anything else. He is sensitive to the pervasiveness of metaphors as he brings other elements from the material world to approach his mistress' beauty and ugliness at the same time. Her eyes cannot be compared to the sun, nor could her cheeks be likened to roses. While her lips take after "coral" in their reddishness, her hair seems to be stringy and wiry. The reader feels that the poet is mouthing a straightforward satire against his mistress' deficiencies because of love. The image of the eyes and the sun are explicitly rendered in the Arabic version of the sonnet, which does not preserve the syntactic structure of the original, nor does it keep the order of certain words and expressions: "But no such roses see I in her cheeks/ خديها/ الورود في خديها/ لكننى لا أرى مثل تلك الورود في خديها؛ And in some perfumes is there more delight/ وفي بعض العطور رائحة أكثر إمتاعا". This tendency to reverse the subject and change the order of words is inherent in and integral to Shakespeare's sonnets; this could be interpreted as a rebellion against the stylistic conventions and norms of the English language – a sort of linguistic deviation – to sound more emotive and passionate when it comes to love. The translation solution is absolutely inadequate in that it does not echo the wondering, displacement, and profound reflection of the speaker over his mistress' beauty. Consider the translated Arabic version, which is absolutely unfaithful to and less harmonious with the original:

2)

عينا معشوقتي لا تشبهان الشمس؛  
المرجان أشد احمرارا من شفقيها؛  
إذا كان الثلج أبيض؛ فلماذا نهدها داكنان؛  
لو كان الشعر سلكا، فعلى رأسها تنمو أسلاك سوداء،  
لقد رأيت ورودا امتزج فيها اللون الأحمر بالأبيض،  
لكننى لا أرى مثل تلك الورود في خديها؛  
وفي بعض العطور رائحة أكثر إمتاعا

من الأنفاس التي تفوح من معشوقتي (291)

The image of the eyes is still evoked in another sonnet, whose verses tell of the derogatory connotation of the black colour that is incompatible with beauty as far as the speaker is concerned:

3)

*Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,  
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.  
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,  
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem. (284)*

When probing into the dictions used in the sonnet, the author realizes that they are semantically charged, carefully chosen, and sometimes obscured. This is not the case for the Arabic equivalent that reduces the weight that words carry. The words “sweet”, “profaned”, “disgrace”, “raven” are highly selected by Shakespeare to express the speaker’s sorrow and discomfort with the beauty of the “Dark Lady.” This could be noted in the Arabic lines below:

4)

لم يعد للجمال العذب اسم، ولا مقياس مقدس،  
بل أصبح مُهْمَلًا، فضلا عن الاستهجان الذي هبط إليه  
لهذا فإن حواجب معشوقتي فاحمة السواد،  
وكذلك عينيها شديدي السواد، كأنهما في رداء الحزن (285)

It has been claimed that comparisons play multiple functions in poetry; they are introduced for numerous reasons and purposes: illustration, amplification, and variety (Lowth 1825, 121). Shakespeare not only creates variety in the sonnets through comparisons and analogies, but he also attempts to simplify a little the images he constructed in his mind about love to the reader. The repetitions used in the English sonnet seem to be absent from the Arabic one. The words “red” and “wires”, for example, have been foregrounded to trigger a psychological effect in the reader, yet the Arabic lines do not give any due attention to such foregrounding. In sonnet 127 and even 152, Shakespeare depicts the “Dark Lady” in a debased manner, and he even alludes to the reasons why she is dark. She is untrustworthy, cunning, and deceitful because she did not seem to reciprocate his noble sensations of love, but he still finds great solace and refuge in her love. The following lines, which featured in sonnet 152, are a good instance of this demeaning portrayal of the “Dark Lady”:

5)

*In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,  
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;  
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,  
In vowing new hate after new love bearing.* (334)

When considering the Arabic version of the verses above, it becomes clear that the translator is foregrounding knowledge and backgrounding love; moreover, there is a reference to the institution of marriage which the original version of the sonnet did not refer to, albeit terms like “act”, “bed”, and “vow” might yield such interpretation. The translator seems to force love to its extreme, yet the poet stresses that any new love with this “Dark

Lady” is doomed to fail as it can beget just a new hate. In compliance with Newmark (1981) and Schaffner and Wiesemann (2001, 43), I infer that the translator is replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image (the image of marriage as a case in point). As already mentioned, the reference to marriage is made explicit in the Arabic lines:

6)

تعرفين أنني من أهلك خنت عهود زواجي  
أما أنت فخاننة مرتين، إذ تقسمين بحبك لي؛  
فأنت تنكثين بعهد زواجك، كما تمزقين عهدك الجديد بالاخلاص  
عندما تؤكدين كرهك لي بعد اندفاعنا للحب من جديد (335)

The speaker's love for the “Dark Lady” is mature enough on account of the fact that he is so conscious of its risks and shortcomings. It is a love that brings him up and down in many situations. Here, below, he is qualifying it as a “dear love” that is indifferent and inattentive to the gossip of the layman:

7)

*No want of conscience hold it that I call  
Her love, for whose dear love I rise and fall (332)*

When approaching the Arabic version, the translator appears to be somewhat intruding on the original, with a view to accommodating it to Arabic culture. At first, he is prudent in his use of the term “حبيبتى”, which was placed between inverted commas; in addition, he is strongly implicating the readers, negotiating meaning with them, and most significantly, challenging their conscience. Nuttal (1989) sets forth that “the translator (...) selects from the receiving language equivalents *which shall be wholly natural to the receiving language* (italics are in Nuttal, 1989). Consider the Arabic version of the already cited verses that directly pointed to the poet's mistress:

8)

لا تعتبروني لست واعيا بما فيه الكفاية حين أدعوها “حبيبتى”  
تلك التي في حبها الغالى أسقط (333)

In another instance, the translator resorts to addition (e.g., أيتها الحبيبة) and modification of punctuation marks (e.g., the exclamation mark) as translational strategies to elucidate and disambiguate meaning, but he ends up violating and spoiling both the aesthetics and the stylistics of the sonnets. The following verses taken from sonnet 149 prove that even the use of archaic terms (e.g., *doth, thy, thine, thou, lov'st*, and so on) and complex poetic structures pose considerable challenges for the translator, a fact which is tacit in the next lines:

9)

*When all my best doth worship thy defect,  
Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?  
But, love, hate on, for now I know thy mind,  
Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind. (328)*

Because Shakespeare's sonnets were composed more than four hundred years ago, they inevitably espouse certain words and terms that are unfamiliar today. These obsolete words have fallen out of use, and they unequivocally lack equivalency in Arabic. The lines of the Arabic version do not convey at all the stylistic sophistication and complexity of the original:

10)

بينما أفضل ما عندي يقدر نقائصك  
مسيرا بالإشارة التي تصدر من عينيك؟  
واصل، أيتها الحبيبة، كرهك لي، لأنى أعرف الآن أفكارك  
أنت تحبين أولئك الذين يستطيعون الرؤية، وأنا رجل أعمى (329)

In fact, the translator looks trapped if not misled by certain polysemic words like "worship", "defect", "mind", created by what can be called *a trompe l'oeil*, a stylistic strategy permeating almost all of the sonnets as the poet, very often, draws on metaphorical and figurative language to obscure and eclipse meanings. The translator's visibility is noted in interpreting these words according to his proper view of the affair of love and the issue of women. He has not only modified the grammatical forms of certain nouns such as "defect" and "mind", both of which occurred as singular nouns, but he has also taken meaning in another direction in the last line: "Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind/ أنت تحبين أولئك الذين يستطيعون الرؤية، وأنا رجل أعمى". This verse suggests that the love of the poet has exceeded all the love of the onlookers because he is portraying himself as a blind man who has managed to triumph over them in delimiting the reality of the "Dark Lady" with the eye of the heart. This image of the blind man is called up in sonnet 148, alongside personification as another stylistic choice to poeticize and romanticize the "cunning love" of the "Dark Lady":

11)

*No marvel then, though I mistake my view;  
The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears.  
O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me blind,  
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find. (326)*

These verses reveal that the poet, either implicitly or explicitly, denigrates his "Dark Lady", keeping his portrayal of her in the domain of caricature, but he also overtly and distinctly caricatures himself (Cousins, Howarth 2011, 129). The poet is in a real impasse, and he admits that he has wrongly perceived the "Dark Lady." Considering the Arabic version, the author finds that the translator has employed a passive construction in favor of an active one ("The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears / إلا بعدما تصفو السماء / فالشمس نفسها لا ترى جيذا إلا بعدما تصفو السماء") when transferring the image of the sun in the second line:

12)

فلا عجب إذن لو أخطأت فيما أرى  
فالشمس نفسها لا ترى جيذا إلا بعدما تصفو السماء  
أيها الحب الماكر، أبقيتني بالدمع في هذا العمى،  
كيلا ترى عيناى، إن صح النظر، أخطاءك الأثمة (327)

The personification of the sun in the ST has been lost in the TT. In complete congruity with Newmark (1981), it is suggested that the translator repeatedly converts metaphor to sense. The translator is even inattentive and heedless of the poet's strong resolution to find the defects of his mistress as expressed in the last line: "Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find / أخطاءك الأثمة، إن صح النظر، أخطاءك الأثمة". In sonnet 135, he matches his mistress to the immeasurable sea, and he delineates himself as imparting life as well as existence to her, yet he admits that he is "nothing" – a naught or zero in sonnet 136, the verses of which highlight the name "Will" of the poet, denoting willingness and daringness to become one with the "Dark Lady." This name is obviously excluded from the Arabic version, wherein the translator tends to recreate the ST and assign to it another signification. The verses below are an illustration of this perceptible fact:

13)

*Though in thy store's account I one must be;  
For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold:  
That nothing me, a something sweet to thee:  
Make but my name thy love, and love that still,  
And then thou lovest me for my name is 'Will'. (302)*

As stated elsewhere, the translator has resolved to interfere in ST by recreating it; he has probably "read the poet's mind" and (re)expressed his feelings more straightforwardly vis-à-vis the "Dark Lady." Let us view the lines of the Arabic version, which alludes to this physical love that the poet is advocating:

14)

رغم أنني في حسابك المختزن، لا بد أن أكون واحدا،  
 فلتعتبريني لاشيء لديك، ما دام يسعدك الإبقاء  
 على هذا الأنا اللاشئ، كشئ حبيب إليك  
 إتخذيني لك حبا، وحبيبا إلى الأبد،

عندئذ، سوف تحبينني، فأنا مطلب الجسد(303)

It is crystal clear that the Arabic version reproduces the image built in the original. Again, in line with Newmark (1981), the translator could resort to another procedure of translation in which he reproduces the same image in the TL (Schaffner, Wiesemann 2001, 43). The poet is cognizant of the innumerable tricks played and the lies spoken by his mistress, yet he maintains good intentions towards her (sonnet 138); he thus seems torn apart, scattered about by this crazy love for his mistress. In sonnet 144, for instance, he is chronicling two sorts of love: one of comfort and the other of despair. There is an inner fight in the poet's mind, embodied by the image of "the evil female", who is prone to seduce the poet and change his sainthood into devilry. This female is the source of trouble and despair for the poet; she is "coloured ill", has "foul pride", and is keen on seduction and temptation. The poet is using similes by comparing his "Two loves" to "two spirits." In the original, whereas the poet did not specify the gender of those "two loves", the translator has gendered them, given the polysemic and ambiguous dimension of love itself. Consider the line, "*Two loves I have of comfort and despair*", which should be contrasted with the line, "*لدي حبيبان أحدهما للتناول والآخر للباس*", in the verses that follow:

15)

*Two loves I have of comfort and despair  
 Which like two spirits do suggest me still:  
 The better angel is a man right fair,  
 The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.  
 To win me soon to hell, my female evil,  
 Tempteth my better angel from my side,  
 And would corrupt my saint to be a devil.  
 Wooing his purity with her foul pride. (318)*

The word "love" encompasses several facets. Durant and Fabb (1996) assume that "some possible meanings are [as follows]: (a) the act of loving, (b) the beloved person, (c) love personified as the god of love." Now examine the Arabic version, which has made another mistake in stereotyping and generalizing evil in all women:

16)

كأنهما شبحان يواصلان حتى على العمل:

وشبح سىء على هيئة امرأة بغیضة اللون.

(319) مغوية نقاء بحرارة شهوتها الكريهة

لدي حبيبان أحدهما للتناول والآخر للياس،

ملاك طيب في صورة إنسان جميل الطلعة،

تقوم الروح الأنثوية الشريرة، لكى تشدنى سريعا إلى الجحيم

فتغرى ملاكى الطيب وتجذبه بعيدا عنى،

لتفسده وتحوله إلى روح شريرة،

This generalization is expressly noted in the following line:

“تقوم الروح الأنثوية الشريرة، لكى تشدنى سريعا إلى الجحيم / The worser spirit a woman coloured ill/To win me soon to hell, my female evil.” The two metaphors of, “The better angel is a man right fair/ The worser spirit a woman coloured ill”, have been retained in the Arabic version of the sonnet; however, while the first was rendered in a broad sense (صورة إنسان جميل الطلعة), the second was defined and more specific because it is relative to women (وشبح سىء على هيئة امرأة بغیضة اللون). This proves, as Newmark (1981) has claimed, that the translator has not only combined the same metaphor with sense, but he has provided an explanation to ensure that the metaphor will be fully understood.

The love that the poet has expressed for the “Dark Lady” is doubtlessly different from the love that he has felt for the “Fair Youth”, who turned into an enigma in Shakespeare's sonnets. He is the “fair friend” (sonnet 104) and “an older friend” (sonnet 110) – older because of long friendship with the poet, and yet the poet has, perhaps deliberately kept his identity a deep mystery (Starker 1998, 84). In the sonnets 1–17, the poet seems to urge the “Fair Youth” to marry, to procreate, and thereby to increase the treasure of beauty (*ibid.*, 87). He is comparing the “Fair Youth” to a summer's day and concludes that his beauty is greater than that of a summer and even the sun.

It is evident that the essence of the sonnets has been ruined in translation because the image of summer for the English people is not the same image for the Arabs. For the latter, summer connotes heat, idleness, boredom, laziness, and fatigue; however, for the English people, summer might connote relaxation, beauty, recreation, and so on. Chan and Polland (2001) affirms that “summer's day” should be replaced by a cultural equivalent, say an “oasis” or a “palm tree”, when it is to be translated into the language of a country where summer is unpleasant. The verses that follow suit include this tendency of the poet to compare the “Fair Youth” to a summer's day:

17)

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all short a date: (66)*

It has been argued that Shakespeare has chosen summer as a beautiful aspect of nature in English culture with which to compare his addressee, the "Fair Youth." As this season carries many negative connotations for Arab readers<sup>1</sup>, it is the translator's duty to search for other symbols of beauty to compare the addressee to; for example, the gazelle, a beautiful kind deer in Arabia, the moon, and the Pleiades can fit this situation as these natural elements have an attractive appearance and the moon and Pleiades guide the traveler in the deep darkness of the Arabian night (Al-Azzam 2005, 65). In the next verses, the translator has clearly deviated from the original since he was providing a word-for-word equivalence, which reverses the pragmatic meaning as intended by the poet:

18)

هل أقرنك بيوم من أيام الصيف؟  
الرياح القاسية تعصف ببراعم مايو العزيزة،  
أنك أحب من ذلك وأكثر رقة.  
وليس في الصيف سوى فرصة وجيزة. (69)

Needless to say, the previous lines could not be semantically translated into a language spoken where summers are unpleasant. This occurs mainly because the readers should receive a vivid impression from the content of the verses and the beauty of summer in England; so the verses ought to open their appetite and train their imagination to better explore English culture. Another flaw of this translation resides in the fact that the translator repeatedly mistakes the addressee of certain sonnets for a woman. In sonnet 7, the poet has used the possessive adjective "his" almost seven times to refer to a male. By utilizing words expressing human features (e.g. youth), the readers might infer that the subject of the poem is a man and not a woman. Now contrast the following verses from the sonnet under question with the Arabic ones:

<sup>1</sup> For most Arabs, summer is the season in which things dry up faster. The heat is intense. Sometimes, it is deadly and lethal. People feel exhausted and lazy to work, while resources of water dwindle. It is also a time that coincides with vacation and repose.

19)

*Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,  
Attending on his golden pilgrimage:  
But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,  
Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day. (44)*

20)

بينما تُبدي نظرات البشر الفانين افتتاحها بجمالها،  
تتابعها بإخلاص في رحلتها القدسية الذهبية؛

ولكن عندما تصل عربتها متعبة إلى أعلى ذروة مسيرها،

تبدأ الخروج من دائرة النهار مثل الإنسان الضعيف في نهاية العمر (45)

The above English lines represent the "Fair Youth" as another sun to the world, which has outranked even beauty and status, yet he is himself subject to the tyranny of time and age. In altering the gender of the addressee, the translator conveys another commonsensical eulogy that the readers are more likely to find infelicitous and less captivating. Apart from the irrelevant and inaccurate selection of his words, the translator hardly sticks to the original because he seems to interfere, eliminate and add to the original. He thus distorts all these images that the poet has built about love; it is this strong love that the poet maintained for the "Fair Youth" that makes his sonnets timeless and eternal. His love for his friend is akin to the love of Rumi to Shams e-Tabrizi, albeit the context differs quite markedly. It is a love that is purely spiritual and grounded on knowledge. The poet might have been informed of Rumi, or read his odes to his master, and hence, reproduced part of this love in his poetry.<sup>2</sup> These verses, which featured in sonnet 14, duplicate what Rumi said about his friend centuries ago:

21)

*But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,  
And, constant stars, in them, I read such art  
As truth and beauty shall together thrive,  
If from thyself, to store thou would'st convert (58)*

<sup>2</sup> Rumi and Shams' story is a story of love and devotion, not just to each other, but to the Beloved, God. Rumi both reveals and narrates this transfiguration he positively felt in the company of Shams as follows:

*In your light I learn how to love  
In your beauty, how to make poems.  
You dance inside my chest,  
Where no one sees you,  
But sometimes I do,  
And that sight becomes this art. (see Barks 2004, 122).*

22)

فهى النجوم الوفية التي أجمع منها معرفتى

لكنني أستقي معرفتى من خلال عينيك،

حيث تزهر الحقيقة والجمال معا

لو أنك تحولت في حياتك عن اختزان نفسك (59)

While the poet means to say that he is getting the knowledge of the future of the youth, not from the contemplation of the stars of the sky, but from the meditation on the youth's eyes which take after the stars of the sky in light and illumination. Strikingly, this image of the stars inhabiting the eyes of the youth was lost in the Arabic version. Consider the next lines: "And, constant stars, in them, I read such art/ فهى النجوم الوفية التي أجمع منها معرفتى". The original version stresses that the stars are merely part of the eyes of the "Fair Youth", yet the Arabic one has gone a little bit further to depict those eyes as though they were themselves stars. In translating those previously mentioned verses, their substance is lost, so what is preserved "are the inessential elements—the images, the basic ideas, many of the words—but not the sounds or the multiple meanings or resonances of the words, the exact way in which the ideas and images are ordered and embodied" (Wechsler 1998, 51).

Like many other poets, the poet portrays time as an enemy to love. Time destroys and wreaks havoc on love because time unequivocally causes beauty to vanish; it leads people to weakness and old age, and even worse, it brings life to an end. In sonnet 15, the poet appears in conflict with time so long as it strips his friend of his youthfulness and damages his beauty and purity. The poet declares the following:

23)

*Where wasteful Time debateth with decay  
to change your day of youth to sullied night,  
And all in war with Time for love of you,  
As he takes from you, I engraft you new. (60)*

Obviously, the translator, though he attempts to transmit the enmity between the speaker and time, misreads, and therefore mistranslates the last verse wherein the speaker puts life into the "Fair Youth", recreates him, and adorns him with another beauty thanks to poetry composition. There is no denying that the Arabic lines do not refer to this idea of recreation and rebirth that the speaker endows the "Fair Youth" with. This semantic and pragmatic inaccuracy could be seen in the last line: "As he takes from you, I engraft you new/ فكلما أخذ منك، أضقتُ أنا من جديد إليك".

24)

حيث الزمن المدمر يتحد مع الذبول  
لِيَحُولَ نهار شبابك إلى ظلام اليباب  
كل شيء في حرب مع الزمن من أجل حبك،  
فكلما أخذ منك، أضقتُ أنا من جديد إليك (61)

The translator is excluding the “Fair Youth” from the next lines, probably because he is more inclined not to shock the Arab readers with this image, in which the center of love is a young man and not a woman. The exclusion of the “Fair Youth” could be noted in the following lines:

25)

*But out, alack, he was but one hour mine,  
The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.  
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;  
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth. (96)*

26)

لكن، والأسفاه، إنها لم تكن لي سوى ساعة واحدة فقط،  
ثم حجبتها الآن على قناع السحب.  
ليس في هذا ما يدعو إلى هنيهة من الازدراء؛  
فشموس الأرض تطمسها البقع السوداء إذا ما انطمست شمس السماء. (97)

By so doing, the translator has destroyed the true and evocative image of love that Shakespeare had crafted in the sonnet. He, therefore, took an opposite direction, building a false and unfaithful image of love compared to the original. As already shown, almost in every line, the poet is dwelling on an image or a metaphor to approximate the imaginative world to that of everyday life, yet the translator sometimes transgresses against the aesthetics of these metaphors and renders these symbolic images inaccurately. The problems of linguistic, cultural, and even metaphorical equivalences pose serious problems for the translator, whose verbose translation and redundant explanation – occasionally – result in the artificiality and unnaturalness of the translated product. This is evident in sonnet 21, in which the poet emphasizes the theme of immortality. He not only grants the “Fair Youth” immortality through his verse, but he himself gains this immortality as well by virtue of his truthfulness and loyalty to love of the “Fair Youth”; indeed, the English verses look poignant, concise and rhythmical owing to the systematic use of alliteration and rhythm achieved. Consider the next lines taken from sonnet 21:

27)

*So it is not with me or with that Muse  
Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse  
Who heaven itself for ornament doth use  
And every fair with his fair doth rehearse (72)*

This condensing of thought and outpouring of imagery do not find a place in the Arabic version, which leans toward violating ST structures and liberating its words from the chains of rhyme and rhythm:

28)

ليست المسألة بالنسبة لي كما هي بالنسبة لذلك الشاعر  
الذي استلهم أشعاره من الجمال المصطنع  
والذي يستخدم السماء نفسها كحيلة للزينة  
ويعيد ذكر الشيء الجميل الذي يتعلق بأشياء حبيبته الجميلة (73)

Based on these remarks, it must be underlined that the rendering of these lines has serious pitfalls, especially since it has subverted and undermined the essence of the original. Seemingly, the translator cherishes, either intentionally or unintentionally, a strong desire to appropriate and domesticate the original to fit the Arab context; however, he ends up building a false image of love in regard to the Shakespearean sonnets.

To crown it all, to translate Shakespeare's poetry means to kill the sonorous and rhythmical patterns of the English text. The problem of a "philosophical" vocabulary, complex notions and themes, obscure cultural allusions, periodical neologisms, homely images, powerful personifications, mixed metaphors, recurrent ambiguities, and repetitions of thematic key words, do in fact emerge from time to time. These technical problems might result in contradictions and poetic infelicities when rendered or transferred into Arabic.

## CONCLUSION

Admitting that the efforts of the translator deserve praise and appreciation, this study has tried to provide a contrastive analysis for the translational solutions and choices provided by Ibrahim (2012) for Shakespeare's sonnets on love. I have found out that it is hard, and even impossible, to translate Shakespeare's sonnets on love because they are fraught with innumerable symbolic imageries, metaphors, similes and other stylistic devices. What is more, the linguistic and cultural ambiguity sometimes mislead the translator to perceive

another meaning; and hence, constitutes another interpretation of the sonnets. The other implication of this study is that the translator was unable to keep the tone of the sonnet and sometimes was confused as concerns its addressee. Archaic forms of poetry seem challenging for him in as much as they were rendered in a very simple and uncomplicated way. Thus, it can be concluded that the content, the form, the style, the rhythm and heart of Shakespeare's sonnets on love are often untranslatable as they were composed at a particular era and addressed to a particular people. It is in fact this poetic spirit that Shakespeare has embedded and injected into his sonnets that gives them life and eternity. Put differently, to read Shakespeare outside his sonnets is to take the risk of losing him.

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## ŠEKSPYRO MEILĖS POEZIJOS NEIŠVERČIAMUMAS

RACHID ACIM

### S a n t r a u k a

Versti Šekspyro poeziją yra vienas iš sudėtingiausių uždavinių, jaudinusių šimtus vertėjų, vertimo teoretikų ir mokslininkų visame pasaulyje. Kadangi poezijoje vartojama daug retorinių priemonių, dėl kurių dažnai išnyksta riba tarp vaizdingumo ir intertekstualumo, ji pati tampa neaiški, dviprasmiška, o kartu ir neišverčiama. Be to, vartojamos stiliaus figūros, tokios kaip palyginimai, sinekdokos ir metaforos, šiai poezijai suteikia tokią diskursinę jėgą, kuri nekinta nepaisant anglų kalbos evoliucijos ir to, kad poetas mirė jau prieš kelis šimtmečius. Šioje poezijoje temų spektras toks didelis, kad pats Šekspyras atrodo kaip kosmopolitinė figūra, neapribota nei laiko, nei erdvės. Straipsnyje siekiama įvertinti Šekspyro poezijos meilės tema vertimo sprendimus Ibrahimio (2012) vertime į arabų kalbą. Siekdamas šio tikslo, autorius siūlo naudoti gretinamąją anglų ir arabų poetinio teksto analizę ir nustatyti, ar vertėjui pavyko išsaugoti jos esmę. Daroma išvada, kad originalaus poetinio teksto stilistiniai aspektai ir estetinės savybės vertimuose į arabų kalbą daugeliu atvejų buvo prarasti, nes dėl archainių formų ir reikšmių daugiasluoksniškumo vertėjui dažnai nepavyko išsaugoti sonetų stilistikos, kartais net supainiotas soneto adresatas (vyriška / moteriška giminė).