



Translating the Glorious Quran: Arberry's approach as a Case in Point

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Abstract— *The paper is an investigation into the approach to translating the Quran adopted by the English orientalist A.J. Arberry. This study aims to follow his soul which is felt to be squeezed into this work while living hard personal experience he referred to in the closing paragraph of his preface to the 1964 edition of the 'Koran Interpreted'. The study hypothesizes that Arberry's approach is appropriate to a large extent since he believes that to understand the Quran, appreciate it, one has to take it as a whole, and that for its translation to be successful depends on the translator because the reader's role in comprehending the Quran is fundamental. The study has come up with the conclusion that Arberry's rendering of the glorious Quran differs from others in the spirit and motive, and demonstrates a serious attempt at reflecting a glimpse of the captivating beauty found in it.*

Keywords— *Arberry's approach, style, objectivity, translatability and untranslatability.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Glorious Quran is a magnificent document that has been known for fourteen centuries because of its matchlessness or inimitability (Irving1985,2). The Glorious Quran is not a missionary manual but a record of experience. It forms both a message or "an ideology" and a book or "scripture". So, the translation of this book permits everyone Muslims or non-Muslim, to understand the sacred document itself even though they do not understand Arabic.

The translation of religious texts demands an additional consideration because of the sanctity of the text (Ilyas 1989,89). Also, the meanings of a religious text cannot be easily determined since the textual material of the religious texts is marked with many ambiguities. Such ambiguities are owing to the nature of the religious text: the language employed in these texts; and the temporal factor as they belong to remote periods. Yet, the linguistic content and the situational context can help the translator in the area of translating religious texts (see EL-Awa 2006, 9-13).

(Al-Maghdawi 2012,30-31) advances ten conditions should be taken into consideration in rendering the

meanings of the Quran, among them are that the translator should be well aware of the denotations of terms in both SI and TL in different contexts, the translator should be well acquainted with the meaning of the legal terms in the Quran, and the interpretative translation should be brief and concise, explaining the meanings by using the best expressions with the best style.

In this study, an attempt will be made to investigate Arberry's approach to translating the Glorious Quran. He states that it is his purpose to produce something which may be accepted as echoing however faintly the sublime rhetoric of the Quran. It tries to follow traces of his soul which we feel he has generously squeezed into this work while living the exceptionally hard personal experience he referred to in the closing paragraph of his preface to the 1964 edition of *The Koran Interpreted*:

This task was undertaken, not lightly, and carried out to its conclusion at a time of great personal distress, through which it comforted and sustained the writer in a manner for which he will always be grateful. He, therefore, acknowledges his gratitude to whatever power or power inspired the man and the prophet who first recited these

scriptures. I pray that this interpretation, poor echo though it is of the glorious original, may instruct, please, and in some degree inspire those who read it”.

II. A.J. ARBERRY AND THE GLORIOUS QURAN

A.J. Arberry is a well-known English orientalist. Filled with admiration of the beauties of the Quran, he could not see how people possibly failed to recognize that, as a work of supreme literary excellence, the Quran couldn't be handled in the same way as the Old Testament. He accused such critical translators as Dr. Richard Bell of imitations of the Old Testament scholars who preceded them in criticizing the Quran. He wrote, "disciples of the Higher Criticisms, having watched with fascinated admiration how their masters played havoc with the traditional sacrosanctity of the Bible, threw themselves with brisk enthusiasm into the congenial task of demolishing the Quran" (1955, 10-11).

So (Arberry 1955,11) openly accuses their critical work of having a destructive effect on the masterpiece they handled unskillfully. What they undertook turned out to be a "task of demolishing the Quran". He adds that there is no need to take offense at their attempts to offer "well-intentioned and well-conducted investigation of pure scholarship".

However, he added, their work emptied the Quran of its spirit and left it a corpse. He wrote:

"But having cut to pieces the body of Allah's revelation, our eruditesleuths have found themselves with a corpse on their hands, the spirits meanwhile eluding their preoccupied attention. So, they have been apt to resort to the old advice of explaining away what they could not explain; crushed between their fumbling fingers, the gossamer wings of soaring inspiration have dissolved powder."

The critical work of such scholars, whose extreme representative was Bell, was based on a favourite, but cautiously expressed, the hypothesis that the seeming incoherence of the Quran is "due in no small measure to the fact (or rather to the presumption, for this, is no shred of proof) that parts of the Suras were originally written down, more or less at random, on the backs of other parts, and then tacked on to follow them by the later editors." (1955, 11) here one draws attention to Arberry's phrase "for there is no shred of proof". Their critical work was directed to the questions of the ordering of the Suras and the ordering of the Ayas (verses) so that they. "Sought to assign every Sura, and every section, almost every verse or half-verse of each Sura, to a particular incident in the prophet's career". (ibid)

Arberry said that he embarked on his task in an environment where Quranic studies meant, in his words, such "anatomical mincing" (Ibid, 12) in this environment he launched his defence of "the unity of the Sura and the Quran". (Ibid) he approached the reader in a manner different from that of his so-called critical predecessors:

"Instead of offering the perplexed reader disjecta membra scattered indifferently over the dissecting table, I ask him to look again at the cadaver before it was craved up and to imagine how it might appear when the lifeblood of accepted inspiration flowed through its veins. I urge the view that an eternal composition, such as the Koran is, cannot be well understood if it is submitted to the test of only temporal criticism. It is simply irrelevant to expect that the themes treated in the individual Sura will be marshalled after some mathematical precision to form a rationally ordered pattern; the logic of revelation is not the logic of the schoolmen. There is no before or after in the prophetic message, when the message is true: everlasting truth is not held within the confines of time and place, but every moment reveals itself wholly and time and place, but every moment reveals itself wholly and completely" (Ibid, 12-13).

With the joyous clinging to the truth advanced by Ibn al-Farid, (Arberry 1955,14) seeks to add some persuasion to his argument that what he experienced was something similar to his, "experience of multiplicity – in unity, this momentary flight of the eternal spirit out of the prison of life – in – time into the boundless plain of life everlasting". (Ibid;14)

With this opinion and emotional attachment to the Quran, Arberry sets out to find out why the people of his nation do not find in the Quran the masterpiece which has captivated the Arabs and himself as well.

He arrives at the conclusion that "the Koran ... is best sampled a little at a time, and that little deserves and needs meditation". (Ibid,26)

He also points to the fact that the Quran can be enjoyed by listening to it, and the printed page prohibits this joy, in addition to the foreign idiom, because "the Koran is God's revelation in Arabic, and the emotive and evocative qualities of the original disappear almost totally in the skilfullest translation". (Ibid, 27)

1.1 Arberry and the Westerners

Arberry did enjoy the Quran as he confessed, and whatever westerners criticized it for, those things themselves did appeal to him or at least present themselves to him in the most beautiful array.

The most important point westerners attack the Quran for is repetition Rodwell did not conceal his boredom with فباي

الاء ريكما تكذبان when he replaced it wherever it re-occurred by "which etc.", meaning that it is the same and therefore need not be mentioned again. The appreciation of this repetition, according to Arberry, needs foundations – He says, “when appreciation rests upon these foundations, the charges of wearisome repetition and jumbled confusion become meaningless” (Arberry 1955, 27)

He announces his deep conviction of the truth embodied in the Quran including its repetitions. He says, "Truth cannot be dimmed by being frequently stated, but only gains in clarity and convincingness at every repetition; and where all is true, inconsequence and incomprehensibility are not felt to arise". (Ibid.) he appreciates the beauty in which the same is repeated and compares it rather hesitatingly (by saying it is a "false analogy") to a nice platform of images with lots of repetitions by famous painters of the same themes: “Annunciation, the Temptation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection”. He says “no one but the savage in his ignorant in appreciation of the masterpieces of Michelangelo and Raphael and Titan” and similarly no one but a savage can “in his impatient misunderstanding of the Koran” write that the Koran is “wearisome, confused, jumbled, crude, incondite.” (Ibid)

He expresses his admiration of the supremacy of the Koranic composition. He says, “the Koran undeniably abounds in fine writing; it has its own extremely individual qualities; the language is highly idiomatic, yet for the most part delusively simple; the rhythms and rhymes are inseparable features of its impressive eloquence, and these are indeed inimitable”(Ibid., 28)

He admits that the Quran has "shaken the world" (Ibid., 29) and no other work which a human produce in the hope of imitating it could attain this power.

1.2 Arberry and style:

Regarding the style he adopted in the translation, (Arberry 1955, 30-31) says that he began with experiments of different kinds of translation styles ranging “from literal unemotional prose to different sorts of stress verse” and submitted them to the readers in the small book (1953) for suggestion and advice so that he could complete the translation of the Quran in the style most appealing to the ordinary readers. He deliberately excluded scholars from this address since they were interested in criticism of the Quran, having the background of disbelief. He said he was interested in showing the readers, the general public, "what the Koran means to the unquestioning soul of the believer, not what it suggests to the clinical mind of the infidel". (Ibid., 31) Let us read what he wrote in connection with the style he attempted in his translation project before he finally decided on away and completed his work:

“In making these translations [that is selections he was submitting to the public to test their taste], I have experimented very freely with various possibilities of treatment, from literal unemotional prose to different sorts of stress verse”. (Ibid.,30-31)

Expressing his rejection of using ‘Biblical’ style, he says,

“I would willingly get away as far as possible from ‘Biblical’ style, being aware of its inappropriateness especially when taken to excess”.

However, he hints at his limits of choice in this concern since Biblical language is influenced by Hebrew, and this is what English is familiar with within the Old Testament. Now since Arabic, the language of the Quran belongs to the same family as that Hebrew, namely Semitic, he says the translator is almost goaded as to how to translate the Arabic text: "... the Arabic original, being Semitic speech like the Hebrew Testament, dictates to the translator to no small extent how he shall go to work” (Ibid., 31)

In a tone of reservation, he says that the English public on their part wants to feel while reading the Quran that it was holy scripture. He says throughout these generations the English people developed a sense of religious style and perhaps they would require ratification of this sense in any work they read which claimed the rank of religious book. If a translator loses his eyes to this fact, he will appear rather eccentric. He says, "... and there is also no doubt that the English mind has during these centuries become so conditioned as to what constitutes the religious style, that one appears more eccentric is writing deliberately otherwise than by conceding at least a minimal obedience to tradition". (Ibid.)

1.3 Arberry and objectivity

The attitude with which Arberry approached his task can at best be called objective.

There are of course those who approach this task subjectively, either by showing likeness without really examining the grounds of the likeness or by striving to highlight what they think are defects or points likely to stimulate rejection of the work and the nation that believes in it owing to the differences between the culture or prejudices.

Arberry wanted to be, let us say, objective and to do justice to the Quran and to be faithful to the kind of knowledge he attained about the Quran and Arabic through his studies as well as personal experience.

Such objectivity and honesty in him made people conclude that he was Muslim. Such a thing might not be favourable to him or in the interest of a scholar in an English university. Muslims, however, would like to think that he was Muslim at heart, at least. This is what Arberry sensed

and he was quite frank in talking about it. "As for the faithful, I will not conceal from them, what they will not, in any case, imagine, that I am no Muslim, nor could ever be" (Arberry 1955, 31). Muslims, the faithful as he calls them, were led to such an attitude towards Arberry because they had found him exceptional in his objectivity and sincere feelings of respect to Islam and appreciation of the Quran as compared to the orientalist before him. He did not conceal such attitude when he lectured to his students and when he supervised postgraduate students. He showed warm feelings towards them and towards the Muslim world of which he had beautiful memories, particularly Egypt, where he spent happy days.

Annoyed by Pickthall's assertion that it is only a believing Muslim who can do justice to the Quran, Arberry again refers to this painfully when he says after declaring that he is no Muslim, "Pickthall's definition would therefore exclude me from being a fair interpreter". (Ibid.) but he boasts afterward, although with the humbleness of a scholar, that he "endeavoured to be fair"(ibid.)and said that he did not limit his fairness to the letter but extended it to the spirit: "yet I have endeavoured to be fair, not only philologically but also imaginatively, by making the effort always to approach and apprehend these scriptures as if I believed them to be divinely inspired, whatever that phrase may mean". (Ibid.)

Arberry was perhaps in a social and psychological dilemma. We indeed said he was objective. But objectivity leads to truth, and a sincerer scholar of Arberry's calibre cannot live at peace with his mind and inner conscience if he continues to contradict his inner convictions as regards truth. We feel that contradicts his inner convictions as regards truth we feel that there is something deeper for the intelligent reader in his words: "Whatever that phrase may mean". Still, if the matter needs exceptional ineliance to understand, Arberry undertakes to clarify when he repeats that same phrase at the beginning of a new paragraph: "Whatever that phrase may mean; for I do not doubt at all that the Koran was a supernatural production, in that it bears all the marks of being the discourse of exaltation."

He confesses the great difference between the style of the Koran and "how Mohammed spoke in his normal moods" (Ibid.) as "recorded in the books of Tradition" (Ibid.) and denies the thoughts Margoliouth put forward "that the Koran was Muhammed's conscious production, but he says that he could not explain this difference between Mohammed's language and the language of the Quran, and he would not desire to "guess" at this matter. He says this is what makes him stand apart from Muslims, he writes:

"It is therefore only on this point that I find myself standing apart from the

faithful; that whereas the faithful claim the source of the Prophet's inspiration to be divine and are naturally content to leave it at that, believing where they cannot prove, I confess myself unable to say what might have been its origin, despite the psychologists, and an equally content not to guess at it". (Ibid., 32)

III. TRANSLATABILITY AND UNTRANSLATABILITY VERSUS IMITABILITY

Inimitability

When Arberry undertook the production of a new rendering of the Quran, he was aware of the huge difficulty of the undertaking and the ideological arguments concerning the translation of the Quran and the ideological arguments concerning the translation of the Quran. He didn't allow himself to be taken unawares into the Islamic religious controversy as to the permissibility or otherwise of using a non-Arabic rendering in worship. He limited himself to the linguistic aspect of the problem. This he quotes Pickthall's decisive statement that "the Koran cannot be translated." (Arberry 1955,20, citing Pickthall) ⁽¹⁾. But Pickthall adds, "That is the belief of old fashioned ⁽²⁾ Sheykh's and the view of the present writer" ⁽³⁾ (Ibid). For the sake of clarification and to demonstrate his awareness of the existence of such a belief among the Muslim, (Arberry 1953,13) immediately adds to Pickthall's statement the following elucidation, "The theory, or rather the tenet, that the Koran cannot be translated is very ancient in Islam, and every orthodox Muslim assent to it." (Ibid.) ⁽⁴⁾

So, he reveals his knowledge of this fact and modifies Pickthall's rather restricted statement when he says, "That is the belief of old-fashioned Sheykh's" to extend it to all orthodox Muslims in the past and the present.

Later on, in the work (Ibid.,27), he re-iterates this same belief: "It is ancient Muslim doctrine that the Koran is untranslatable".

Arberry also expresses his awareness of the background of the tenet of untranslatability when he refers to the question of the inimitability of the Quran. He writes, following the above statement, "That is a sense a corollary of the preposition, even older, that the Koran is an inimitable miracle". (Ibid.). He cites the challenges in the Quran to the unbelievers to "produce any other sura the like of it".(ibid.) When the challenge took place during

Mohammed's life, says Arberry (Ibid.,8- 27), the emulations, in effect, proved the Koran's claim to inimitability. He describes the Quran as possessing "unique beauty" that cannot be rivaled. (Ibid.,28) from the question of inimitability, Arberry moves smoothly to the question of translatability, and says, "If Arabic could and can never again be spoken as it was spoken in the Koran, certainly the Arabic of the Koran defies adequate translation." (Ibid.)

Arberry does not define the term translation, but he gives certain remarks regarding the problems of translation and particularly works of high literary merits. He says (Ibid.), "Of course it is true in a general sense that nothing can be adequately translated from one language into another if it possesses the slightest artistic merit and emotional appeal. Having spent many years studying the problems of translation, I know all too well that within my own experience, no piece of fine writing has ever been done full justice to in any translation. The Koran undeniably abounds in fine writing; it has its own extremely individual qualities; the language is highly idiomatic, yet for the most part delusively simple; the rhythms and rhymes are inseparable features of its impressive eloquence, and these are indeed inimitable."

Here we should like to make three points.

First. No piece of literature can be written twice even in the same language, let alone in a different language. Therefore, any work by Shakespeare, Chaucer, Keats, cannot be re-written. If the same writer attempts such a thing, it is another piece of fine writing by him, but not the same work. Each of the two works will show its distinctive qualities and merits. Thus, no work can be produced twice. Therefore, if one cannot have any poem in English re-written and ascribe to its original author or poet, how can this be done when a French poem by Lamartine, for example, and say this is Lamartine in English. A Greek statue remains one despite copies by imitators, a painting by Michelangelo or Raphael remains itself, and remains one despite copies by any later ambitious painters; a poem by al-Mutanabbi, a piece of fine prose writing by al-Hareeri, Dr. Johnson, or Carlyle remains unique despite copies by imitators.

Now if the case is so with human works, it cannot be otherwise with the Quran. This is a question too clear to be argued about.

Second. Inimitability is something related to work done in the same language, whereas translatability concerns work between two languages, and the difference is greatly taken between the two.

Third. Doing justice to work when translating it is the core of the subject of translation and it applies most certainly to the Quran.

Arberry's endeavour in his rendering was concentrated on how to do justice to the Quran in translating it into English, and how to make the English reader appreciate it and enjoy it despite the difference in language and composition.

IV. WHAT HAS ARBERRY DONE IN HIS TRANSLATION?

"In making these translations [i.e. the selection which he included in his 1953's *The Holy Koran*] I have experimented very freely with various possibilities of treatment, from literal unemotional prose to different sorts of stress verse" (Arberry 1953,30-31).

First, he considered the rhythm, the rhyme, and the stress. He admits that European scholars before him called attention to the rhythmical nature of the parts of the Quran received in the first years of Muhammad's Apostleship which were characterized by short sentences and frequent rhymes. However "when the rhythms of the Koran have been analyzed, they have been analyzed quantitatively, following the rules for scanning Arabic poetry". (Ibid., 20) Arberry expresses the reservation here that quantitative analysis "does not give by any means a complete picture of the situation." (Ibid.) What he thinks must also be taken into account is stress which "also played an important part in heightening the excitement of the discourse." (Ibid.,21) But Arberry is also cautious about the introduction of the element of stress "because we know very little for certain about how Arabic was enunciated so long ago, and can in the main only conjecture from modern practice which, however, varies from region to region." (Ibid.)

Arberry is no doubt right when he declares that stress is problematic in linguistic study, but concerning the Koran, its pronunciation has come down to us through specialists, orally as well as in written description, and the Koran is recited in prayer, and because there is no difference in its pronunciation by learned men nowadays wherever one goes, one can say for certain that this was its pronunciation, including stress, fourteen centuries ago.

V. JUSTIFICATION OF A NEW VERSION IN ENGLISH

First of all, Arberry gives his justification for producing a new version of the Koran even though so many translations have already been made in English by eminent Englishmen before him. Those translations were made

with a different purpose and spirit than his. As for himself, he says (1953,31), "here I am trying to show what the Koran means to the unquestioning should of the believer, not what it suggests to the clinical mind of the infidel". He says, "in no previous rendering has a serious attempt been made to imitate, however imperfectly, those rhetorical and rhythmical patterns which are the glory and the sublimity of the Koran." (Ibid.,25). This is why those translations sound "dull and flat indeed in comparison with the splendidly decorated original", and this is why he finds his work not only justified but also a necessity. He says, "I am breaking new ground here" (Ibid.) And he goes on to explain his intention and his method.

5.1 Significance of the Title Chosen for This Version

Explaining why he called his version *The Koran Interpreted*, Arberry hints to the view expressed by Pickthall concerning the "untranslatability" of the Koran, and says, "Briefly, the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound like things to be a poor copy of the glittering splendor of the original." (Arberry 1953,24).

5.2 The Arrangement of the Suras

A number of translators before Arberry devised different systems for the arrangement of the Suras of the Quran and did not preserve the traditionally known order. Arberry, however, did not follow their example and was even critical of them. He said he did not alter anything. He wrote, "As I am trying in this interpretation to indicate what Muslims of all ages have known as their sacred book, and not how a handful of European scholars have laterally essayed to recast it, I have followed the traditional arrangement", although he agreed that there existed "admitted perplexities" in this arrangement. (Arberry 1953,25)

5.3 The Internal Structure of the Suras

In connection with the structure of the Suras individually, he says he is aware of the composite character of each Sura, Suras "holding embedded in them fragments revealed at widely different dates" a fact "recognized by Muslim students from the earliest times." (Arberry 1953,25), but he says "I have disregarded this accepted fact, wishing to show each Sura as an artistic whole" (Ibid.) and he shows an astonishingly different attitude from previous translators, revealing an aesthetic sense when he says "it'soften-incongruous parts constituting a rich and admirable pattern." (Ibid.)

5.4 The Type of Language Used in the Rendering

In his rendering, Arberry chose straightforward language he says, "I have tried to compose clear and unmannered

English, avoiding the "Biblical" style favored by some of my predecessors. (Arberry 1953,25)

VI. THE PRINTING OF THE TEXT

In printing his translation of the Quran, Arberry says he has avoided its presentation to the English reader simply as continuous prose", which is "like the original text itself", and which is the manner followed by the translators of "all previous versions of the Koran". (Arberry 1964,Xii). In such a presentation, Arberry says, "the rhapsodic nature of its composition has been largely lost to ear and sight." (Ibid.) The adjective *rhapsodic* is usually used concerning ancient Greek epic poems where certain parts are suitable for a single uninterrupted recitation. By using the adjective *rhapsodic*, Arberry means that there are units within each Sura that need to be made prominent to the reader to keep their parts together during reading. This also serves the purpose of making explicit what units exist within each Sura.

Arberry does not make too much of this device, but with the modesty of the scholar, and out of full reverence to the Quran, he says, "By showing the text as here presented, some faint impression may be given of its dramatic impact and most moving beauty." (Ibid.)

Thus, one does not find in his version that he indicates each Aya (Verse) with a separate number or writes it separately on a new line beginning with capital letters, as they do with lines of poetry since verses in his rendering run together in the form of rhapsodies so that one reads the Sura rhapsody after rhapsody. The reckoning of Ayas (Verses) in his version is by fives, and the numbers are printed on the margin. This is one of the two alternatives which go back to early scribes. Arberry (Ibid.) says, "The reckoning by fives and tens goes back to ancient times". It is a practice referred to in references to the history and practice of Quranic arrangement and writing. It is thus stated in (الداودي 1960:15):

قال الازاعي :سمعت قتادة يقول :بدووا فقطوا , ثم خمسوا و ثم عشروا .

Al-Awza'i said: I heard Qutadah saying: They commenced dotting, then they multiplied by fives then by tens.

Abu Omar said: This is expressive of permissiveness and capacity in such a matter.

The same statement is quoted in (السيوطي 1951,11-171)

One can be reckoning by fives and tens used in English plays and poetry, and it is too familiar to be documented here or sampled.

VII. THE BASIC OF HIS SEQUENCE-GROUPINGS OF AYAS (VERSES)

The sequence-grouping or rhapsody which Arberry devised in his presentation of the text seems to be based on the association that he finds between the Ayas (Verses), and he unites them with a rhythmic pattern that he devises. (Arberry1964, x) declares, "I have striven to devise rhythmic patterns and sequence-groupings in correspondence with what the Arabic presents, paragraphing the grouped sequences as they seem to form original units of revelation".

The reason behind his concentration on rhythm is that he believes that the rhythm of the Quran is the secret behind the Quran's excellence and majesty. Thus, he says, "I have been at pains to study the intricate and richly varied rhythms which-apart from the message itself-constitute the Koran's undeniable claim to rank amongst the greatest masterpiece of mankind". (Ibid.) He believes that the lack of appreciation of rhythm in the Quran on the part of the translators "from the seventeenth down to the twentieth century" is the reason behind "a certain uniformity and dull monotony characteristic of all [their versions of the Koran]." (Arberry 1955, 1-24) He almost associates the appreciation of composition. Thus, he further describes translators as "letter-so far as the letter has been ... understood" (Ibid.) but their method "has in general excluded any corresponding reflection of the spirit, where that has at all been appreciated." (Ibid.)

Arberry returns to the question of rhythm in his preface to the second volume of the 1955 publication of his translation. He expresses his belief that the power of the Quran is in its rhythm. Therefore, to discover the Quran you have to attend to its rhythm "It is to the rhythm", says Arberry, "that I constantly return as I grope for a clue to the arresting, the hypnotic power of the Muslim scriptures." (Ibid, 8-11) He declares that:

"A keen sense of rhythm is of course one of the most outstanding characteristics of the Arab genius; it has displayed itself in a great variety of ways. No other people have evolved prosody of compatible richness and complexity; the meters in which Arab poets have composed from earliest times exhibit a wide range of rhythmic patterns, all used with a seemingly effortless ease, and each eliciting a distinctive response from the listener. Arab music reveals the same quality." (Ibid.,9-11).

And he describes this rhythm in a way that reveals his keen sense of appreciation, saying

"Rhythm runs insistently through the entire Koran; but it is a changeable, fluctuating rhythm, ranging from the gentle, lulling music of the narrative and legislative passages, through the lively counterpoint of the hymns of praise, to the shattering drum-rolls of the apocalyptic movements." (Ibid.)

In his enchantment with the Quranic rhythm, professor Arberry reacts severely to Professor Nicholson's remark in his "Literary History of the Arabs" where Nicholson accuses Quranic composition of 'dullness'. Arberry, in return, accuses him of "deafness ... to that rhythmical quality which marks the Koran apart from all other books", that is Prophetic Books, (Ibid.,10-11).

VIII. THE TREATMENT OF QURANIC RHYME

(Arberry1955,1-25) considers rhyme in the Quran as a connecting device of verses. "The verses into which the individual Sura is divided usually, but not always, represent rhetorical units, terminated and connected by a rhyming word." However, he has not been misled by his enchantment with the Quranic rhyme to follow the steps of those "few bold spirits [who] have ventured on occasion to show this feature by rhyming their translations, [since] the resulting products have not been very impressive." (Ibid.) He contrived a different method instead. This method is "to indicate these terminations and connections by rounding off each succession of loose rhymes with a much shorter line." (Ibid) Here are can see how he applies this method to the final part of the Sura entitled Mary:

"And they have taken to them other gods apart from God, that they might be for them might.

No, indeed! They shall deny their service, and they shall be against them pitted.

Hast thou not seen how we sent the Satans against the unbelievers, to prick them?

So, hasten thou not against them; We are only numbering for them a number.

On the day that we shall muster the god fearing to the All-merciful with pomp

and drive the evildoers into Gehenna herding,

Having no power of intercession, save those who have taken with All-merciful covenant.

And they say, 'The All-merciful has taken unto himself a son.'

You have indeed advanced something hideous!

The heavens are well-nigh rent of it and the earth split asunder, and the mountains well-nigh fall crashing.

for that, they have attributed

to the All-merciful a son; and it

behooves not the All-merciful to take a son."

In the above part from Arberry's rendering, the use of much shorter lines, namely a might, pitted,prick them, number with pump, herding, covenant, hideouscrashing, a son are meant to give some effect to compensate for the Arabic rhymes:

واتخذوا من دون الله الهة ليكون لهم عزا. كلا سيكفرون بعبادتهم ويكونون عليهم ضدا. ألم تر انا ارسلنا الشياطين على الكافرين تؤزهم ازا. فلاتعجل عليهم انما نعد لهم عدا. يوم نحشر المتقين الى الرحمن وفدا. ونسوق المجرمين الى جهنم وردا. لا يملكون الشفاعة الا من اتخذ عند الرحمن عهدا. وقالوا اتخذ الرحمن ولدا(سورة مريم:81-88)

Such a thing, in Arberry's opinion, is better than messing with the Quranic rhymes by trying to produce rhymes in English in the manner they follow in English poetry. "The function of rhyme in the Koran", he says, "is quite different from the function of the rhyme in poetry; it, therefore, demands a different treatment in translation" (Ibid.) To clarify, he continued,

"That has been my method in interpreting narrative, argumentative and legislative passages. Where, however, the original, as often enough, interposes between these leisurely period's sudden outbursts of sharp rhetoric or shapely lyric, I have called attention to such changes of mood and tempo by making corresponding variations in my rhythmical patterns. In this fashion, I have also striven to isolate and then to integrate the diverse sections of which each Sura is composed" (Ibid,25-26)

Arberry chose for illustration the story of the Birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in the same chapter we have quoted above, viz. Mary; so let us follow his rendering and the devices he contrived for expressing rhythm and

rhyme. I shall give here the Arabic and the English together for easy observation and consideration.

"And mention in the book Mary

واذكر في الكتاب مريم

When she withdrew from her people to an eastern place,

اذ انتبذت من اهلها مكانا شرقيا

and she took a veil apart from them

فاتخذت من دونهم حجابا

then we sent unto her Our spirit

فأرسلنا اليها روحنا

that presented himself to her

فتمثل لها

a man without fault

بشرا سويا

She said, "I take refuge in the

قالت اني اعوذ

All-merciful from thee!

بالرحمن منك

If thou fearest God ...'

ان كنت تقيا

He said, "I am but a messenger

قال انما انا رسول

Come from thy Lord, to give thee

ربك لاهب لك

A boy most pure"

غلاما زكيا

To defend his rejection of a rhymed translation, Arberry gives two specimens of rhymed translation, the first of the *qāra'at* by Professor Nicholson and the second of *سورة الفاتحة* by Richard Burton. The way Arberry introduced these specimens to the readers (Arberry 1953,28-29) is worth considering.

"the rhythms and rhymes are inseparable features it's [the Koran's] impressive eloquence, and these are indeed inimitable. R.A. Nicholson was as experienced a translator of Arabic as the English world has produced, and none would charge him with deficiency of literary appreciation; yet see what he did when he tried to mimic the rhymes of the Koran, as in his version of Sura C1", (viz. *القارعة*.)

"The smiting! What is the Smiting?"

And how shalt thou be made to understand what is the Smiting?

The Day when Men shall be as flies scattered, And the Mountains shall be as shreds of wool tattered, One whose Scales are heavy, a pleasing life he shall spend,

But one whose Scales are light, to the Abyss he shall descend.

What that is, how shalt thou be made to comprehend? Scorching Fire without end!"

Burton of the Arabian Nights was scarcely more luck in his rending of Sura I [viz, الفاتحة]

"In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Praise be to Allah, who the three worlds made,

The merciful, the compassionate,

The King of the day of Fate.

Thee alone do we worship, and of thee alone do we ask aid.

Guide us to the path that is straight

The path of those to whom thy love is great,

Not those on whom is hate,

Nor they that deviate.

Amen"

Here Arberry says, "I do not think if the Koran had spoken like that, it would have shaken the world". (Ibid.,29)

IX. CONCLUSION

Arberry's translation, if we allow ourselves to depart from the term he preferred, viz. interpretation, differs from all previous translations in the spirit and motive and demonstrates a serious attempt at reflecting a glimpse of the captivating beauty which Arberry found in it and enjoyed over so many years. He approached his task with a deep recognition and belief that the Quran is multi-faceted, and to understand it, appreciate it, one has to take it as a whole: letter, spirit, rhetoric, rhythm, everything, and consider a litter of it at a time so that one lives with it in mediation over a long period. Thus, he states that the success of the translation does not depend solely on the translator. That is because the reader's role in comprehending the Quran is fundamental.

Bad translation is not the whole of the story by any means. The defect be not so much in the way of translation but in the way of reading the translation. The problem is that the ordinary and extraordinary reader have not been enough informed how to read the Quran.

It is important that the Western reader must keep away of the idea that the Quran is more or less similar the Old Testament. The misunderstanding starts when natural the first casual view selects the names of Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, Joseph, Job. Misled by these early impressions, the reader makes the fatal mistake of trying to take in too much at once; he opens at likely place, the beginning of a Sura, and is lulled into un suspicion by the familiar lay-out of chapter and verse; he finishes his first Sura, and goes on to several more; he is bewildered by the rapid and seemingly illogical changes of subject, and he quickly wearies of the frequent repetitions of themes and formulas. Having no clue about the Quran's own merits, he likens it unfavorably , with what he knew since he was a child of incorrect information about the Quran.

Notes

1. See also Pickthall (1930/ 1977,iii)
2. Old-fashioned has been changed to traditional in the 1977 edition of Pickthall's work.
3. The present writer means Pickthall.
4. For a detailed discussion of this question, see ابن قدامة(ت 620/هـ 1367:ج/ص486-487) وكذلك البنداق(1980:84--47)

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