

*Despite the great distance, existence unites the two:
Translating the poetry of Fadwa Tuqan¹*

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In this paper, I document my process of translating the poetry of Fadwa Tuqan into English, then analyze how my translations relate to and illuminate the influence of syntactic and semantic disparities between Arabic and English on translation at the sentential level. Dickens et al. (2002) state that Arabic and English present information sententially in the same order, beginning with the more known information (the *theme*) and following it with the lesser known or newer information (the *rheme*). Keeping the same theme-rheme structure in translating from Arabic to English requires “roughly maintaining” the same word order while translating (Dickens et al. 2002: 119), but this goal is impractical for two reasons.

First, Arabic demonstrates greater syntactic flexibility than English: while English

sentences rely mostly on word order to determine the function of each word in a sentence, Arabic uses case markings and agreement to identify the grammatical functions of sentence components. Thus in Arabic one can with relative ease manipulate the word order of a sentence, typically to emphasize a certain part of the sentence. In English, creating such emphases requires significant restructuring of the sentence, resulting in forms that are more marked and less commonly used than their Arabic counterparts. Second, Arabic and English use coordination and subordination in different ways. Dickens (2009) demonstrates the myriad ways that Arabic and English package information into coordinate and subordinate clauses, concluding that Arabic connects clauses with greater flexibility of denotative meaning.

These two differences in Arabic and English syntax and semantics caused difficulties in my efforts to translate five of Fadwa Tuqan's poems from Arabic into English; they combined to significantly inhibit my efforts to translate accurately on a sentential level. I found that in translation the denotative meaning of the source text could be maintained, even under the specific constraint of theme-rheme equivalence; however, the connotative meanings of the text were almost inevitably altered. Thus the thesis concludes that while approaching literary translation through the lens of comparative linguistics may be illuminating insofar as it explains specific translation issues, it does not propose clear solutions for connotative equivalence on a sentential level.

This paper lacks a clear predecessor in the world of translation studies; there have been few attempts to incorporate literary translation and theory with linguistic analysis.

This perhaps results from the noticeable gap in translation studies between theoretical and empirical works; one finds collections of empirical treatises (Biguenet and Shulte 1989), surveys of foundational theoretical tracts (Venuti 2000), and coursebooks that discuss translation from a multitude of linguistic angles (Dickens et al. 2002, Baker 1992), but few works that incorporate all of these pieces of the translation studies puzzle. In the two coursebooks I used to translate (Baker, Dickens et al.), for example, the word *theory* does not even appear in the index; the texts are purposely presented as practical (and not theoretical) tools. The gap between practical training and abstract theories is one that scholars struggle to explain, and will not be addressed by this paper. Most translators, when it comes to the actual work of translation, simply do what they've learned feels right – I'll do the same, based on my interpretations of the relevant *extratextual information* (social, historical, cultural factors), *theory*, and *contrastive linguistics* (the study of the similarities and differences between two languages). El-Shiyab (2000: 37) offers a convenient synthesis of these fields; he notes that translation theory concerns itself with general decisions, not with the specifics of the languages and texts at hand in a particular translating situation – this is instead the domain of contrastive linguistics. When one translates, one employs knowledge of both fields, in roughly the following order: (1) considering the context of the text's creation, then (2) looking at characteristics of the text itself (genre, for example), and finally (3) taking into account matters of contrastive linguistics, that is, the specific properties of the two languages concerned (El-Shiyab 2000: 39). Such is roughly the agenda that I follow in this paper: giving an

account of relevant background from historical and translation theory perspectives, developing a translation agenda, then observing what aspects of comparative linguistics influence the translation process and how they do so.

In Chapter 1, I review the cultural background necessary to develop a translation agenda: the history of Arabic literature and Fadwa Tuqan's biography. Chapter 2 introduces relevant translation terminology and history. Then, I formulate a translation agenda in Chapter 3, drawing on both how translation theory reflects upon my own translation circumstances. In Chapter 4, I discuss the results of my translation briefly, then introduce the syntactic and semantic background on Arabic and English that will inform the investigation of my translations. Chapter 5 features in-depth analyses of poem extracts where such syntactic and semantic disparities feature prominently. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the course and conclusions of the paper and suggests avenues for further study.

1 EXTRATEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Section 1.1 traces the development of Arabic literature through time, giving an historical context to the works and life of Fadwa Tuqan. Section 1.2 gives a biographical account of Tuqan's life. Chapter 1's contents, when reflected on through the lens of translation theory (Chapter 2), will inform the specifics of the translation agenda that I develop in Chapter 3.

1.1 History of Arabic literature

Classical Arabic literature, by which is essentially meant classical Arabic *poetry*,

as formal Arabic prose is a fairly recent development, “can safely be regarded as fundamentally a continuum” (Badawi 1992: 1). From its pre-Islamic foundations until the early 19th century, Arabic poetry remained firmly within an established tradition. The traditional poetic form, the ode or *qasiidah*, consisted of the choice of sixteen meters, with every line divided into *hemistiches* (half-lines, separated by a *caesura*, or pause). The *qasiidah* employed *monorhyme* – that is, every line ended with the same rhyme. Over time, certain formulas of rhyme and line length became associated with certain genres of poetry, such as the erotic prelude or the panegyric (an orally delivered, poetic ode).

Though there was some innovation within these parameters, they remained essentially fixed until the era of modern Arabic literature, which is generally said to begin with the French invasion of Egypt in 1798; this crucial moment in the region’s history initiated the interaction of Arab and European cultures. From this collision comes the *nahdah* ‘renaissance,’ the literary revolution that resulted from the mixing of indigenous literary traditions with Western literary forms and philosophy.

As Arab scholars (particularly Egyptians) went to study in Europe, and Europeans paid their own visits in turn, education and the production of literature in the Arab world took on a Western feel. Government schools based on European teaching methods were established and Arab scholars undertook translations from European languages so that that knowledge could be taught in Arab schools. Similarly, the poetic tradition changed. Poetry had for centuries been an activity of the courts, something written for and about the wealthy patrons who funded it; it now began to escape these confines, and as a result

its subject matter changed: poetry, and Arabic literature in general, became concerned with “*mimesis*...an imitation of life” (Badawi 1992: 16).

Throughout the 19th century, Arabic literature and journalism flourished in tandem, as publications started up across the region, and new poets and authors filled their pages; this tradition continues to this day, as famous authors like Mahmoud Darwish, Naguib Mahfouz, and the subject of my study, Fadwa Tuqan, broke onto the scene by publishing in periodicals (and have continued to do so throughout their careers). This arrangement has also by necessity engendered in the Arabic literary community a certain degree of flexibility and worldliness – as regular contributors to periodicals, they must write editorials, essays, and other types of non-fiction as well. During these years, intellectuals debated the merits of mixing Western thought with Arabic and Islamic traditions, and the poetry they wrote reflected this debate: it was neoclassical, returning to and refining traditional poetic structures with an eye towards the modern.

Between the two world wars, the Arab literary scene was both nationalist and romanticist. This Romanticism was a response to the political upheaval that resulted from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after WWI – like European Romantics a century before, Arabs found themselves in “a society which is at odds with itself and in which the individual questions the relevance of traditional values,” and like those Europeans, they expressed this dissatisfaction by moving away from traditional literary forms (Badawi 1992: 19). Their poetry was also marked by a further increase in “individual involvement and intensity in their...poetic expressions” (Badawi 1992: 83); in other words, Arabic

poetry grew yet more introspective and personal in these years. In the vacuum left by the Ottoman Empire, many nationalist movements sprung up, and the region's literature also reflected the excitement many Arabs felt about the region's future.

World War II changed things again, and in the years that followed the nationalist and pan-Arab sentiments that had energized the literary scene became less idealistic and more pragmatically minded; some writers even embraced socialism as a solution for the Arab world's troubles. Events like the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948 and the defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War devastated the Arab world as a whole, causing frustration with the past and sparking "a new courage" to move further beyond the old ways of literature and thought (Badawi 1992: 147). It was in these years, particularly between 1948 and 1967, that large-scale experiments in poetic form began. Poets – Fadwa Tuqan featuring prominently among them – broke away from traditional structures, eventually developing and refining free verse poetry.

Until just recently, Arabic literature was written almost exclusively in Modern Standard Arabic (also called *fusha*), the form of Arabic traditionally used in writing, formal speech, and most other professional settings. MSA in turn derives mostly from Classical Arabic, the language of Arabic literature until the modern era. So although Fadwa Tuqan grew up in Palestine and spoke the Levantine dialect, she wrote exclusively in *fusha*. Arabs from Morocco to the Gulf grow up speaking their regional dialect and learning *fusha* formally in schools – thus it is the international Arabic.

The development of Arabic poetry over the last two hundred years is inextricable

from its social context; it “responded to intrinsic needs for a change towards a more ‘modern’ apprehension of experience, aesthetic and otherwise” (Badawi 1992: 132). Al-Muhsawi (2006:16) argues that Tuqan’s autobiography, *A Mountainous Journey*, is representative of this “itinerary from tradition to modernism,” as it documents her struggles with religious and social norms, her knowledge of the Arabic literary heritage, and her experiments with romantic poetry and other forms. The next section describes Tuqan’s life, showing how one female poet lived through, documented, and commented on the tumultuous changes in the Arab world and its literary scene.

1.2 The life of Fadwa Tuqan

Fadwa Tuqan was born in the city of Nablus, Palestine, in 1917, the seventh child in a wealthy family. In her autobiographical account of her early years, *A Mountainous Journey*, two chief themes emerge: her difficult home life and her love of literature. Born to a mother who tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to abort her, Fadwa struggled to find acceptance in her own family. Despite receiving almost no recognition or affection from her mother, Fadwa loved her intensely. Her father, a vocal opponent of western imperialism, was banished to Egypt in the year she was born by the British authorities, who had just completed their occupation of Palestine. A serious man and a strict adherent to tradition, when at home he mostly ignored his youngest daughter as well.

Her salvation was in school, and in her older brother Ibrahim. Of her days in primary school, she says, “I was able to discover some parts of my lost self” (Tuqan 1990: 45). This blossoming was cut short by the discovery by her brother Yusuf that she

had received a flower from an older boy from school; he declared her confined to the house henceforth, and, in a world where “the woman had to forget that the word 'no' existed in the language,” the matter was settled (Tuqan 1990: 36).

The isolation of such an existence dragged Fadwa into a deep depression, one that she could escape only through poetry. Her brother Ibrahim, a recent college graduate, returned home in 1929 to teach at a school in Nablus. A poet himself, Ibrahim set out to teach his sister poetry, and she took to the challenge with incredible vigor, memorizing and reciting for hours each day. Fadwa's knowledge of classical Arabic poetry grew encyclopedic, and she began to write her own poetry, publishing it (under pseudonyms, and eventually with her own name) in regional and then international newspapers and magazines. Her early poetry was in the classical style, but she soon discovered the appeal of the free verse, and it is free verse, with occasional, irregular rhyming, that characterizes her poetry.²

Although Fadwa's reputation as a poet grew, her existence continued to be defined by the oppressive social traditions. She observed and participated in a gradual acquisition of freedom on the part of the Arab woman, but she continued to feel and suffer acutely from the gender imbalance in Middle Eastern society. Her father, when he did engage with her, would ask her to write political poetry, and she would want to respond:

A voice from within would rise up in silent protest: *How and with what right or logic does Father ask me to compose political poetry, when I am shut up inside these walls? I don't sit with the men, I don't listen to their heated discussions, nor*

² “Poetry continues to be distinct from prose and there is nothing more charming than musical durations as they echo within lines of differing length, and nothing more beautiful than rhymes alternating in a free verse poem, sometimes appearing distinctly, and sometimes disappearing” (Tuqan, 1990: 75-76).

do I participate in the turmoil of life on the outside. I'm not even acquainted with the face of my own country, since I am not allowed to travel. (Tuqan 1990: 107).

Between her brother Ibrahim's heartbreaking death in 1941 and her visit to England in 1962, Fadwa lived in Nablus in her family's home, or with male relatives in Jerusalem and Amman, Jordan, among other places. In each location, though, her desire to participate fully in the changing social life of the Arab world was stifled. With the death of her father in 1948, and the arrival that same year of thousands of Palestinian Arab refugees in Nablus, she began to experience some greater freedoms; as Fadwa recalls, "When the roof fell in on Palestine in 1948, the veil fell off the face of the Nablus woman" (Tuqan 1990: 113).

But it was not until she spent two years (1962-1964) taking classes at Oxford that Fadwa could experience the freedom she had long sought. Upon her return to Palestine, she began writing political poetry; one poem I translate, "My Sad City," was written in response to the Israeli occupation of Nablus in 1967.

Fadwa did not hit her full stride as a poet and international figure until middle age. Until her death in 2003, she published poetry and scholarly works with regularity and was a vocal participant in and commentator on the politics of the Arab world.

In the forward to Tuqan's autobiography, translator Salma Khadra Jayyusi writes of the Palestinian "personal account literature" tradition, of which Fadwa is a fundamental component:

It is a phenomenon of life in crisis, a call on the outside world to look in on the true, live experience of an afflicted people, to see their tragedy as it is actually experienced, to feel the pulse of their suffering, and of their pride and resistance

(Tuqan, 1990: vii-viii).

Jayyusi has also called Tuqan, “Mistress of the two gifts: love and pain” (Tuqan, 1990: xii), and these two quotes together reflect the unique nature of her poetry. Fadwa felt throughout her life the pain and fear of exclusion, both from her own family and the larger social experience. She watched her home country struggle against the imposition of domineering cultures throughout her life; she never experienced or saw a liberated Palestine, the subject of so much of her writing. She desperately loved those family members who did care for her, and outside the confines of her home learned more about love, which had long “remained a concept...this abstract concept had no shore or harbour where I could cast anchor” (Tuqan 1990: 115). As she acquired physical freedoms, Fadwa also explored her own sensuality in her poetry; as Jayyusi writes, “In her later love poetry, eros is completely liberated” (Tuqan 1990: xii).

This complex relationship with her homeland, Arab society, and with her family, with the things that could instill in her both pain and love, is ubiquitous in her poetry. It is indeed the poetry of “an afflicted person,” a woman seeking acceptance and security for herself and her people; a woman who, even as she traveled extensively, wrote ceaselessly of her Palestine.

2 TRANSLATION BACKGROUND

Here I discuss the translation studies background necessary for my study of Tuqan’s poetry. First, I present a framework in which translation decisions and theories are commonly situated. Next, I introduce 20th century translation theory that is relevant to

Where a calque maintains the foreignness of the text in the target language, a *cultural transplantation* involves the complete replacement of a source-culture specific item with a target-culture specific one. An example would be the replacing a reference to a cultural icon like the Egyptian singer Umm Kalthuun with a reference to an analogue in American culture, like jazz singer Billie Holliday. An English-speaking reader is more likely to recognize Billie Holliday's name and thus identify with the text; however, removing such a cultural element deprives the text of some of the associations and connotations that element possesses in the source language and culture.

Another perspective on the above continuum is given by Venuti (2000), who frames the history of translation as a shifting relationship between the translator's relative autonomy from the text and the relationship between the concepts of *equivalence* and *function*. These terms, as I discuss in later sections on translation theory, have been so variously defined that our definitions must start off rather general: equivalence is a variable measuring how the translated text relates to the source text, and function is the ability of the translated text to behave for its audience in certain ways.

Nida (1964) splits that variable of equivalence into two kinds: *formal* and *dynamic* equivalence. Formal equivalence is source-oriented, aiming to reproduce several elements of the source text: “(1) grammatical units, (2) consistency of word usage, and (3) meaning in terms of the source text” (Nida, 1964: 134). Conversely, dynamic equivalence is target-oriented, aiming for “naturalness of expression in the receptor language” that still “reflect[s] the meaning and intent of the source” (Nida, 1964: 136,

137). This useful theoretical dichotomy can be thought of as showing how a translator might guide a text towards fulfilling different functions: formal equivalence aims for a literal reproduction of the source text, while dynamic equivalence seeks to reproduce the experience of reading that text.

2.2 Contemporary translation theories

This summary draws selectively from the many theories and translation schools of thought. What I choose to discuss is presented to give a sense of the scope of translation studies and show how its disparate parts might be incorporated into a particular, situational theory of translation.

2.2.1 Twentieth century translation theory

In the twentieth century, translation theory changed dramatically, responding to and building on developments in linguistic and semiotic theory. Translation theory up to this point had been based on belief in the concept of equivalence in meaning – twentieth century theorists would dispel this as an overly idealistic goal.

Challenging the possibility of equivalence was the first step; deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida would question the possibility of ever determining the source text's message in the first place, let alone translating it. Other theorists built on these doubts by re-conceiving translation, not as an isolated act of scholarship but as an activity that takes place in an historical and social context. In doing so, they have argued that meaning is a phenomenon beyond the understanding or control of the translator. This viewpoint has important implications for the translation process – it frees the translator from seeking

perfection, and supplies both translator and theorist with ways to understand translation more holistically.

Modern translation theory and twentieth century linguistic theory in general were informed by the emerging field of *semiotics*, the study of signs and sign processes, which found its modern form in the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure (1916) posited that each word in a language is a construction of sounds, acting as a *signifier*. The mental concept that word represents to a listener when it is spoken is called the *signified*. The relationship between these two, the signifier and the signified, is arbitrary – there's no necessary reason why the sounds that make up the word *wife* must mean ‘female spouse.’ Furthermore, there's no reason to expect that mental concept to remain constant across cultures or even amongst members of a community; a married man who hears *wife* may think immediately of his partner, while to a teenage boy *wife* may call to mind something more abstract.

Saussure's semiotics gave a structure and vocabulary to a burgeoning issue in translation. As early as Matthew Arnolds' 1860 lecture “On Translating Homer,” translators were expressing doubt about ever truly knowing the effects of the source text on its original audience. More recent scholars like linguist Roman Jakobson, in his essay “The Linguistic Aspects of Translation” (1959), have applied this system directly to translation: every word (which he calls a “code-unit”) is a signifier, endowed with connections to the other words in the same text (*synchronic* relationships) and to words outside the text (*diachronic* relationships). Not only is each word or code-unit only

understood by its relationships with other code-units, but any translation into another language means another code altogether; “translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes” (Jakobson 1959: 115). Jakobson elaborated this system in order to argue that any human experience can be described in any language, provided that the language adapts itself to the situation; thus, equivalence in translation can be reached. It can be argued in response to Jakobson's proposition that since no human experience is processed and understood *outside* or *without* language, and since every language is both unique and constantly changing (as Jakobson does acknowledge) no two can communicate an equivalent message. His argument does contradict itself: his synchronic and diachronic relationships are reminiscent of our definition of the connotative meanings of a word, and as the words outside a text are constantly changing and being redefined, each of his code-units should be constantly changing in meaning as well.

Saussure, by placing meaning inside of one's head and outside the word itself, dispelled the idea of definite meanings. One branch of translation theory, deconstructionism, takes this point to its logical extreme. It argues that every utterance takes place in a unique moment, one that can never be recreated or fully understood, because the specifics of the situation (the time, the place, the reader) will never exist again in that exact combination. The meaning of the source text, then, can never be known, and translations cannot capture it. Nor can the intent of the author ever be known; Foucault (1977) suggests that the notion of “author” be replaced with “author-function,” a term that places the author in an historical and social context and shifts the focus of

inquiry from discovering authorial intent to investigating all the forces that participated in the creation of the text.

Other theories have assigned yet more importance to placing a translation in its social context, arguing that the positions of the source language, target language, and the tradition of translation in a given society powerfully affect which translations are undertaken and how they are written and perceived. Even-Zohar (1978) places translation within a greater system of all the literary genres in a culture, which he calls a “poly-system.” In this poly-system, the role of translation is dictated by the literary tradition in the culture’s native tongue. He claims to have proved in this research that in a country like the United States, which has a thriving literary tradition of its own, translations will be chosen and written with an inclination towards fitting them into the established tradition of American literature. Conversely, in cultures where literature written in the native language is less established, translations will play a more prominent role, and characteristics of the source text are more likely to be preserved in the translation; they may even come to influence the native literary tradition.

Niranjana (1992) proposes a postcolonial theory of translation, using similar terms to Even-Zohar. She finds “fidelity” or “being true” to the original text to be archaic concerns that have long distracted from a more important issue: considering the “*force*” of the translation (Niranjana, 1992: 57-58). She argues that centuries of theory have problematically assumed that such a truth can be reached, even across disparate cultures, when in fact translations from a minority language into the colonizing culture’s language

have perpetuated stereotypical conceptions of that minority culture, and even projected those ideas back into the original text.

2.2.2 *Translating poetry*

Susan Bassnett notes in her survey of translation studies that, although poetry may be the most commonly discussed genre in works on translation, those works are typically limited in scope to one author's experiences or techniques for a certain type of poetry, and the genre as a whole seems to resist a non-empirical methodology (1991: 81).

Lefevere (1975) makes one such attempt, suggesting seven types of poetry translation: (1) *phonemic* (reproducing source language sounds while paraphrasing source text ideas), (2) *literal* (word-by-word preservation, ignoring syntactic rules of target language), (3) *metrical* (maintaining the source language meter), (4) *poetry-to-prose* (rewriting the poem as prose), (5) *rhymed* (keeping both meter and rhyme intact across languages), (6) *blank verse* (retaining the source text's structure), (7) and *interpretation* (change of form but retention of the substance of the text). For the purpose of translating Fadwa Tuqan, I find none of these sufficient; each type focuses intently on one aspect of the poem at the expense of the rest of the material. Place those techniques on the spectrum between source language bias and target language bias, and they cluster at opposite poles. Options 4,5, and 7 tend toward accessibility in the target language, prioritizing a functional equivalence. This target language bias may compromise the unique structures of the source language text. Options 1-3 and 6 are biased towards the source text, and are likely to stretch the limits of target language comprehension.

Peden (1989) provides an informative example of these techniques at work. She studies nine English translations of a sonnet in Spanish originally written by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, comparing how each maintains (or doesn't maintain) not only the rhyme scheme but also the placement of key words to the sonnet. She found that a sense of loyalty to the sonnet's specific rhyme scheme often led translators to make considerable departures from the Spanish, sometimes abandoning altogether metaphors or phrases central to the text. At the same time, those translators who abandoned the nature of this particular sonnet, which is a single sentence extending through fourteen lines and characterized by repetitive structures, lost the dramatic tension effected by the accumulation of images. As Peden summarizes, "When the frame disappears, the edifice collapses of its own weight" (1989: 23). What can be extrapolated from her argument is that a balance in attention to both form and content when translating poetry is the best way to avoid sacrificing either (Peden 1989: 26).

3 A CONTEXT-SPECIFIC TRANSLATION THEORY

3.1 Theoretical considerations

From a theoretical standpoint, the diversity of ideas summarized in the preceding pages might make one despair of ever undertaking translation. Determining how "equivalent" my translations are to the original poems is evidently not an option, but my objective is not anything so absolute; I want to use theory selectively to reach an agenda that is specific to the circumstances I face. In this regard, the theories described in Chapter 2 can in fact provide guidance. As I work, I can be aware that I am translating

across disparate cultures, across the lines of colonialism, from the voice of an “afflicted person” into that of a person who has not experienced the same hardships; I can be wary of the English-language poetic tradition and its potential to steer my versions of this foreign voice towards familiar and easy methods of expression. Thinking of Foucault, I can consider not only what I want to say, or what Fadwa Tuqan was trying to say, but what everything around us that we experienced and continue to experience contributes to our work as well.

Socioculturally speaking, translation theory urges me to draw on Fadwa Tuqan and the context of her life. Recall from section 1.3 some of its particulars: her difficult upbringing; her patriotism; her struggles with the social norms of patriarchal Arab society; and her gradual physical and emotional emancipation through poetry. These themes are so central to her work that to compromise them in translation would be an enormous injustice. Her works are reflections on her own life and identity – this is her material, and her life *is not meant to conform uniformly* to an English-language conception of life. Thus, if the thematic material of her poems feels foreign in English, it's because the experience is foreign, and I want the target language reader to confront this dissonance by contending with unfamiliar themes and images.

3.2 Linguistic considerations

Knowing that I want my translations to tend toward the foreign, that I want to be deliberately conscious of avoiding creating translations that feel familiar, what steps can I take from a linguistics standpoint to achieve this?

Returning to Lefevere's seven strategies for translating poetry from 2.2.3, it seems that all are concerned with the particular *form* of the poem. This preoccupation is a valid concern, but making it the singular or primary focus of one's translation methods would be dangerously negligent of the importance of the poem's semantics, an importance that was affirmed in 3.1.

Also, none of Lefevere's strategies applies particularly well to translations of free verse poetry, where form and structure may be irregular but are essential in their specific irregularity. Where a poet decides to end each line in a free verse poem, what kind of enjambments she uses, the length of each line, especially in relation to its adjacent lines – these are structural matters that cannot be dismissed in translating free verse poetry. As El-Shiyab (2000: 40) writes, “adherence to the form of the text...is applicable to literary translation. In these texts, the main concern of the translator is to highlight the effectiveness of the same semantic and syntactic structures of the source text...The visual or physical presence of the text and its intonational qualities are also significant.” In the spirit of of El-Shiyab, and of Peden (1989), as discussed in 2.2.3, I shall try in my translations to produce a structure that is relatively similar to the original text in both its *overall form* (relative line length, and separation of different ideas by line) and its *arrangement of ideas* (the sequencing of ideas, and the order in which parts of a sentence are introduced).

These goals that I have articulated point my translation firmly toward the literal/source bias side of the continuum. My focus, in other words, is on creating the

same experience on the sentential level: the same figurative language, and the same arrangement of ideas.

4 CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS: ARABIC AND ENGLISH

Before I can analyze the difficulties I encountered while implementing the translation agenda that was developed in Chapter 3, I must provide the necessary linguistic background. Section 4.1 discusses the basics of syntax and grammar in Arabic and English, showing how Arabic's greater syntactic flexibility produces a semantic flexibility different from that of English. Section 4.2 draws on the work of Dickens (2009) to discuss how differences in junction in Arabic and English create problems for translation on a sentential level.

4.1 Syntax and grammatical functions in Arabic and English

To discuss sentential differences in Arabic and English, we must first describe how the two languages construct sentences. I'll first describe grammatical functions in Arabic and English, then discuss variations in word order.

4.1.1 Grammatical functions and word order in English

In English, the standard word order is subject-verb-object. We derive the grammatical function of a word in English from its place in the sentence; many lexemes can take multiple roles in a sentence, and thus we look to their position to understanding how they're being used:

The cat watched the mouse. (subject)

versus

As can be seen in examples 2-4, case endings make clear the grammatical functions of the nouns. In (2) the relationship between the adjective *new* and the *two female professors* is clear, because *new* is marked for number (dual) and gender (feminine). In (3), both *Ibrāhīm* and *dijāj* are masculine nouns, and it is the case markings that tell us that Ibrahim, and not the chicken, did the eating. In (4), both nouns in the double object structure have accusative case markings – it's up to the listener or reader to determine from context which noun is being given, and which noun is the receiver. In fact, the vast majority of Arabic texts do not use these markings (called *harakaat*) at all, because native speakers are expected to understand or intuit the grammatical role of each word.

There are two types of sentences in Arabic: *verbal* and *nominal*. Sentences that are verb-initial, like (3) and (4), are called verbal sentences. In such sentences, it is generally agreed by grammarians that the unmarked word order is verb-subject-object, as seen in (3).

Nominal sentences, by contrast, begin with a noun and may or may not have a verb. (2) above, like (5) below, is an example of a particular kind of nominal sentence – an *equational sentence* or a sentence with a *null copula*:

- (5) الفتاة حزينة
 al-fatāt-u hazīnat-un
 DEF-girl-NOM sad-NOM
 'The girl is sad.'

In Arabic, the present tense of the verb *to be* is not expressed in such a sentence. Case markings demonstrate that the two words are in an equational relationship – they're both marked as nominative. In a nominal sentence with a verb, the standard word order is

SVO, similar to that of the standard English sentence:

(6)	المعلمون	يساعدون	الطلاب
	al-mu‘allumūn	yusā‘idūn	al-ṭulāb-a
	the-teachers	help.3PLMASC	the-students-ACC
	'The teachers helped the students.'		

Nominal sentences that do have a verb are a contentious subject amongst Arabic grammarians; although they are in agreement that such an order is marked, there are varying theories as to the function of such variation. In an early work on Arabic grammar, Wright (1955: 251) writes:

[T]he difference between verbal and nominal sentences, to which the native grammarians attach no small importance, is properly thus, that the former relates an act or event, the latter gives a description of a person, or thing either absolutely or in the form of a clause descriptive of a state. This is the constant rule in good old Arabic, unless the desire to emphasize a part of the sentence be the cause of change in its position.

Most scholars at least agree that marked word orders are used as Wright suggests: to emphasis certain information within the sentence (Suleiman 1989, Menacere 1995). Let’s consider an example. If somebody had asked *madha aakala Ibrahim?* 'what did Ibrahim eat?', sentence (3) would be a sufficient answer, but other, more marked responses would feature a moving forward or preposing of the subject or object:

(7a)	اكل	دجاج	ابراهيم
	ākala	al-dijāj-a	Ibrāhīm-u
	Ate.3SGMASC	the-chicken-ACC	Ibrahim
	'The chicken is what Ibrahim ate.'		

(7b)	الدجاج	اكل	ابراهيم
	al-dijāj-a	ākala	Ibrāhīm-u
	the-chicken-ACC	ate.3SGMASC	Ibrahim
	'Ibrahim ate the chicken.'		

Bringing *chicken* to the front of the sentence emphasizes its relevance in this context – what the speaker wants to know is what Ibrahim ate, and one way to emphasize that is to put it out front. Notice also that chicken becomes definite in these constructions. What in English one accomplishes through significant sentence restructuring (like clefting or fronting in the gloss for (7a) above), Arabic permits the speaker to do with fewer changes.

This example illustrates a principle that scholars concerned with Arabic-English translation have often noticed: “Whereas in English, grammatical components are for the most part determined positionally and constraints are imposed on manipulating the word order, Arabic is more tolerant in the movement of its components” (Menacere 1995: 608). This syntactic flexibility in Arabic has important implications for its semantic flexibility relative to English’s semantic flexibility, as we shall see in the next section.

4.2 Junction in Arabic and English and its sentential ramifications

4.2.1 Theme and rheme

Dickens et al. (2002) and Dickens (2009) suggest a framework for looking at the structure of a sentence in translation: dividing it into a *theme* and *rheme*⁵. Theme in this context should not be confused with the theta-role theme; rather, it is the part of a sentence which is considered to contain “at least relatively predictable information,” while the rheme contains the “at least relatively unpredictable information” (Dickens et al. 2002: 116). Alternatively, we could define theme as “the element of most immediate

⁵ *Theme* and *rheme* here align with the more common linguistic pairing of *topic* and *comment*, respectively. As the terms Dickens uses are central to his theory, I too will use them in place of topic and comment.

concern in an utterance,” and rheme as “what the speaker says about this theme” (Dickens 2009: 1096). Speaking generally, then, the theme is information that is (more) expected and relevant, and the rheme is new information that relates back to the theme and carries the conversation forward.

They posit that both English and Arabic typically place the theme before the rheme, or the better known information before the less known information; the rheme is also more likely to receive sentence-stress or to carry intonational stress. (Dickens et al. 2002: 117). Let's observe all this information in action:

(8a) Ahmad found a dog.

(8b) وجد احمد كلبا

wajada	Ahmad-u	kalb-an
found.3SGMASC	Ahmad-NOM	dog-INDEF

“Ahmad found a dog.”

In both of these sentences, *Ahmad* is the more likely to be known information – the use of his name indicates a familiarity – so it is the theme. Conversely, *a dog* is the rheme, as it is indefinite. The primary stress falls on *kalb-an* and *a dog* in both of these sentences. If we replaced *Ahmad* with *a boy* and *a dog* with *the dog*, we might change the English sentence to passive to reflect this distinction of knownness:

(8c) A boy found the dog.

vs.

(8d) The dog was found by a boy.

In Arabic, the passive construction is much less common than in English, and such flexibility would likely not be exercised. We consider this example not to dabble in matters of syntax, but to illustrate the general tendency of theme preceding rheme.

English sentences typically start with a subject, and Arabic sentences typically start with a verb. Any information that precedes these parts of speech, Dickens et al. suggest, is *preposed* (placed before the subject in English or the verb in Arabic) and *emphatic* (placed there for emphasis) (2002: 118).

What does this mean for translation? It means that keeping the same theme-rheme structure (and capturing faithfully any deviations from that expected structure) while translating from Arabic to English necessitates “roughly maintaining” the same word order (Dickens et al. 2002: 119). There are obvious and significant problems with such an agenda, however. It would work if Arabic sentences usually began with a noun, as English sentences do, but the verb is typically the initial word in an Arabic sentence, and when the subject precedes it, the sentence can be considered preposed and emphatic – in other words, it's marked not only syntactically, as was discussed in 4.1.1, but semantically as well. English has stricter rules of syntax, and cannot always adopt a similar flexibility to prepose and emphasize information. Although Arabic's standard word order is VSO, its case markings allow many other configurations to be grammatical and far less marked than when one attempts to prepose sentence elements like the verb or object in English:

(9a) He jumped the fence.

(9b) Jumped the fence is what he did.

(9c) The fence is what he jumped.

While in English we can emphasize any part of (9a) using intonational stress (*he* jumped the fence vs. he *jumped* the fence, etc.), making those elements sentence-initial requires clefting of the sentence, as (9b) and (9c) demonstrate.

Why are clefting and fronting problematic? The additional structures and helping words needed to effect such a change in an English sentence are likely to complicate Arabic-English translation. Consider the transition from (9a) to (9c); preposing *the fence* requires two additional words, namely the fragment *is what*. If a translator is concerned with, for example, maintaining both the theme-rheme order and the length of a poetic line, the necessary use of *is what* keeps that order at the expense of prosodic faithfulness.

4.2.2 Main and subordinate clauses; foreground and background information

Elements of a sentence which are theme or rheme can be packaged or presented differently. While these terms deal with matters of knownness, the relevancy of an element to the greater structure and content of the text also needs to be taken into account. In this regard, we can also look at sentences as consisting of *foreground* and *background* information; foreground information is central to the development of the text, while background information typically relates to the foreground information and less to the greater narrative or context (Dickens 2009: 1099). Let's consider a simple sentence with clear background and foreground information:

(10a) After graduating from college, he went to New York.

In this sentence, the phrase *after graduating from college* is background information – it relates to the context at hand, but it does not propel the narrative forward like the foregrounded phrase (*he went to New York*) does. How is this distinct from theme and rheme? The first phrase here is our theme; the use of the word *after* suggests that the college attendance of the person in question may have already been discussed, so we may consider it the better known, thematic information. Meanwhile, *he went to New York* introduces new, probably unexpected information – therefore, it's the rheme.

There's yet another way to look at (10a) – it is composed of a *main* clause and a *subordinate* clause. A main (or independent) clause is a stand alone sentence that expresses a complete thought; in this case, we have *he went to New York*. A subordinate (or dependent) clause cannot stand alone and does not express a complete thought, our example being *after graduating from college*.

We have just established several dichotomies: we have theme and rheme, which relates to the knownness or predictability of information; background and foreground, which describes the relevancy of information to its greater context; and main and subordinate clauses, which are used to create hierarchies of information in a text. Dickens (2009) unites these categories by asserting that there is “a correlation in English – and to a lesser extent in Arabic,” between foregrounding and main clauses, and backgrounding and subordinate clauses (1099). He thus proposes conflating main with foreground and subordinate with background and combines this pairing with the theme-rheme pairing. Four possible options for categorizing information then result (Dickens 2009: 1110):

<i>Main-theme</i>	foreground, predictable (known-oriented) information
<i>Subordinate-theme</i>	background, predictable (known-oriented) information
<i>Main-rheme</i>	foreground unpredictable (not known-oriented) information
<i>Subordinate-rheme</i>	background, unpredictable (not known-oriented) information

Returning to (10a), we can identify the two clauses under our new system. *After graduating from college* is a subordinate-theme – it gives information that is more likely to be known (so it is a theme), but it comes in a subordinate clause which does not carry the discourse forward, so it is definitely subordinate. Meanwhile, *he went to New York* is a main-rheme: it is less predictable information, contained in an independent clause, and it brings up a new topic, moving the discourse forward. Let's now add information in the form of a subordinate-rheme clause:

(10b) After graduating from college, he went to New York, a city he'd never seen. The phrase *a city he'd never seen* doesn't express a complete thought, so it is definitely a subordinate clause, and it is information that was not expected (but does in turn describe New York, the information which proceeds it), so it is a rheme.

Recall that Arabic and English show a tendency to use different word orders (VSO vs. SVO), but the best way to reproduce theme-rheme order from one language to the next is to mimic word order. Adding to this disparity are the different ways that Arabic and English combine subordinate and main clauses. Writing (10b) in Arabic, for example, might require turning the subordinate-rheme into its own complete sentence:

- (11) بعد التخرج من الكلية ذهب الى نيو يورك و هي مدينة لم يراها من قبل
 ba'ada al-taharruj min al-kulliya dhahaba ila niy yurk
 after the-graduation from the-college went.3SGM to New York
- wa hiya medīnat-a lum yarā-ha mn qabl
 and it city-INDEF not see.3SGM-3SGF from before

Lit. 'After graduating from college, he went to New York City, and he had not seen it [the city] before.'

What was a subordinate clause in (10) becomes a main clause of its own in (11). In (10), the subordinate-rheme suggests some degree of optimistic naivete in the young college graduate; in (11), what was a phrase describing New York and his relation to it becomes a complete sentence of its own.

This sentence exemplifies a crucial difference between clause coordination in English and Arabic, a matter that Dickens (2009) explores deeply and that will form the heart of the linguistic analyses of my translations. (10) and (11) communicate four distinct elements, but they do so in different ways. Both sentences begin with a prepositional phrases containing the subordinate-theme, but they introduce the subordinate-rheme differently. In (10), the subordinate-rheme is a dependent clause (*a place he'd never been*), which in English we can set off from the main clause with a comma. To translate this dependent clause into Arabic as literally as possible requires making it effectively an independent clause; the phrase would actually read *wa hiya medīnat-a lum yarā-ha min qabl* ("and it was a city that he had not seen [it] before").

4.2.3 Conjunctions in Arabic and English

Dickens (2009) studies these translating phenomena at length, observing how different ways of creating junction in Arabic and English yield difficulties of semantic equivalence in translating between the two languages. There are three types of junctions, and they occur in both English and Arabic: coordination, disjunction, and adjunction. The

poems translated in this paper used almost exclusively for purposes of conjunction the coordinator *wa*, so I will limit discussion here to his theories about coordination.

On the level of categories, Dickens (2009) asserts that categories of junction words in Arabic behave similarly to those in English, with coordinators and disjuncts demonstrating enough commonalities to be grouped together and adjuncts claiming a distinct category. More specifically, he proposes that there is no discrete syntactic distinction between coordinators and disjunctions. For example, words like *for* and *though*, although classified as disjuncts, can behave very much like coordinators (Dickens 2009: 1088). He thus re-categorizes coordinators as existing in a *semantic cline* with disjuncts. By this he means a scale of varying levels of coordination: while coordinators such as *and* establish an equivalent and non-adverbial relationship between two clauses such that neither is subordinate to the other, disjuncts like *since* establish some degree of indirectness and an adverbial relationship between the clauses (Dickens 2009: 1089). Disjuncts display some coordinator-like properties, so they are grouped on a continuum with coordinators.

Establishing the coordinators-disjuncts grouping is useful to our purposes because coordinators are used far more frequently, and with greater semantic range, in Arabic than in English. For example, Arabic places the coordinators *wa* or *fa-* between every item in a list, and *wa* and *fa-* commonly begin sentences in Arabic – a trait that is highly marked for English coordinators⁶.

⁶ When *wa* is used to mark the divisions between independent clauses or complete sentences in Arabic, and neither clause needs to be subordinated to the other, the coordinator is generally omitted in the

Dickens (2009) observes that most Arabic conjunctions display greater flexibility in foregrounding or backgrounding information. A couple examples will demonstrate this relationship in action:

(12a) فتعالّت ضحكات البنات بينما انفجر غضب فواز

fa-ta'ālat	ḍahakāt	al-bināt	baynamaa	infajara
so-rose.3SGF	laughs	the-girls	while	exploded.3SGM
ghaḍab	Fawaz			
anger	(of) Fawaz			

Lit. “The girls' laughter rose, while Fawaz's anger exploded.”⁷

This is an excerpt Dickens draws from the short story “Fire and Water”, by Syrian writer Zakariyaa Taamir. This literal translation of the sentence is grammatical English, but in its greater context it is problematic. Fawaz is poor, and these are richer girls who are laughing at his clothes, and in the next line, Fawaz turns to face them in anger, ready to respond. In English, *while* introduces a subordinate clause, but the information that follows it in the literal translation is essential to the story itself, and arguably more important than the rising of the girls' laughter. Relegating this crucial information to a subordinate clause, which in English typically contains background information, treats it as inconsequential, when it should actually be foregrounded (Dickens 2009: 1102). In fact, a more idiomatic translation reverses the subordination structure:

(12b) When he heard the girls' laughter, Fawaz exploded with rage.⁸

Dickens (2009) concludes from this and other examples that “Arabic more readily

English translation and replaced with punctuation (usually a period).

⁷ (12a), which starts with the particle *fa-* exemplifies the tendency in Arabic, as noted earlier in this chapter, to begin sentences with a conjunction.

⁸ St. John 1999: 32.

allows both adjuncts and disjuncts in final (rhematic) position to convey foreground information” (1102). Conversely, the Arabic coordinators *wa* and *fa* “display a degree of flexibility in their foregrounding/backgrounding potential which is not shared by English 'and', which consistently foregrounds both coordinated clauses” (Dickens 2009: 1112). Here's an example in Arabic of a coordinator linking two clauses of unequal weight to the discourse:⁹

(13a) يولد الاطفال فيستقبلون الحياة بالصرايح
 yūlid al-aṭfāl fa-yistaqbilūn al-ḥayāt bi-l-ṣarīkh
 born.PASS.3SG the-children and-greet.3SGMPL the-life with-the-screaming
 Lit. “Children are born, and they greet life with screaming.”

The use of a coordinator suggests that the two clauses are of equal weight to the text, but in fact the rest of the Arabic sentence describes how one boy (the protagonist) comes out of the womb laughing instead, rendering the second clause more pertinent to the overall text than the first. That children are born is also an incredibly trivial observation, almost a rhetorical comment; in English such a comment, especially when it is only ancillary to the topic at hand, is usually expressed in a subordinate clause. Indeed, that is what Dickens (2009: 1115) does in an idiomatic translation:

(13b) When children are born, they greet life with a scream.

Dickens also suggests that *fa* 'and, and so, so' in this instance may have the effect of foregrounding the clause it heads *while also backgrounding* the clause that preceded it. This interpretation does serve to explain the presentation of unequally weighed semantic clauses as seemingly equivalent, but neither Dickens nor I will explore it further; the

⁹ Saalih, At-Tayyib 1964:11.

point is that a coordinator like *fa* can accommodate background and foreground information in ways that English coordinators cannot, and can influence whether certain clauses are perceived as background or foreground information.

4.2.4 *The pragmatics of the coordinator 'wa'*

The coordinator *wa* is fairly analogous to the English *and*; both “have a basic conventional semantic meaning and a large list of pragmatic meanings” (Yagi and Ali 2008: 617). Yagi and Ali (2008) trace the history of how *wa* has been understood by Arab grammarians. The main conflict is over the question of sequence – some grammarians think *wa* is used “for sheer combination,” while others argue that it implies or even entails a sequence (Yagi and Ali 2008: 618). They conclude that *wa* “implies sequence only pragmatically,” and that sequencing or lack thereof is determined by how the speaker is understood in relation to the Gricean maxims of manner and quantity. If a speaker uses *wa*, they reason, he is either conveying information in the order in which it happened (he is adhering to the principle of manner, of giving information in the proper order), or he is conveying information wherein the sequence does not matter (adhering to the principle of quantity, wherein a speaker is expected not to withhold any relevant information) (Yagi and Ali 2008: 626). Translating the coordinator *wa* in Tuqan's poetry, then, is a matter of interpretation as well as a matter of negotiating subordinate and main clauses, so I will translate *wa* not uniformly as *and* but with an eye to the sequencing it may or may not imply.

5 ANALYSIS

The translated poems can be found in the Appendix; here I draw on excerpts to highlight the tension between the demands of sentential equivalence and the desire to create a coherent, cohesive poetic narrative in English. Matters of semantic weight and syntactic variability almost inevitably overlap, so the examples have not been divided into sections. Though I may mention considerations of stylistics as they pertain to the examples and reflect my efforts to translate according to certain aforementioned principles, the analysis is mostly linguistic. In 5.2, I begin to synthesize the literary and linguistic aspects of these thesis with in-depth discussion of a few examples from 5.1

5.1 Linguistic analysis

Let us begin with a passage that translated rather smoothly. Consider the opening line of “My Sad City”:

(14) يوم رأينا الموت و الخيانة
 yūm rāeinā al-mowt wa al-khiyāna
 day saw.1PL the-death and the-deception

Trans. 'The day we saw the death and deception'

This line lent itself quite well to the translation process; the subject 'we' is present in the verb itself, so there's no need to contend with the typical VSO vs. SVO word order disparity between the two languages. As a result, the line translates smoothly to English – my translation is nearly a literal interpretation of the Arabic. My only deviations from a literal interpretation were to translate *al-khiyāna*, whose meaning might be more accurately reflected by words like *faithlessness* or *treason*, as *deception*, for purposes of alliteration; and to translate *yūm* as *the day* instead of something more situationally

appropriate, such as *on the day when*. *Yūm* in isolation simply means *day*, but in this line it is modified by the rest of the sentence, so it becomes definite. In refraining from using *on the day when*, I created a rhythm of monosyllabic words followed by d-initial words, which gives the line a heavy and portentous feel.

However, there were lines where syntactic concerns, such as distance between referents, made translation problematic. Lines 4-6 from “Existence” demonstrate such a difficulty:

(15)	و كنت لي إشراق نور جديد	4	
	wa kunta l-ī ishrāq nūr jadīd		
	and were.2SGM to-1SG radiance light new		
Lit.	'And you were to me the radiance of a new light'		
	من عتمة المجهول	5	أطلعه قدر
	min 'atma al-majhūl	¥	qadr āṭla'a-hu
	from darkness the-unknown		fate appear.CAUS.3SGM-3SGM
Lit.	'From [the] darkness of the unknown	/	Fate caused it to appear.'

Translation: “And you were to me the radiance of a new light/From the darkness of the unknown,/ revealed by fate.”

There are two issues at work here. One difficulty is that the object of the causative verb *āṭla'a* in line 6 is *ishrāq*, which appears in line 4. If *radiance* was repeated in line 6 to keep the original poem's referential structure, it would elongate the line and disrupt the rhythm of the poem.

The second issue is thematic. First, line 6 acts as a complete sentence in the Arabic version; although there's no coordinator such as *wa* being used, it is of equal weight to line 4. Second, in line 4 the radiance is rhematic, but in line 6 it acts thematically – the rhematic information is that fate reveals this radiance. The Arabic line

6 dutifully places theme before rheme, but replicating this order in English requires syntactic changes.

Also, lines 5 and 6 are shorter than line 4 and semantically subordinate to it – they both describe the radiance. Line 5 is subordinate in both Arabic and English, but line 6 is not. In Arabic, subordinate-rheme information appears in both subordinate in coordinated clauses, whereas in English it is generally confined to subordinate clauses.

How then to subordinate line 6 to line 4? Using a passive participle allows *radiance* to act thematically in line 6 (although it is not explicitly stated), introduces *fate* as a rheme, and turns line 6 into a subordinate clause. The verb *ṭala‘a*, which is the root of the verb in line 6, means 'to rise, ascend, appear, show,' so I chose to use *reveal*, one of the less common meanings of *āṭla‘a*, but one which retains its sense of 'to cause to rise, ascend, appear, etc.'

My solution is also supported by the structure of the poem itself. Lines 5 and 6 are indented in the original copy of the Arabic text, so one might expect them to be syntactically and semantically subordinate to line 4. Looking at this structure, we see that lines 5 and 6 carry unequal weight in Arabic (one is a subordinate clause, the other coordinate to line 4). Why is there more trivial information (line 5) between these two bits of foreground information (lines 4 and 6)? Doesn't this distance strain the link between the pronoun -hu in line 6 and its antecedent *ishrāq* in line 4? Although in the translation I favor faithfulness to the source text's structure over my own inclinations, I'd prefer that line 6 precede line 5, and that the translated version read “You were to me the

suggests that the two thoughts, though related, are definitely independent of each other.

In translation, I found that these passive constructions were essential to maintaining the source text word order. Another example where it facilitated the source text word order is in lines 31-35 of “I found it”:

- (17) بحيرة رائقة ساجية 31
 buḥaira rā'iqa sājia
 lake pure tranquil
 Lit. 'A clear and tranquil lake'
- ان ولفت مرّة / في قلبها الصافي ذئاب البشر 33
 32
 in walafat marra / fi qalbi-ha al-ṣāfi dhe'āb al-bashr
 if lapped.3SGF times in heart-3SGF the-pure wolves the-man
 Lit. 'If [they] lapped at times/In its pure heart, the wolves of mankind'
- او عبثت فيها رياح القدر 34
 ow 'abathat fi-ha riyāh al-qadr
 of fooled around.3SGF in-3SGF winds the-fate
 Lit. “Or the winds of fate fooled around with it [the lake]”
- تعكرت فترة 35
 ta'akarat fatra
 muddied.3SGF [for] a time
 Lit. “[The winds of fate] muddied a time”

Translation: “A lake, clear and tranquil./If at times its pure heart/Was lapped at by the wolves of mankind/Or the winds of fate played in the lake/And muddied it briefly”

Again, to introduce the theme before the agent in English and maintain the Arabic word order, a passive construction must be used. This worked for lines 32-33, where the wolves of mankind lap at the pure heart of the lake. Having introduced a new aspect of the lake (its pure heart), the next line (34) refers back to the lake itself – we know this because the pronoun -ha is feminine, and thus does not refer to the heart (masculine *qalb*). In the English translation we lose these useful gender distinctions, and thus the

‘ann-ī	ghadan	ḍirāwa	hadhī	al-ḥaiyāt
from-1SG	tomorrow	greed	this.F	the-life

Lit. “from me tomorrow, [the] greed of this life”

Translation: “We are together tonight,/but you will be hidden from me tomorrow/by the cruelty of this life.”

What's unusual in this excerpt is the distance between the verb *tuṭwī* and its subject, *ḍirāwa*. This distance between verb and subject can happen in English as well – the subject just usually happens to come first. In the Arabic excerpt in (18), one hears about the act of concealing and then listens to the rest of the sentence waiting to hear *what* does the concealing. This is not to say that that's necessarily how the sentence is processed cognitively; in Arabic this *is* the standard way of organizing information – verb before subject. To recreate this sequence of ideas in English, one must make the agent, in this case the 'concealer,' the less predictable information. Using a passive construction (*be hidden*) turns *you* into the theme of the English sentence and makes *the greed of this life* rhematic information that is expected to come afterwards.

Thus the change here is a matter of both syntax and semantics: in Arabic, it's normal to wait to hear the agent until later on in the sentence – in English, this is accomplished mostly by using the passive voice. The semantic impact of this change is that the target text reinforces the centrality in the sentence of the relationship between the speaker and the addressee – establishing that the fact of their parting is more important to the poem as a whole than the question of why they are parted. It's an interesting artistic choice, an emphatic decision in Arabic that makes the English version more strained and tense, both dramatically and syntactically.

Note also that in (18) the two Arabic clauses, despite their unequal lengths and relevance to the overall text, are joined by the *wa* in line 1 and thus are coordinate clauses. If we return to the literal translation of these first three lines, we find that this junction feels inappropriate in English: “We are together tonight,/ and it conceals you from me tomorrow,/ the greed of this life.” In English, using the coordinator *but* seems to more accurately convey the relationship between the two clauses. Recall that Dickens places coordinators such as *but* on a semantic cline with disjuncts, meaning that coordinators and disjuncts indicate varying levels of coordination. In this case, *but* serves our purposes better than *and*; it maintains the equal weight of the two clauses while establishing an oppositional relationship between them.

Here's an example where *wa* translation was straightforward and unproblematic:

(19)	و أمسكت انفاسها المدينة	و	أغلقت نوافذ السماء	و	تراجع المدّ
	tarāja‘a	al-medd	/	wa	āghlaqat nawāfidh
	retreated.3SGF	the-tide		and	closed.3SGF windows
	al-samā’	/	wa	āmsakat	anfāsa-ha al-medīna
	the-sky		and	held.3SGF	breaths-SGF the-city

Lit. “The tide retreated / and the windows to the sky closed / and the city held its breaths”

Trans. “The floods fell back / The windows to heaven closed / And the city held its breath”

In (19), the Arabic coordinator *wa* behaves just as English *and* does, making translation of these lines straightforward. The three images that are linked by *wa* are semantically independent of each other, and as none references something in the preceding image, there is no need to translate with a different English coordinator that would indicate a relation between them.

The word order in the third phrase of this excerpt is marked: the object precedes the subject. There's no equivalent way to translate this markedness into English, and the repetitive structure carries over nicely into English as it is. While (19) was an example of Arabic conjunction and English conjunction in cooperation, (20) demonstrates the a less harmonious situation involving the coordinating *wa*:

(20)		مدينتي الحزينة	¥	و اختنقت بغصّة البلاء	¥	ترمّد الرجاء
	tammada	al-rijā'	/	wa	ikhtanaqat	bighaṣṣa
	burned-to-ashes.3SGM	the-hope		and	strangled.3SGF	agony
	al-bilā'	/	medīna-ti	al-ḥazīna		
	the-trials		city-1SG	the-sad		

Lit. "The hope burned to ashes / And the agony of the trials strangled / My sad city"

Trans. "Hope burned/ As an agony of misfortune strangled/ My sad city"

Translating this sentence into English was largely a matter of interpretation. As we have seen, the Arabic *wa*, though analogous to the English *and*, does not necessarily imply an equal relationship between the two clauses it connects. In (20), the first line expresses a complete thought in just two words, and this contrasts strongly with the longer clause formed by the following two lines. Also, there's a stronger sense of the connection between the two clauses in (20) than between those in (19); it is the kind of relationship that in English is better expressed by a coordinator with a narrower or more specific semantic range, such as *while*. It's also possible to interpret this *wa* as being the adverbial *wa*, which would mean that the clause contained in the latter two lines should be interpreted as an adverbial description of what else was happening while the hope was burning to ashes.

My translation fits both interpretations of the excerpt; the word *as* operates somewhere between conjunction and disjunction in this instance, giving a sense of simultaneity for the two clauses while also emphasizing the first line.¹⁰ This also serves to compensate for something I could not reproduce in the target text. In the source text the first line is very powerful, as it packs a lot of semantic weight into just two words. I could not capture the full semantics of it in just two words, so I traded the power of the image in the source text for a heavier semantic weight in the target text.

Certain pairs of Arabic independent clauses gave me particular difficulty in translation. (21) is a fairly straightforward example:

(21) أهكذا في موسم القطاف
 a-hakadha fi mausim al-qīṭāf
 Q-thus in season DEF-harvest
 Lit. 'Is it thus in harvest time'
 تحترق الغلال و الثمار
 tahtaraqu al-ghilāl wa al-thimār
 burn.3SGF DEF-crops and DEF-fruits
 Lit. 'The crops and fruits are blazing'

Trans. “Are you thus at harvest time, your crops and fruits aflame?”

What seems implicit here is that the second line is subordinate to the first – it defines what the author indicates with the word *thus*. There were several ways to achieve this hierarchy; I also considered the free *-ing* construction (21a) and using a prepositional phrase (21b):

(21a) “Are you thus at harvest time, your crops and fruits burning?”

¹⁰ If this description of the behavior of *as* as a conjunction feels unfounded, consider a simple exercise. If we place the word *just* before *as* in such a structure such as (24), the latter phrase becomes more adverbial, and therefore subordinate to the earlier phrase.

(21b) “Are you thus at harvest time, with your crops and fruits burning/ablaze?”

Ultimately, I chose *aflame* because it created consonance with *fruits*. In this instance, because the poem invokes the sad city and asks it to describe itself, a translation with a disjunct or adjunct was not appropriate.

In (22), we find a more difficult instance of juxtaposed independent clauses:

(22) مخضّب الخطى / و الحزن في مدينتي يدبّ عاريا
 wa al-ḥuznfi medīna-ti yudabbu ‘ārian
 and the-sadness in city-1SG crawls.3SGM nakedly
 / mukhaḍḍib al-khiṭa
 dyed the-steps

Lit. “And the sadness in my city crawls nakedly / The steps [are] dyed”

Trans. “The sorrow in my city crawls shamefully,/ Staining her steps.”

When independent clauses, like those found in these two Arabic lines, do not have a coordinator between them, we assume that they are given equal semantic and syntactic weight. However, the semantic relationship between the two clauses is unclear, as the literal translation above should make evident. Again, in Arabic such conjunction is the standard, but in English the proximity of two unrelated thoughts feels strange, especially because, although the two clauses are not explicitly syntactically connected, they contain some semantic similarities – they both deal with movement along the ground, and (as my translation indicates) the word *mukhaḍḍib* carries a sense of being stained, spoiled or shamed, which reminds us of ‘*ārian* 'nakedly' in the preceding line.

The specific nature of the second line also troubles its relationship with the first. It seems like a subordinate-rheme, or unpredictable information that is backgrounded, yet

because it is an independent clause, set against *another* independent clause featuring a *main-rheme*, it feels (in English) like an overload of new, unpredictable information. To make this palatable in English, we need to subordinate one clause to the other; in this case, I employed what Dickens (2009) calls the 'free *-ing*' construction, subordinating the second line to the first.

5.2 Linguistic and literary analysis

I began the translation process with the goals of maintaining the same *overall form* and *arrangement of ideas*. As sections 4 and 5.1 have demonstrated, these goals were complicated by the syntactic and semantic disparities between English and Arabic. In terms of syntax, Arabic word order is more flexible than English word order. In semantic terms, Arabic phrases are coordinated differently from English phrases; we might summarize this difference by saying that Arabic allows independent clauses to relate to each other with greater flexibility than English does; more specifically, new and less important information which is often foregrounded (put in independent or main clauses) in Arabic is more idiomatically expressed in English in backgrounded (dependent or subordinate) clauses.

It is easier to speak conclusively of the linguistic ramifications of translation than the effects translation has on the experience of reading the poem. As the examples in section 5 indicated, one way to maintain word order in translation was to make sentences passive, using a passive verb or participle. The word order is maintained, but at what semantic cost? For example, recall (15) from section 5.1. What is the difference between:

(23a) *And you were to me the radiance of a new light,
From the darkness of the unknown,
Revealed by fate*

(actual translation)

and

(23b) *And you were to me the radiance of a new light
From the darkness of the unknown
Fate revealed it*

(literal translation)

The answer is not as simple as *active* vs. *passive*. I used (23a), which as a single sentence flows more smoothly than the second, more literal translation (23b). Its second and third lines are united by their role as modifiers of the first. (23b) has its own merits; it remains faithful to the Arabic original in that the third line is an independent clause using the active voice. The semantics of the three lines changes significantly, placing far more semantic weight on *fate*, and accordingly less emphasis on the first line. The second and third lines pair up against the first, giving us in effect two lines of nearly equal length and weight, with *fate* taking a more central and agentic role. These lines must also be considered within the greater context of the poem; how one decides to translate them will have a bearing, for example, on the preceding three lines, whose structure in the original Arabic is nearly identical.

This example characterizes the complexities of prioritizing word order or arrangement of ideas in Arabic-English translation. Syntactic changes were required to maintain word order, and they came at the cost of significant semantic disturbance. In the original Arabic, the syntactic relationships between adjacent lines in Tuqan's poems are often vague to an extent that idiomatic English will not tolerate. This exercise has

demonstrated, then, that in Arabic-English translation more specific relationships between clauses must be established, often at the cost of the connotations of the original text. One can read (23), in the original Arabic, as two independent clauses (the first line, and the next two grouped together), meant to bear equal weight, but English favors a relationship of subordination instead, and as this example illustrates, translation requires this greater specificity.

The flexibility of Arabic syntax proved less of a challenge to translation. One example we might draw on is (18); here are the literal and actual translations:

(24a) *We are together tonight and it conceals you*
From me tomorrow
The greed of this life
 (literal translation)

(24b) *We are together tonight,*
But you will be hidden from me tomorrow
By the cruelty of this life
 (idiomatic translation)

As we observed in section 5, the agent of *conceals* is not articulated until the third line of the literal translation. In English, this structuring of ideas can only be achieved in a passive construction. The denotative meaning of the text remains intact (the two people are separated, the cruelty of destiny is responsible), but the shift of semantic roles alters the connotative meaning of the lines. Leaving aside my lexical changes, the move from active to passive voice in general gives a sense of fate as a distant meddler, rather than a deliberate force singling out the speaker. The shift to passive also detracts from the sense of helplessness that permeates the poem; the speaker is continually being manipulated,

and the change to passive is a slight but significant step away from this sense of submission.

Finally, changing to passive forced a serious shift in the rhythm of the poem; the second line of the excerpt, which in the original Arabic was the shortest, is now the longest; a line that once consisted of a prepositional phrase and an adverbial now consists of an entire independent clause. As the literal translation indicates, the original text contained all the action in the first line; now the first two lines seem to be of equal semantic weight.

This excerpt, then, illustrates English syntax straining to its limits to accommodate an Arabic sentence structure. (23) and (24) brought syntactic and junctional issues to light. In each Arabic excerpt (represented above by the literal translations), two independent clauses were related ambiguously to each other and to the adjacent subordinate clauses. Although it was not the task of this paper, the discussion here should both reflect the manifold ramifications that translation has on a poem as a specifically literary text and make evident the amount of analysis (with five poems on hand) left untouched.

6 CONCLUSION

Based on our analyses, Arabic-English translation that seeks to be theme-rheme equivalent and of a similar structure across the languages, and also idiomatic in the target language, requires frequent use of the passive voice and creation of main-subordinate clausal relationships out of coordinated independent clauses.

Thus we can conclude that, although the syntactic and semantic disparities between Arabic and English did not force changes in the denotative meaning of the text, they have significant repercussions for the connotative meaning of the text. Doing much more than speculating as to what those changes are was not the purpose of this paper. English simply can't withhold the agent of an active verb across several lines of poetry; nor does it typically leave two independent clauses in ambiguous relation.

In writing this paper, I set out to explore the interface between literary translation and linguistics. In choosing theme-rheme structures as my constant, I made a deliberate, linguistics-framed choice in a literary setting. Although the connotative meanings of the text escaped my control in translation, it could be argued that preserving the denotative meanings is the most one *can* do in translating poetry; that presenting the raw materials, in the same overall arrangement as in the source text, is in itself a linguistic and translational feat. In this sense, then, this paper offers a framework and guidance as to how to do so.

Appendix: Tuqan's poems

My Sad City

by Fadwa Tuqan

translated by Charlie Huntington

“On the day of Zionist occupation”

مدينتي الحزينة

لفدوى طوقان

ترجمها تشارلي هنتينغتون

"يوم الاحتلال الصهيوني"

The day we saw the death and deception,

The floods fell back,

The windows to heaven closed,

And the city held its breath.

Day the waves retreated, day that

The ugliness of the abyss

Exposed its face to the light.

Hope burned

As an agony of misfortune strangled

My sad city.

5

10

يوم رأينا الموت و الخيانة

تراجع المدّ

و أغلقت نوافذ السماء

و أمسكت انفاسها المدينة

يوم اندحار الموج ، يوم أسلمت

بشاعة القيعان للضياء وجهها

ترمد الرجاء

و اختنقت بغصّة البلاء

مدينتي الحزينة

Gone are the children and songs;

Not a glimpse, not an echo.

The sorrow in my city crawls shamefully,

Staining her steps.

The silence in my city –

Silence like mountains at rest,

Like a dark night, a painful silence

Burdened

With the weight of death and defeat.

Alas! Oh, my sad, silent city

Are you thus at harvest time,

Your crops and fruits aflame?

Alas! Oh, what an end!

Alas! Oh, what an end!

15

20

اختنقت الاطفال و الاغاني

لا ظلّ ، لا صدی

و الحزن في مدينتي يدبّ عاريا

مخضبّ الخطى

و الصمت في مدينتي

الصمت كالجبال رابض

كالليل غامض ، الصمت فاجع

محمل

بوطة الموت و بالهزيمة

اواه يا مدينتي الصامتة الحزينة

أهكذا في موسم القطف

تحترق الغلال و الثمار؟

اواه يا نهاية المطاف

اواه يا نهاية المطاف

Existence

by Fadwa Tuqan

translated by Charlie Huntington

وجود

لفدوى طوقان

ترجمها تشارلي هنتنغتون

In life, I was a question without home;

In the enfolding darkness,

My answer was concealed.

And you were to me the radiance of a new light,

From the darkness of the unknown, 5

Revealed by fate.

The stars rotated around it,

Rotated twice...

Until it came to me,

That unique radiance. 10

The blackness broke

And in two tremors

I found in my hand

My missing answer.

كنت على الدنيا سؤالاً شريد

في الغيب المسدول

جوابه استتر

و كنت لي اشراق نور جديد

من عتمة المجهول

أطلعه قدر

دار به الفلك

و دار مرتين

حتى انتحى الىّ

اسعاعه الفريد

و انقشع الحلك

و في انتفاضتين

وجدت في يدي

جوابي الفقيد

Oh you, oh you near and far, 15

Don't remember the fading

Of your spirit in flames.

My universe and yours,

Ours, the two poets;

Despite the great distance, 20

Existence unites the two.

يا انت ، يا انت القريب البعيد

لا تذكر الأفول

روحك يستعر

الكون لي و لك

لنا ، لشاعرين

رغم المدى القصي

ضمّهما وجود

I found it

by Fadwa Tuqan

translated by Charlie Huntington

وجتها

لفدوى طوقان

ترجمها تشارلي هنتنغتون

I found it on a beautiful, sunny day.

I found it after great loss:

Fresh verdant soil,

Wet and flourishing.

I found it as the sun passed over palm trees 5

Scattering over the grassy gardens

Its golden bouquets.

It was an April generous and fertile

In seeds, warmth, and the spring sun.

وجدتها في يوم صحو جميل

وجدتها بعد ضياع طويل

جديدة التربة مخضوضرة

نديانة مزهرة

وجدتها و الشمس عبر النخيل

تنثر في الحدائق المعشبية

باقامتها المذهبة

و كان نيسان السخي المريع

و الحب و الدفاء و شمس الربيع

I found it after great loss: 10

An evergreen-fresh bough

In which birds seek refuge,

So it lodges them in its protective shade.

If a violent wind crosses it someday,

Thunderous and trembling, 15

It bends slightly,

Twists before the wind lightly.

As the thunderstorm dies down

The limb levels out,

Its water-heavy leaves quenched of thirst; 20

Its pliant body did not shatter

Under the wind's hand:

The branch remains as it was.

As if its trials did not break it

It laughs, with the beauty in all that it 25

Sees, in the radiance of a star,

In the lightness of a breeze,

وجدتها بعد ضياع طويل

غصنا طريا دائم الاخضرار

تاوي له الاطيار

فيحتويها في حماه الظليل

ان عبرت يوما به عاصفة

راعدة من حوله راجفة

مال خفيفا تحتها و انحنى

امامها ليّنا

و تهدأ الزوبعة القاصفة

و يستوي الغصن كما كانا

مشعشع الأوراق ريّانا

لم تتحطم اعطافة اللدنة

تحت يد الريح

و يمضي كما

كان ، كأن لم تثنه محنة

يضاحك الجمال في كل ما

يراه ، في اشراقه النجمة

في هفة النسمة

In the sun, the dew, and the clouds.

في الشمس في الانداء في الغيمة

I found it on a beautiful, sunny day,
After loss, after a long search: 30
A lake, clear and tranquil.
If at times its pure heart
Was lapped at by the wolves of mankind,
Or the winds of fate played in the lake
And muddied it briefly, 35
It cleared with the clarity of a crystal
And became the moon's face:
A pool of blueness and light
Where the guiding stars bathe.

وجدتها في يوم صحو جميل
بعد ضياع بعد بحث طويل
بحيرة راتقة ساجية
ان ولغت مرّة
في قلبها الصافي ذئاب البشر
او عبثت فيها رياح القدر
تعكرت فترة
ثم صفت صفاء بلّور
و رجعت مرآة وجه القمر
و مسبح الزرقة و النور
و مستحّم الانجم الهاديه

I found it! Oh you tempest, blow 40
And mask the sun's face with clouds
As you like, and you days, turn my fate
From sunny and cheerful
To sullen and gloomy;
Even then my lights do not fade 45
And all the darkness that has been
Extending blackly through my life,
Enfolding it night after night,
Is gone, buried in the grave of the past,
Since the day my soul found itself. 50

وجدتها ، يا عاصفات اعصفي
و قنّعي بالسحب وجه السماء
ما شئت ، يا ايام دوري كما
قدّر لي ، مشمسة ضاحكة
او جهمة حالكة
فإن انواري لا تنطفي
و كلّ ما قد كان من ظلّ
يمتد مسودا على عمري
يلفه ليلا على ليل
مضى ثوى في هوّة الامس
يوم اهتدت نفسي الى نفسي

And nothing remains

by Fadwa Tuqan

translated by Charlie Huntington

و لا شيء يبقي

لفدوى طوقان

ترجمها تشارلي حنتنغتن

We are together tonight,
But you'll be hidden from me tomorrow
By the cruelty of this life.
The seas will separate you from me
And oh! If only I could see you; 5
I'll never know where
Your path led you, which course
You took, and what unknown destination
Your steps pushed you to reach.
You will depart, and the thief of all beauty, 10
And all that's dear to us,
Will steal this happiness from us,
Emptying our hands of it.

معا نحن هذا المساء و تطويك
عني غدا
ضراوة هذي الحياة
ستقصيك عني بحار
و هيهات بعد أراك
ساجهل دوما الى اين افضي
مسيرك ، ايّ اتجاه
اخذت ، و ايّ مصير خفي
حثثت اليه خطاك
ستمضي ، و سارق كل جميل
و غالٍ لدينا
سيسرق هذي الهناء منا
و يفرغ منها يدينا

Tomorrow at sunrise you'll leave, like a ghost,
Turning into a delicate cloud, passing 15
Quickly in the summer noon.
Your scent, your scent has the essence of life
In my heart,
As the earth gulps up the gift of rain
And the fragrance of the trees. 20
I will miss it when you leave tomorrow,
And nothing remains,
Just as everything beautiful, all that's dear to us,
Is lost, lost, and nothing remains.

غدا مع وجه الصباح ستمضي كطيف
كظلّ غمام لطيف عبر
سريع الخطى في ظهيرة صيف
و عطرك – عطر له فوحان الحياة
بقلبي
و رائحة الأرض غنّ عطاء المطر
و نفع الشجر
سأفقدّه حين تمضي غدا
و لا شيء يبقي
ككلّ جميل و غالٍ لدينا
يضيع ، يضيع و لا شيء يبقي

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